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Mule

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"We won't be long."

"Now, George Lajeunesse, don't get in trouble because of this. Maybe it's better to forget about it."

"Don't worry. Theophile and me, we'll take care of everything."

Moman stood up. "Wait until tomorrow," she said. "It's better to wait."

"No, Papa's fist tightened. "We're going now."

"George, you'll only make it worse." Seeing Papa so angry, so nervous, I wished that I had not told, that I had not mentioned my benefactor's name. What was Papa going to do? What had Monsieur Gidoone done that was so wrong?

"We're going to stop this business now," Papa said.

"Oui," added M'Oncle. "Now is better than later, when it could be too late."

"Tienst! That's right," Papa said, nodding to Moman.

Moman looked sad. "It makes no difference."

"Ton chapeau, George. Ton chapeau!" Me-mere said, pointing to the coatrack.

Papa grabbed his hat, then seeing my dollar on the wall, snatched it, and quickly he and M'Oncle Theophile went out. Moman said, "Go upstairs pray, pray hard," and watched me all the way up the stairs.

But in my bedroom I couldn't stay still. It was all my fault, and so after checking to make sure Moman was in the kitchen, I sneaked down the stairs and out.

Papa and M'Oncle were already on Mechanic Street, Papa leaning forward as he walked. I stayed behind, out of their vision, as together they marched toward Monsieur Gidoone's shack. I took a short cut and ran hard, scared, got to the schoolyard, slipped under the fence, and crept along the side of the church wall to the front. There was Monsieur Gidoone's shack. I hid behind the big elm tree, just in front of the church entrance, and waited.

The shack door was closed, and Papa and M'Oncle were not in sight. Were they inside? Suddenly a loud curse burst out of the shack. That, followed by loud rumblings, like chairs hustling against the wall, brought fat Mrs. Gagne to the open window of her house across the street. She listened, and hearing "MON MAUD! CHIEU DE GODDAM!" pulled her head back inside. I recognized Papa's familiar "SALAUD!" but I had never known Papa this angry. Was he going to kill Monsieur Gidoone? I would never have expected Papa to hurt him.

After another crashing noise, I heard my benefactor moaning. I wanted to squirm closer, to see inside, but I could not move from behind the tree. Mrs. Gagne and her husband rushed out their door toward the shack.

Then I heard a siren in the distance. The shack door flew open. Papa and M'Oncle dragged Monsieur Gidoone out by his armpits. Blood trickled from his nose, and he wobbled and slid, trying to stay on his feet. What had I done?

Papa gripped Monsieur Gidoone's shirt and pointed to the Bonford chimney. "Look! Look what you Jonnybulls are doing to us!" he shouted. "But not! That's not enough! You got to go after our children with . . . with your filthy dirty hands!" And he pulled from his pocket a piece of paper, my dollar maybe, and pushed it in Monsieur Gidoone's eyes. Then tore it violently, over and again, and flung it in my benefactor's face. The old man was crying and trembling, and his pants looked wet.

The police car raced up, and Officer Beaulieu, a friend of Papa's, jumped out. Papa gestured wildly, as did M'Oncle Theophile, while a small

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by Joan Henson

We ferret ravines and boulders, you and I — foragers, sitting streams and turning rocks; miles into desert, ochre days are clocks
we read by shadow length and shade of sky.

You echo in ancient shafts, unseen to all except my long, low ears attuned to mines;
I heave in the heat near shimmery cactus spines
hearing you pick and probe abandoned wall.

Emerge yellow-dusted, denim soft with sweat,
vague as twilight sinking against my side,
rocking your head as if the night were wide
chasms you must cross or must forget.

I lick your shovel fingers, worn old
and stand mute, tranfixed by you: in gold.

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