

Consequences of a Forbidden Fruit

The Atlantic wasn't just a baseball field to us - sure, we played ball there after school and on weekends when adults weren't playing their slob ball- but there was more to it than that. It was an unchaperoned extension of our school of life that started when the other school was out. Where scores were settled, crushes were formed (and often destroyed), where we bullied and were bullied. Our ballfield served identical purpose to the thousands of similar fields throughout the country, save one substantial difference- our centre field fence abutted to the yard of one Gertrude Cunningham- whom, according to youth public knowledge and general consensus, was a witch. A witch with the tastiest apples in all of Dansforth county.

Occasionally the braver of the kids would find themselves sneaking over and helping themselves to one of her delicious honey crisps. They were usually seen and ran off the yard by the old woman with threats of "being brained" or "boiled alive". Other times it was her dog Agatha, a fabled St. Bernard, that came bellowing from around the corner of the old house, full sprint for a large dog and certainly much faster than Gertrude Cunningham. I had yet to see the dog or witch myself, but I had also yet to scale the outfield fence.

There were stories about Gertrude Cunningham that circulated through the youth from the safety of the Atlantic's ballfield. She supposedly had a pond specially for breeding leeches to administer to the eyeballs of those that wronged her. Also, she was said to have a collection in her living room of real shrunken heads of medicine men from the Fiji Islands. Still another tale spouted her as being seen on the calmest of moonlit nights riding her broom and casting spells over the neighboring towns bringing them

bad luck. I didn't believe this last one, because even I knew at that age witches can't actually fly. The stories went on and on, the younger the listener the more outlandish the tales.

Most of the older kids, even the smokers in high school, gave her a wide berth and rarely crossed over into her yard. I would have been content to live out my days never seeing what the hype was all about.

Then came June sixteenth, nineteen eighty-six.

I was eleven years old, at the end of my fifth grade, and the morning was a bust with only five of us at The Atlantic. I had been excited to show off my new bat, a black graphite Easton with "Obsidian" written lengthways in neon green at the business end. I was bummed out at missing a game but surviving, as I was fully involved in devouring an Old Pirate ice cream stick, the kind that had an inside miniature pirate holding a sword you could break off for small sword fights with your friends or just use as a toothpick. I always saved the swords.

Eddie Power, a grade older and three grades heavier, tried his best to convince the two Broussard brothers Leo and Stephen, a girl named Sally Linkletter and myself to sneak over to Gertrude Cunningham's for some apples. The Broussards weren't having any of it and took off. Which was fine because the both of them were thieving cads and nobody liked them anyway. Sally and I weren't buying it either and it was only when Eddie swore he'd start a rumor about seeing us kissing unless we went that we agreed to go. Personally, I didn't see a huge problem with this rumor circulating, but Sally did and I couldn't very well show my hand in the whole situation.

We grabbed two milkcrates from our stash in the bushes, then walked to the outfield, skirting along the inside of the wooden fence. The wood panels were solid and head height and prevented us from seeing through it as we walked. Lettering and caricatures, in need of attention, peeled off the ads as they succumbed in the elements. The sun was already strong forcing me to keep the bill of my cap turned down, and the sounds of summer greeted us as we walked- the bees lazily floating dandelion to dandelion, the cicadas singing to each other. In the distance, lawns were being mowed. To assist climbing the fence, we always put a milkcrate on either side. On Gertrude Cunningham's side the crate always went missing, (perhaps taken to hold her ever increasing shrunken head collection), but with one of the other regulars of the ballfield being the daughter of a milkman we always had a steady supply of them. After Eddie struggled to pull his excessive frame up to see if the coast was clear, the three of us hopped it and found ourselves in Gertrude Cunningham's yard. I had my bat as I couldn't very well leave it in the dugout in case one of the Broussard brothers came back and hawked it. Plus it felt better with it with Agatha possibly around. I hadn't told anyone but it was actually my first time in the promised land of witches, St. Bernards, and honey crisp apples.

Eddie motioned us for silence then led the way which I had no objection with. I followed, then Sally.

The house, dead gray with its sagging two story roof sat on a small hill in the distance, with rotting wooden windowsills and a droopy porch. The house's rock foundation was failing in some spots, crumbled in. The building was only a hundred feet up past the nearest apple tree. Close to the distance of home plate to first base. A short

distance if you were trotting a home run. A long one if you had a baseball (or dog) chasing you.

We made our way to the nearest of the trees, pushing branches and leaves around to look for apples. Sally found two and grabbed both, throwing me one. The size of a baseball, it was yellow and orange and red and the most amazing thing I had ever put in my mouth. Partly because it was a gift from Sally but I stand by what I say.

There were only the two low apples and Eddie wanted my bat to stab at some higher fruit. Even with the bat Eddie couldn't reach and looked at the base of the tree. I suspected that he may try to climb it and if he did I expected him fall and be killed. I wasn't ready for jail. I was lean and light so for me scaling the tree was easy enough as the knobs on the branches offered adequate hand and foot holds.

Even from my enhanced vantage point the apples remained just out of reach and I asked Eddie to throw my bat up to me. He agreed to catch my apples only if I promised not to drop the bat on his head. I was stretched much further out on a limb than I had any business being and had gotten two apples knocked down for Eddie and reaching for a third when from the direction of Gertrude Cunningham's house a god-awful bark pierced the morning summer air. My position made it difficult for me to look at where the direction of the baying came from, but the looks on Eddie and Sally's face told me everything.

Agatha was coming.

They dropped what apples they had and ran as fast as they could back towards the safety of the ballfield's fence.

I heard a galloping come from behind me, wondering giddily if perhaps Agatha had been traded in for a horse being ridden by a knight. A black whirl streaked under me, too small for a horse but too big for a dog. Possibly a bear, I thought. I was able to watch as Agatha gained on them but miss out just as Sally then Eddie hopped up the milkcrate and scaled the fence to security and out of sight.

Agatha leaped, crashing into the ballfield fence with the thudding velocity of a car just missing Eddie. The dog then stood up, shook herself off, and walked back towards the house, the path of which I was directly in.

I clutched my bat, holding to the tree branch for the sake of my future kids that still wished to be born. Agatha, the only St. Bernard I had ever seen in real life was larger than any dog I ever thought possible. All black with long fur, she looked like a picnic table moving below me. Her head was the size of a car tire.

Agatha walked back to where Eddie and Sally and been just standing, then stopped and sniffed the air. I was now right above her. I looked through the leaves at the fence and saw two caps peering over the backboard. My friends could only look on helplessly. I looked back down at Agatha. She was still sniffing the air, her massive snout lifting and moving side to side, into and out of the breeze. Then her snout drifted upwards, with no obvious intention of stopping until she would be looking right at me.

With a sudden loud snap my branch broke and while still clutching both that and my bat, I fell to the ground.

Then there was nothing for a while.

I woke up in a very warm room and staring at a white tin tiled ceiling in a house I was unfamiliar with. The uninviting aroma of stew filled the air and I could faintly smell smoke from a cigarette. Upon trying to shift my body I felt a crippling pain shoot between my knee and foot on my left leg. I looked down and saw my pant leg from the knee down had been cut off with a cloth towel laid on my sore shin. The slightest movement whatsoever made the pain unbearable and I was reduced to turning only my head to see where I was.

I was on a wooden cot, the upper half with a slight incline which aided in my assessment of my surroundings. I was in a large kitchen with a very large stove which was lit despite being summer outside, creating great heat in the room. On the stove sat a massive steel pot. My grade four teacher would have called it a cauldron and I deduced it was the source of the aroma of the stew. On the wall near it hung many pots and pans, and a lot of knives. Large and small, some of the cutting implements more qualified to be called cleavers and axes. I didn't doubt all were very sharp. I looked around but could not see any sign of life. In a corner on its own table was the largest snow globe I had ever seen, two feet tall. In it a single-story log cabin, nine inches high, was surrounded by miniature firs and hardwoods, and even a small pond resembling the start of a lake. They all looked amazingly realistic.

Beside the snow globe was a window, with a faded wood frame and dusty pane, allowed sunlight through while dozens of flies buzzed about in vain trying to find a way out. A cobweb laced back and forth, catching some of the flies and along with them any hopes of their escape.

“They all try to get out, but none do, unless I let them,” a woman’s voice spoke from another corner of the room and if it weren’t for being young and healthy I am sure I would have had a heart attack. Then the voice cackled. “The flies, that is.”

Gertrude Cunningham.

I jolted and was reminded of my leg. I cautiously looked at her. She didn’t look any older than my own grandmother, as she sat in a rocking chair with two long needles darning something that looked like but didn’t quite look like a blanket to me. It had square patches six inches by six inches, of what I imagined to be pieces of skin and animal hide, and also some cloth. Which is what is what I suspected witches darned, if anything at all. She got these patches from a pale steel bucket on the floor in front of her. She had gray hair done up in a bun and wore tan slacks and a baby blue short sleeved blouse. A cigarette dangled from her mouth the same way it did with Eddie’s when he was smoking and at bat, with no hands to spare. She wore large glasses with horns on the edge. Not little horns, like other old people I knew. The horns on these were four inches long.

“It’s broken, dearie,” she spoke, nodding at my leg. “But have no worries, we ‘ll have you back up and running in no time. Who knows, you may even be able to scale that fence better than before. To come steal my apples.” She smirked as she said this and her eyes glistened as she looked at me.

“Mrs. Cunningham?” I asked.

She continued to look at me while continuing to darn. Her hands worked so fast it was like they were being played in fast forward compared to the rest of her.

“That is I, yes. And you are who? I couldn’t very well contact your parents or anybody else without knowing who you were, could I?” and she offered me a smile showing large white gnashers that made me think I was a little pig and she was the big bad wolf. “Your club- it’s obsidian?” She added with a tinge of nervousness as she glanced to a far corner.

“Chace Edwards,” I offered. Then, “My club?” My eyes followed hers to where my baseball bat sat in the corner. “You mean my bat? It’s just graphite. Could you call an ambulance for me? I think I need to go to the hospital.”

She continued to look at me with a dead pan smile as her hands flew, picking patch after patch of skin and hide from the bucket in front of her. I thought of the medicine men from the Fijis and wondered if they were dead when she took their skin. There wasn’t much cloth in the blanket.

“Who were the kids that were with you?” she asked as she darned, a question that would be repeated for some time to come.

I almost ratted my friends then caught myself. “Two kids from another school that were supposed to come for a game, but it got changed at the last minute without us knowing. Never met them before and to be honest I can’t even remember their names. How about that hospital, Mrs.? An ambulance could come get me.”

“Oh, of course, I just remembered,” Mrs. Cunningham stopped darning. Her stare at me was quite uncomfortable. “Phone is down at moment but should be back anytime now. I’ll be sure to call. Until then, you just rest up. Edwards, Edwards.... from Spruce Grove street, yes?”

There was something in her tone, a certain level of dismissiveness. I did not believe her about the phone and wondered how she knew where I lived.

This cot is where I spent the next several weeks watching day turn to night then back to day again. The blanket Gertrude Cunningham had been darning was intended for me to keep me warm at night and was even more gruesome when one saw it up close. Made with the skins and skinned hides of unknown various creatures that I wished to know nothing about, it smelled horrid and would take days for all the little clots of blood to dry as if they were recently harvested. The bucket she obtained her “fabrics” for darning from was demoted to becoming my improvised chamber pot, bringing my levels of shame and disgust to new levels of humility. She had tried the first day to get me to eat from the stew she had simmering, but images of what had offered up their hides and ended up into the stew pot culled any appetite I had and I politely declined. The first night as soon as she had turned in for the evening I threw the revolting blanket off me to the floor. The room was still quite warm from the stove. With the lights out the room was in near complete darkness as I lay, and it was only now I saw the windows in the snow globe house were lit up. I hadn’t noticed this in the daytime.

By the time Gertrude Cunningham came back to me early the next morning I was shivering and famished as both my stomach and the stove were long out of fuel. The stove being a kitchen stove, had a fire box far too small for an overnight log. I never

threw the blanket off again or passed up a meal from the bottomless pot. Twice a day Gertrude Cunningham would dip the cloth from my broken leg in the stew pot, swirl it around some, then place it on my leg like a poultice. She never changed the cloth out. Ever.

My hopes of Eddie or Sally getting me help was strong the first day, weaker the second, and almost gone the third.

The leg pain was almost negligible when I remained still and I'm not sure if it was the food, blanket, or something else unspoken off, but I worried less and less about leaving Gertrude Cunningham's and finding my way back home. My parents, school, and even Sally Linkletter became distant memories from another lifetime belonging to someone that wasn't even me.

Gertrude Cunningham would be gone for hours at a time, but always back in time to keep the stove lit except for when it went out completely over night. So boring was sitting in the kitchen by myself that by week's end I came to yearn for Gertrude Cunningham's returns. I even came to enjoy the stew, with various vegetables she claimed were from her garden. There were potatoes, carrots, turnip and even dumplings. She never revealed her meat in the pot, only telling me it was from a "different garden". Desserts were often apple pie which she claimed were from her orchard. She would often refer to fattening me up and then laugh her weird way.

At moments in the kitchen where it was extremely quiet I periodically would hear a door faintly slamming in the direction of the snow globe, but by the time I looked there was nothing to see.

I asked Gertrude Cunningham one day about Agatha, that I never saw her, but she only smiled and changed the subject.

It was a few days after this, when it was raining outside and I seemed glum, she showed me her Mad Trapper. I had been looking about the room and my eyes came to rest on the snow globe. I was quite certain there was a small willow of smoke coming from the chimney of the log cabin.

“What’s with the snow globe?” I asked.

Gertrude Cunningham stopped rocking in her chair and looked at me. “You’ll have to forgive me, oh yes. Where of where are my manners. Here, sit up, I shall bring it to you.” She pulled the table over that the snow globe was on. “My Mad Trapper,” she pointed out and beamed.

Seeing the craftsmanship of the little log cabin, trees and lake up closer, I told her I thought it was marvelous. And meant it.

“Oh, it gets better,” she advised, as she put her hand through a small opened lid on the top of the dome. She took a bony finger and gently pressed it on the chimney, stopping the smoke from exiting. “Don’t make a sound,” she hissed as we waited and watched.

It didn’t take long for the door to open to the little cabin and a small four-inch tall lumberjack ran out. He was lean, with a neatly trimmed beard and a toque on his head, and wore a dated light blue and egg white plaid woods jacket. His jeans were dirty and had patches sewn over the knees, and his work boots looked well worn with spliced laces. He didn’t seem to take notice of us as he bent over and gasped for air, staring at

the chimney which seemed to be working again. He looked about, then kicked at the snow, then walked back into the cabin stomping his boots at the porch before he went in.

“See?” Gertrude Cunningham whispered.

“Marvelous,” I repeated in my haze.

Then, Gertrude Cunningham placed two things into the snow globe with her long fingernail. The first was a leech which she seemed to pick from within her arm. The leech measured in length equal to that of the lumberjack himself, about four inches. It was fat and black and slimy. She whispered something to it before placing it at the edge of the snow globe’s lake. The leech wriggled into the water, and soon there was no sign of it lurking under the surface. The second item, this time pulled from her ear, was an ant, an inch and a half in length but no doubt also a formidable foe. She whispered to this also, before setting it down. The ant, once placed on the snow, lifted its head to the air as its antennae flitted about. Then the ant scurried into the foliage of the woods and out of view.

“Let’s see how he fares out this time,” she cackled as she rubbed her hands.

“Who is he?” I asked.

“Just some dirty old ant I got from the garden,” she answered. “or maybe it was the ballfield.” I vaguely remembered a ballfield, and it once having some importance to me. But I resolved that those days were behind me and didn’t press the subject. “I mean the lumberjack,” I asked.

“Ahhh, yes. Well, he was an old acquaintance, you see. And he’s a trapper, not just some sorry lumberjack. He once lived in this very area, many years ago.” Gertrude Cunningham added as her eyes drifted off into space, and for a moment I thought she may be sad. There was no more activity in the kitchen that day.

The day after this, Gertrude Cunningham seemed still preoccupied from showing me the trapper, and had an accident. She dropped one of the logs for the stove onto her right foot. She danced about and swore in a language i wasn’t aware of and punched down on the hot stove with enough force that I thought she may break it. The stove, not her hand.

Then she collected herself and limped around the rest of the day. I watched the mad trapper’s log cabin but saw no sign of him. I wondered of he had any idea of the horrors that lurked about in the trees and lake and couldn’t bear the thought of him being blindsided. I did not know him, but knew I liked him more than my captor.

That evening as Gertrude Cunningham went to bed, I grabbed a piece of paper and pen from a stationary desk near my head. I wrote as small as I could a note for the mad trapper explaining only the most relevant information. I hoped he could read English.

“We are both trapped here, you in a snow globe. There is a giant ant and a giant leech in your globe, in the trees and lake. Be careful. Chase. This sword may help.”

I folded the message into a paper airplane with my message on the wing. I would have to throw it to get it in. I took my sword toothpick from my pocket and laid it in the

crease. Then tossed it, knowing full well I may end up in the snow globe also if I got caught due to the paper plane falling shy and ending up on the floor.

I was elated that the paper warning hit its mark and went into the globe. My elation turned to fear as I realized my note, while not on the floor, would undoubtedly be seen by Gertrude Cunningham as she eventually came back into the kitchen and saw the paper in the snow globe.

My heart sank as I realized and came to terms with the fact that Gertrude Cunningham probably didn't like me after all and would in all likelihood eat me at the end of all this.

I stared up into the ceiling and cried quietly to myself as the darkness took over the room and my mind. A small glow coming from my side and increasing in intensity finally caught my attention and I took a break from my realization of my predicament and looked over.

The mad trapper stood, his back to me, holding a small rifle. He was facing my note which he had set ablaze. It burned like a large bonfire, and he had to step back briefly as it peaked. To the side near the lake, the leech shrivelled as the heat from the bonfire dried it. My sword was stuck in it.

I was so relieved I burst out laughing. This wasn't the mad trapper's first rodeo. I stayed awake long after the flame receded and stared at the snow globe wondering if he knew I was here.

I was awakened the next morning to a hand breaking one of the kitchen window's panes from the outside with a small radio. An arm unlocked the clasp and pushed the window up as the flies, my fellow captors, finally found their way out. Sally Linkletter poked her head cautiously through the opening, wearing her Yankees cap. She motioned me for silence.

"Where's Agatha?"

"Sally?! What are you doing here?" I had to think for a moment before I remembered her name.

"The dog, Chase. Where is Agatha?!"

"I haven't seen her since I got here," I told her.

Sally climbed in and came over to me. "Jesus H Christ, Chase, what the hell is this?" she asked with disgust.

At first I thought she meant my chamber pot/bathroom bucket but then realized she meant the blanket of flesh and hides and cloth. Funny what becomes normal after a while. "Oh," I offered. It was all I had for a response. I threw the blanket over, quickly and subtly covering the bucket before she had a chance to look inside it. "How long have I been here?"

"We'll talk when we get out of here. Can you walk?" she asked and I realized I hadn't actually been fully on my feet since I had been here.

"I-I don't know," I answered. "I'll try."

I gingerly put my feet on the floor, waiting for the shoot of pain I had experienced after first trying to move. The leg that was broken was a bit sore, but otherwise pain free as I put pressure on it. Both legs were weak and wobbly from being so inactive. Sally helped me up. "You stink," she said, and lead me to the window. I stopped mid way and hobbled back to the snow globe. I knew I didn't have much time but needed to try to get the mad trapper. There was a small waft of smoke coming from his chimney still from the evening before. No small firebox in his stove. I plugged his chimney.

Within moments he was outside coughing still carrying his rifle. My note had kept him on his edge.

I snapped my fingers above him and he shuddered as if thunder had suddenly gone off overhead. He was first alarmed at seeing me, then realized I was there to help him as I placed my hand down and he ran over to it. He motioned for me to give him a moment and pulled his sword out of the leech, sheathing it in a scabbard he now wore on his belt. Once he was in the security of my hand he slung his rifle over his shoulder and nodded.

Sally saw the mad trapper and her eyes widened. "Holy shit."

As I went by the kitchen stove, I had an idea and completely closed the damper for the flu, soon creating a backflow of the trace amount of smoke similar to which the Gertrude Cunningham so often beset upon the mad trapper. I saw my bat in the corner, with scratches on it as if something has been gnawing at it. I grabbed it, swung at the stovepipe, and now any smoke that had been seeping out was coming much faster. I took the bat with me.

The mad trapper rested on the top of my shirt pocket hanging by his arm pits the same as we do at the outfield fence as we made our way to the window as first Sally, then I climbed out.

We got outside and worked our way towards the apple trees and continued further towards the ballfield. "Why haven't my parents or anyone else come for me?" I asked.

"Be a good boy," Sally spoke into the radio. Then explains. "That's code for we are out of the house. Everyone has been acting so weird," Sally explains. "I don't know if that hag has a spell on most of the town or not. Nobody would listen to us. At first your parents did, but very quickly afterwards seemed quite dismissive on the whole affair. Almost denying you were even their son. Cops, even my own parents, everybody just seemed so chill on everything. Finally Eddie and I agreed on this plan."

"Eddie Power. I remember him. Plan?"

"Yeah, he is on the other side of the property just off the yard, shooting pellets into the upstairs windows we think Gertrude Cunningham sleeps in. It's the last of the windows to turn off at night, anyways. Once he knew for sure he had her attention, he radioed me and had his bike ready for when he thought it was time to jet. The Broussards lent us their radios but wouldn't come. Chickens."

I tried to make sense of everything then gave up. As we hobbled along, the mad trapper in my pocket told me he owed his life to me. He didn't seem very mad from what I saw.

We were halfway between the apple trees and fence for the ballfield when we heard a loud deep barking from the other side of the house. "Shit!" I said, coming further out of my daze. "Agatha!"

"I thought she wasn't around!" Sally looked at me with panic as we rushed even faster towards the fence.

"I said I hadn't seen her!" I answered. I glanced back towards the house and only now I realized why Agatha hadn't been around in the house when Gertrude Cunningham was. As Agatha was bounding down towards us, the size and menace of a black bear enraged at its trespassers, she favored his rear right leg and kept it off the ground. "Gertrude Cunningham IS Agatha!" I yelled. "Faster!"

"You don't think I know that?" Sally snapped as we get to the fence. I insisted she go first since it was she that had risked everything to save me. If I ran out of time I still had the faint hope my bat would save me.

She was over the fence and gone, then it was my turn. The height I needed to hop up and climb felt right as I stood on the crate, but it was a sizable chore with my bum leg. The mad trapper knew what was coming behind us and begged me to put him up on the fence ledge. I didn't have time for myself, but there was no need for both of us to be torn to pieces and end up in Agatha's stomach or Gertrude Cunningham's pot by day's end, perhaps even with our own special placing on her quilt of horror.

I placed him on the fence then quickly looked back at the dog. In five seconds she would be upon me and I winded up for my last chance at what would be the most important homerun of my life.

For the last hundred and fifty years, Gregoire Landry, referred to by his captor as the mad trapper, didn't quite know where he was. His only crime had been to deny the advances of a neighborhood woman rumored to be a witch. He knew that he was inside a very small world with an alarming number of vicious creatures coming at him. Fortunately before becoming Gertrude Cunningham's Mad Trapper he was a gunsmith with his own presses, castings, and the other required tools of his trade right in his very cabin when his world would be first turned upside down. And he had lots of time. Such was his arsenal by the time he had read my note, he feared very little.

Not even the dog that barrelled down at them, which was the size of a mountain. Below him as I braced and took aim with my bat, Gregoire didn't run and hide. He crouched on the two by four of the fence, angled his toque, and pointed his rifle while he held his breath. He caressed the trigger before firing.

I didn't hear the rifle as its bullet rifled out the barrel and with it's obsidian head (which I only later found out was like kryptonite for witches) burrow straight between the eyes of Agatha. Before the dog knew what had hit her she was dead, sliding into me with just enough power to knock me into the fence. I looked at the dog, then up at Gregoire. Gregoire put three more rounds into the dog for good measure then let his rifle cool and straightened his toque.

On her side, Agatha's body was six inches taller than the crate and I found it easier to just stand on her to get over the fence. I helped Gregoire back into my pocket

before going completely over myself. By now Eddie had come around with his bicycle and walked it as he came across the field from home plate. We shook hands rather than hug so as not to crush Gregoire. That, and I smelled too bad for a hug. The three of us- four if you count Gregoire- walked from the outfield towards home plate and I told them about my ordeal, which they told me had lasted two weeks.

“What if my parents don’t even care if I come back? Or forget who I am?” I asked.

“My parents don’t care about me as it is, and I do just fine,” Eddie offered, and everyone laughed.

“Well, for what its worth, I’m glad you are back,” Sally offered, and patted me on the back. It wasn’t a kiss, but it would do.

“Is that club really obsidian?” Gregoire asked, and I had to explain to him it was just graphite, which he had never heard of.

“So- what now?” Sally asked.

“Go home, see if my parents remember me, see what we can do for this guy,” I answered nodding at Gregoire. “Maybe he can become a chessman as long as he promises to not shoot or stab the other pieces on the board.” I smiled.

“No promises,” Gregoire answered returning a smile.

“Maybe after supper we could meet up for a pickup game and try a few of Gertrude Cunningham’s apples,” Eddie suggested, and everyone- even Gregoire- threw their hats at him as we continued on out of the field.

