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Rule of Seconds

by

Shawna Diane Partridge

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of English Language, Literature, and Creative Writing
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at the
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2015

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Rule of Seconds

by

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April 28, 2015

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Abstract

Set in the Northern Ontario city of Sault Ste. Marie, the novella *Rule of Seconds* is a semi-autobiographical fiction that interlaces a city's and a family's history through storytelling, family lore, hearsay, medical accounts, newspaper clippings, and other archival materials. The disjunctive narrative weaves together stories about the troubled relationships of four generations of women with Ukrainian backgrounds. *Rule of Seconds* spans from the early 1920s, through Prohibition, to the present. The narrator-protagonist, a member of the fourth generation, pieces together surprising facts about her family history. The novella is a story of self-discovery, acceptance, and remembrance. It depicts the socio-economic struggles of the working-class men and women who populate the small Northern Ontario city. *Rule of Seconds* raises questions about why we do not have a consensus over what has happened in the past, as suggested by the subtitle of the novella, "*The way the past unfolded depended upon who told it.*" The novella is open-ended, raising epistemological questions about what we choose to believe, and why we make such choices.

Dedication

To 'hard' women.

Eudokia, Henrietta, Sophie, Susan, and Sheena.

Acknowledgements

Eudokia, you are a hard woman, and just as difficult to encompass in words.

To Mom, my biggest fan, for your endless patience, love, and care packages.

I am grateful to those who allowed me to interview them and tell their stories. I hope I did them justice. To my humble storytellers, who would not call themselves thus: Sophie, Willy, Nina, George, Jeanette, Mom and Dad, and Sheena and Kyle.

I wish to acknowledge those who were unable to speak but whose stories I collaged together: my paternal and maternal great grandparents, as well to Douglas Moore.

Dr. Karl Jirgens, my professor, supervisor, editor, and literary guide—I thank you for your patience as I gathered my voice.

I am honoured by Dr. Dale Jacobs for so readily accepting to be my internal reader. Your concern for students' well-being is astounding.

To Dr. Miriam Wright, thank you for being my external reader and adding your perspective and voice to the conversation. I am flattered by your enthusiasm for this project.

To professors who I now call my friends: the late Dr. Alanna Bondar, Dr. Linda Burnett, Dr. Michael DiSanto, and Marty Gervais. I consider my accomplishments to also be your own. Thank you for the continual support.

To fellow writers: Brittni Carey, Lydia Friesen, Hanan Hazime, Zhe Cindy Chen, and Jay Rankin, for consoling my worries and joining in my love of caffeine.

"The Group," some of which I have known since elementary school, others since high school and postsecondary, but all of which comprise my second family.

To the topography that maps me: Northern Ontario, the Algoma Region, Sault Ste. Marie, Lake Superior, and 776.

And thank you to the staff at Centennial Library in Sault Ste. Marie, as well as the independently-minded microfilm readers.

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Rule of Seconds

The way the past unfolded depended upon who told it.

Or So It Was Said

The day began with thunder, then, heavy rain punctuated by lightning strikes so near the house, they rattled the windows. That morning, I had a strange feeling. My doctor calls it the "aura," a warning of a seizure. The timing, always unpredictable. It doesn't matter what my doctor calls it. When it hits, eyes twitch, legs and arms spasm. Mouth mumbles, incoherent. Speech inconceivable. Mouth frothing, jaw out of control, grinding the tongue. Taste of blood. Inside, shouting, *God, make it stop. Speak! Why can't I speak? Yell! Yell for help! God, oh please, let me black out.* It always begins with the eyes. An uncontrolled blinking. Strobe lights. That aura. A cruel warning. Something I can't prevent. Coming. I have to endure.

Today, the diviner arrived. Herald Gill, a messenger transcending the future. Somehow he reaches down, penetrates the earth's secrets, locates springs hidden deep underground, says, where to dig the well. Herald, the water witch. He was a friend of my mother's uncle, Russ. Herald had partial to no teeth, was deathly skinny, wore pants that were always too short for him, crowned his head with a feathered hat, and on his bicycle mapped the city of Sault Ste. Marie.

My mother was nine when Herald envisioned her future. He foresaw that my mother would develop arthritis in her adulthood (true), would give birth to two girls (true:

my sister and I), but before then, she would have a choice between two men prior to marrying one of them (true). “Izza, you will have two suitors who will live in opposite ends of the city.” So the prediction goes.

Growing up, my mother lived in the Buckley area in Sault Ste. Marie. Buckley was in the west-end, close to the city’s industrial section. My mother had grown accustomed to the noxious white clouds billowing from the Steel Plant’s stacks. She tried to ignore the stench. My mother’s childhood was spent in a three-room brick bungalow. Its exterior wasn’t covered with sheets of siding or imitation brick like the bulk of other west-end homes. A happy, traditional family could have lived in that bungalow. Instead, a diverse tribe inhabited the house. My grandparents, Ollie and No-No, occupied one of the rooms. Three of their four children, including my mother took occupancy in the second room. The eldest child and four to five Aboriginal student boarders took the third room. Those boarders stayed only for the school year. Each year would bring a new cohort of boarders to the house. My mother was the second oldest of the four children.

My mother’s street consisted of newlyweds, first-time homeowners, and young families. My mother and her three siblings had plenty of children their own age to befriend, if they wished. But the siblings chose to play among themselves in their backyard. My mother and her older brother, Allen, were aware of the neighbourhood gossip. When I was thirteen, my mother confessed her embarrassment about the family’s living conditions. “I was ashamed of how our family appeared to our neighbours. They’d snicker, ‘A blended household,’ they’d say. But why did that matter? Gossips exaggerate and fib. They’re full of rude remarks and rigid beliefs. Our family was always the target of gossip. But never you mind it.”

My mother told me about her family, the Salenkos, and how the neighbours thought them to be poor. The neighbours thought that the reason my grandmother No-No took in boarders, was because my grandfather Ollie didn't earn enough money at the Steel Plant. Speculations were abundant. Maybe grandfather Ollie was always too sick to work. Maybe grandfather was like his father, Fred, drinking away his paychecks. The neighbours had no way of knowing how much my grandfather earned. Though, they continued to speculate.

Grandmother No-No was my great grandmother Eudokia's daughter. No-No had learned from her mother, Eudokia, to save for those "rainy days" when something extra would be needed, like when Steel Plant workers went on strike. My grandfather Ollie was without a paycheck while union representatives negotiated with company men for improved wages and benefits. "Strikes don't have expiration dates." Another lesson from my mother I had to remember. "Strikes could last for weeks or even months. Your grandma No-No had to prepare for unforeseen events. You see?"

Gossip circulated through the neighbourhood. New parts of stories surfaced or juicier rumours took precedence over yesterday's news. Every day in the neighbourhood, women waved at each other across the street, but when backs were turned whispered under their breaths. Engines roared in the early morning when men left for work. Children played kick-the-can in narrow backyards.

As a child, my mother habitually watched and listened. At age eleven, she was informed about goings on in the neighbourhood. She was appalled about what was said not only about her family, but about the other neighbours, too. Consumed by curiosity, she had to know what was said.

My mother was in her late teens, still living at home, when rumours surfaced about her prospect of marriage, or lack thereof. In those days, neighbourhood busy-bodies were fixed on knowing the lives of the street's younger generation. My mother became a subject of speculation. They predicted she would become an old maid. She would remain in that bungalow forever as my grandmother's companion.

But there was Ronnie. He was a friend of my mother's older brother, Allen. Ronnie smiled at my mother whenever he visited the house. Sometimes he'd wave from the street as he walked by. "Hi Izza." Ever since high school, Ronnie sent little love notes to my mother. He praised her brown eyes, her angelic face, her graceful movements, her slender body. With each note, my mother blushed, tore up the letter, disposed of it in the garbage can. My mother's brother Allen was not to know about Ronnie's affection or desire. Ronnie and Allen ran with the grown-up crowd, three years older than my mother. Izza wasn't allowed to join her older brother's group. She was too young, and not cool. She was Allen's little sister.

But the gossips took notice. "Perhaps she'll marry Ronnie." Ronnie's visits to see Allen became more frequent as my mother matured. My mother was lean, twenty. After seven o'clock, she refused to eat, wanted to stay thin, to appear appealing. She styled her hair, applied lipstick, high-lighted her cheekbones.

Now that they had reached the legal drinking age, my mother and her friend Lisa socialized at The Vic bar in the city's downtown. Lisa started dating Mark, a labourer at the Steel Plant, and wanted to introduce my mother to one of his friends, Jon. My mother explained all of this to me one day. "Lisa thought I should date Jon. You see? And Lisa,

well, she was already dating Mark. Lisa and Mark, me and Jon could be a foursome. But I wasn't going to be forced into anything. You do the same. Stick to your guns."

Jon and Mark both worked at the Steel Plant. They started straight out of high school, when they turned eighteen. My mother explained, "Jon had thick, curly hair. He lived with his parents and younger brother Kevin, in the city's east-end, close to what's now Queen Street East."

During Jon's childhood, the east-end was under-developed. Its suburbs were small and surrounded by bushed area. Like many others in the east-end, Jon's childhood home was built in the 1960s. Bungalows with white siding. Uncultivated bush sheltered the backyard of Jon's home. His backyard seemed to go on for miles, running into wilderness. Jon and his brother Kevin escaped from their parents into that bush, built forts and pretended to be pioneers discovering new lands, until their mother stood on the back step calling them to supper.

Even at twenty, my mother had never ventured to the city's east-end. The west-end had everything she needed, including shops and markets. The Vic bar, downtown was the furthest east my mother had travelled in the city.

My mother agreed to a double date. And soon after grew enthralled with Jon. His neighbourhood seemed peculiarly exotic to a west-end girl. And Jon was enthralled with my mother. He liked to call her "My West-End Girl," alluding to a current hit, back then in 1983, Billy Joel's song "Uptown Girl." Izza was proud of the title, because of who gave it to her, not for what it represented. Instead, she wanted to know all about Jon's childhood, his home, what it was like growing up in the east-end. She compared her life

to his. His family. His parents. His one sibling. Four people living alone in one bungalow did not match her experience.

Gossip circulated my mother's west-end neighbourhood; she was dating a boy from the east-end. At the same time, Ronnie's visits to see Allen, and my mother, became more regular. Ronnie knew about mother's interest in someone else. My grandmother No-No disapproved of my mother living in the east-end if she married Jon. My grandmother refused to travel from her house in the west-end to the east-side of town.

Four years after they met at The Vic bar, my mother and Jon eloped. Only their mutual friends, Lisa and Mark, attended the ceremony to act as witnesses to the marriage. Later that night, my mother and Jon revealed their marriage to each of their parents. Jon would become my father. After the elopement, Ronnie's visits all but disappeared.

My parents bought a small bungalow in the east-end. Wrapped in white siding, the bungalow was only two blocks from my paternal grandparents' house, one street away from the main thoroughfare, Queen Street.

Back then, Herald Gill, the water witch, the fortune teller, hadn't told my nine-year-old mother about the continual strife she'd have with my grandmother No-No over the location of my parents' east-end bungalow, my childhood home. Herald had read my mother Izza's palm and understood. He'd said my mother's placid disposition mirrored that of her father's. It was true my mother seemed placid when there was no other choice. With the arrival of Jon, new avenues were opened. She leapt at the chance, acted on impulse. Herald had been wrong. My mother Izza took after my grandmother No-No. And, I would learn that my grandmother No-No had taken after her own mother Eudokia. Women on my mother's side had the same characteristics. They were hard and impulsive.

Chops or Steaks

It wasn't the first time that women on my mother's side of the family had acted on impulse.

Years later, family members would remember how that particular summer day had turned so suddenly. It was 1923. A warm air current rose above the earth's surface. Lightning webbed across the sky, etching the city's profile. The storm struck quickly. They said it was a sign. Bad luck would rain.

Polina and Alexander Fedorko living in the Ukraine would have four children, two boys and two girls. Eudokia would be the second eldest. Eudokia, stocky, brazen and with a strong will was considered plain. Eudokia's skin was rough, her fingers, short and thick. At age seventeen, Eudokia aspired to migrate to North America, perhaps because of her aunt Olla's letters, which always included some token from Canada, a map, a postcard, photo, or even news-clipping. Aunt Olla would write of her new home in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Eudokia carefully read the words on a postcard Olla had included with her letter:

> *Hundreds of years ago, the area was called Baawitigong, "Place of the Rapids," by Aboriginals. The banks of the St. Mary's River became a meeting place for the Ojibwa people during whitefish season.*

Olla would write about the violent rapids and remarked that the river served as the border between Canada and the United States.

Struck by how exotic and strange Sault Ste. Marie seemed, Eudokia acted on impulse and decided to immigrate to the Place of the Rapids. At first, she could live with

her aunt Olla and uncle Bohdan. They could sponsor Eudokia because they were already permanent residents of Canada.

1922. Eudokia gripped the ticket in her hand while waiting on the wharf. She travelled alone, first to Halifax, and then on to Sault Ste. Marie. She possessed few personal effects and little knowledge of the English language.

Eudokia's immediate family would remain in the Ukraine. Eudokia's mother, Polina, contracted pneumonia shortly after her daughter's immigration. The family was certain that the frigid temperatures in Ukraine had killed Polina, mother of four. It was said, that since childhood, frail Polina was destined to die too young.

Eudokia was not surprised by her mother's passing. Much beloved, Polina had a regal burial attended by all who were close to her, except Eudokia, aunt Olla and uncle Bohdan. Eudokia, and her aunt and uncle were working-class, and unable to afford the voyage.

A friend of Eudokia in Sault Ste. Marie, Nicholas Sorokopud would console her after the passing of her mother Polina. A fellow immigrant from the Ukraine, Nicholas would sympathize with Eudokia's situation. He understood some of the nuances of Canadian life as opposed to living in the Ukraine. They shared nostalgia about their childhood and families, shared loneliness over their distant homeland. Family storytellers remarked that Nicholas had dark, curly hair, the same shade as his thoughtful eyes.

Shortly after meeting Nicholas, Eudokia attracted the attention of Walter Miko. Walter worked at a small butcher's shop in the west-end of town. He always had food and sometimes would bring chops or steaks when he visited Eudokia. Eudokia calculated that he'd be a good catch, a reliable man, with a steady job who could put food on the

table. Although she welcomed visits from the ever attentive Nicholas, a few months into her residency in Canada, Eudokia would become engaged to Walter Miko. Eudokia thought about how she would form family ties, here, in Sault Ste. Marie, Canada. She would lay down roots. Perhaps Nicholas could attend the ceremony as Eudokia's friend. Perhaps he could even witness her marriage to Walter.

A description of Eudokia's fiancé Walter would not be passed through generations of the family. His appearance would not be remembered, nor would there be much said about how he wooed Eudokia. What would be remembered was how two weeks before the wedding Walter gave Eudokia a store-bought wedding dress. The dress would hang in her closet waiting for the special day. Years later, Eudokia would boast to her daughters about how the wedding dress was brand new, not second-hand. It would be told how the dress was mid-calf length, typical of the popular style at the time. It would be said that the dress was made of a dove-white satin with long sleeves and a lace hem.

July 9, 1923. Sometime before the actual wedding day, Eudokia donned her wedding dress. It flowed after her as she ran out of her aunt and uncle's house to the *Paroisse Sacre Coeur*, a Roman Catholic Church. It was there that Nicholas awaited Eudokia's arrival. It was on that day, that a warm current of air rose above the earth's surface. Lightning began to web across the sky, etching the city's profile. The storm struck quickly. A heavy rain followed.

Series Circuit

It was on a similar day that I lay in my bed. The day had been quite warm but soon rain began cooling the city. Lights filtered through the blinds in my bedroom and caused bars to flicker across my bedpost with every snap of thunder.

The thunder cracked. I awoke. My eyes flickering. The hyperactivity in my brain rapidly disseminated from one cluster of cells to the next and onward. Short circuiting my system. A grid of activity swept across my brain until all the nerve cells fired at once. And rippled through my body. The electrical storm outside echoed the explosions igniting in my brain. My body twisted, twitched, spasmed. Thunder cracked. Eventually, the night sky would calm, but I wasn't certain how long the seizure would continue. Days later, I dreamt of thunder clouds pulsing in the sky, bolts waiting to strike. My seizures typically struck after I'd fallen asleep, rarely, when I was awake or could sense the aura of something coming.

My first seizure happened when I was thirteen. I had no idea what was going on. Years later, I began researching the malady. I read medical texts and encyclopedia's on the topic. One day, I discovered my mother's diary. In it, I read her account of my first seizure:

> *Sheila's first seizure happened in 2001. I heard noises from her bedroom and went to investigate. I didn't realize it at the time, but she was having a grand mal attack. I remember her eyes twitching. She couldn't move or speak, and it lasted several minutes. She was foaming at the corners of her mouth and wet the bed. Afterwards, she seemed dopey and sick to her stomach and had trouble speaking and walking. The seizure happened at 1 a.m., just after midnight. At the time, I*

was uncertain of the cause. We hospitalized her for 3 days trying to find a clue as to the problem. Her father had just painted her bedroom a day ago. I wondered if the paint smell caused the reaction. I try not to blame myself. I'll try to put worry aside and learn from this. I have to be strong like my grandmother Eudokia was.

A hard woman. Acting on impulse. Eudokia dumped her fiancé, and instead wed Nicholas Sorokopud, while wearing the wedding dress paid for by the well-intentioned Walter. Whatever happened to Walter? The Sorokopud family would never know. Did he marry someone else and remain in Sault Ste. Marie? Did he ever confront Nicholas for stealing his bride? Did Walter ever come across Eudokia again? Little is known.

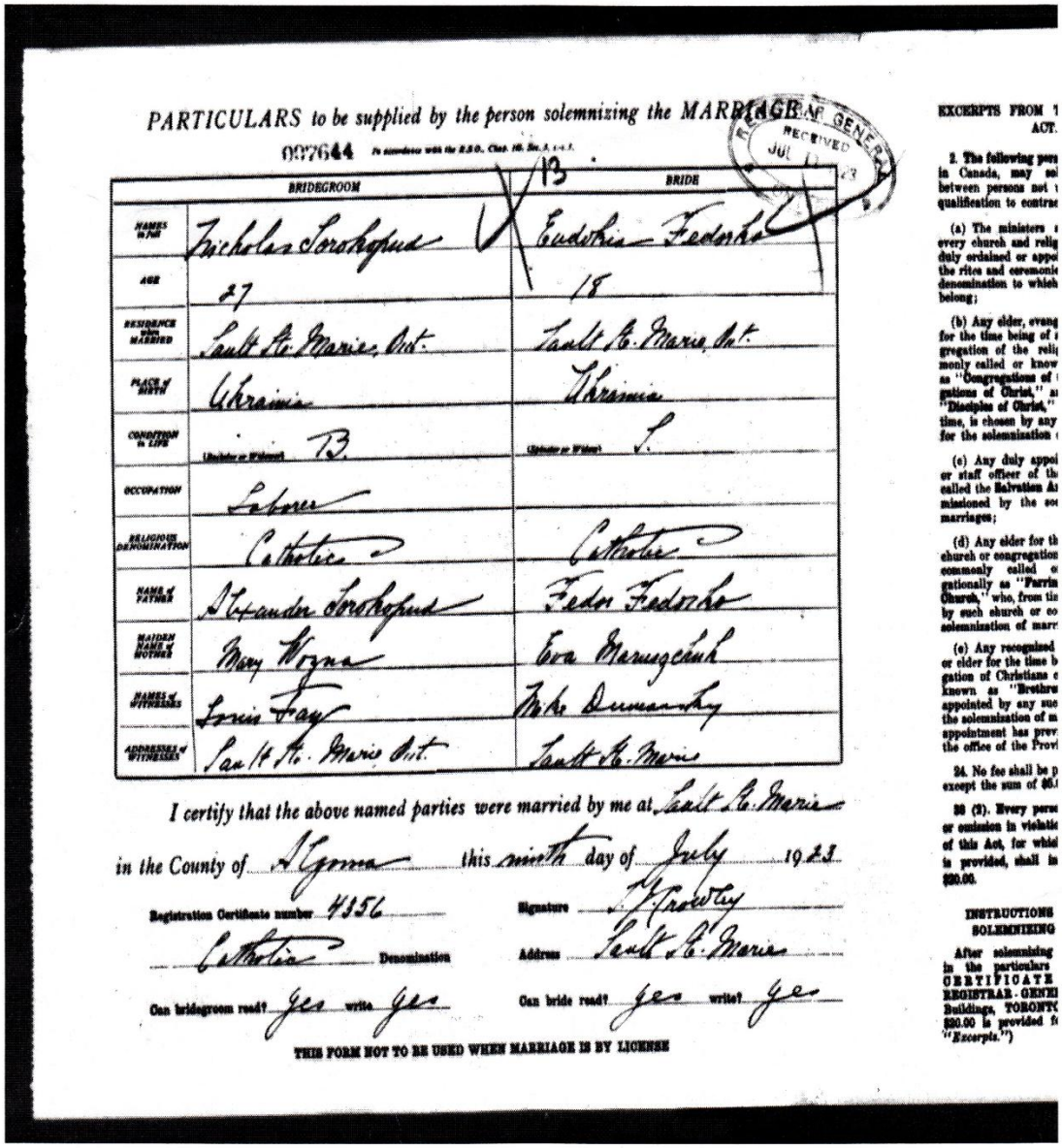
Eudokia and Nicholas would have eight children together. They'd live in a west-end neighbourhood close to the St. Mary's River. Their children would swim in the dangerous rapids throughout their youth. Brave but rash, the fifth eldest child in the Sorokopud family would become my grandmother No-No.

These many years later, I have landed a position as the archivist at the City of Sault Ste. Marie Centennial Library. Ninety-one years have passed since the day the Priest at the *Paroisse Sacre Coeur* forged the bond between my great grandparents.

Last week, searching through genealogical archives, I discovered my great grandparents' marriage license and record. Their names preserved, written in smooth cursive embellished with swoops and flicks of the pen. When touching the pages, running my finger along my great grandparents' names, I imagined Eudokia running to the church in the dress Walter had purchased.

The Particulars of Marriage

Marriage license from *Ontario, Canada, Select Marriages*.



PARTICULARS to be supplied by the person solemnizing the MARRIAGE

027644

	BRIDEGROOM	BRIDE
NAMES IN FULL	Nicholas Sorokopud	Eudokia Fedorko
AGE	27	18
RESIDENCE WHERE MARRIED	Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.	Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.
PLACE OF BIRTH	Ukrainia	Ukrainia
CONDITION IN LIFE (Bachelor or Widower)	B.	(Spinster or Widow) S.
OCCUPATION	Laborer	
RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION	Catholic	Catholic
NAME OF FATHER	Stepan Sorokopud	Fedor Fedorko
MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER	Mary Wyna	Eva Baruszczuk
NAMES OF WITNESSES	Louis Fay	Mike Dumanchy
ADDRESSES OF WITNESSES	Sault Ste. Marie Ont.	Sault Ste. Marie

I certify that the above named parties were married by me at Sault Ste. Marie in the County of Algoma this ninth day of July 1923

Registration Certificate number 4356 — Signature J. Crowley

Catholic — Denomination — Address Sault Ste. Marie

Can bridegroom read? yes write yes — Can bride read? yes write? yes

THIS FORM NOT TO BE USED WHEN MARRIAGE IS BY LICENSE

RECEIVED JUL

EXCERPTS FROM T... ACT.

2. The following pers... in Canada, may so... between persons not ... qualification to contra...

(a) The ministers ... every church and relig... duly ordained or appo... the rites and ceremonie... denomination to which ... belong;

(b) Any elder, evang... for the time being of ... gregation of the relig... monly called or know... as "Congregations of ... gations of Christ," a... "Disciples of Christ," ... time, is chosen by any ... for the solemnization ...

(c) Any duly appoi... or staff officer of th... called the Salvation A... missioned by the se... marriages;

(d) Any elder for th... church or congregation ... commonly called o... gationally as "Parris... Church," who, from tim... by such church or co... solemnization of marr...

(e) Any recognized ... or elder for the time b... gation of Christians ... known as "Brethre... appointed by any suc... the solemnization of m... appointment has prev... the office of the Provi...

24. No fee shall be p... except the sum of $5.

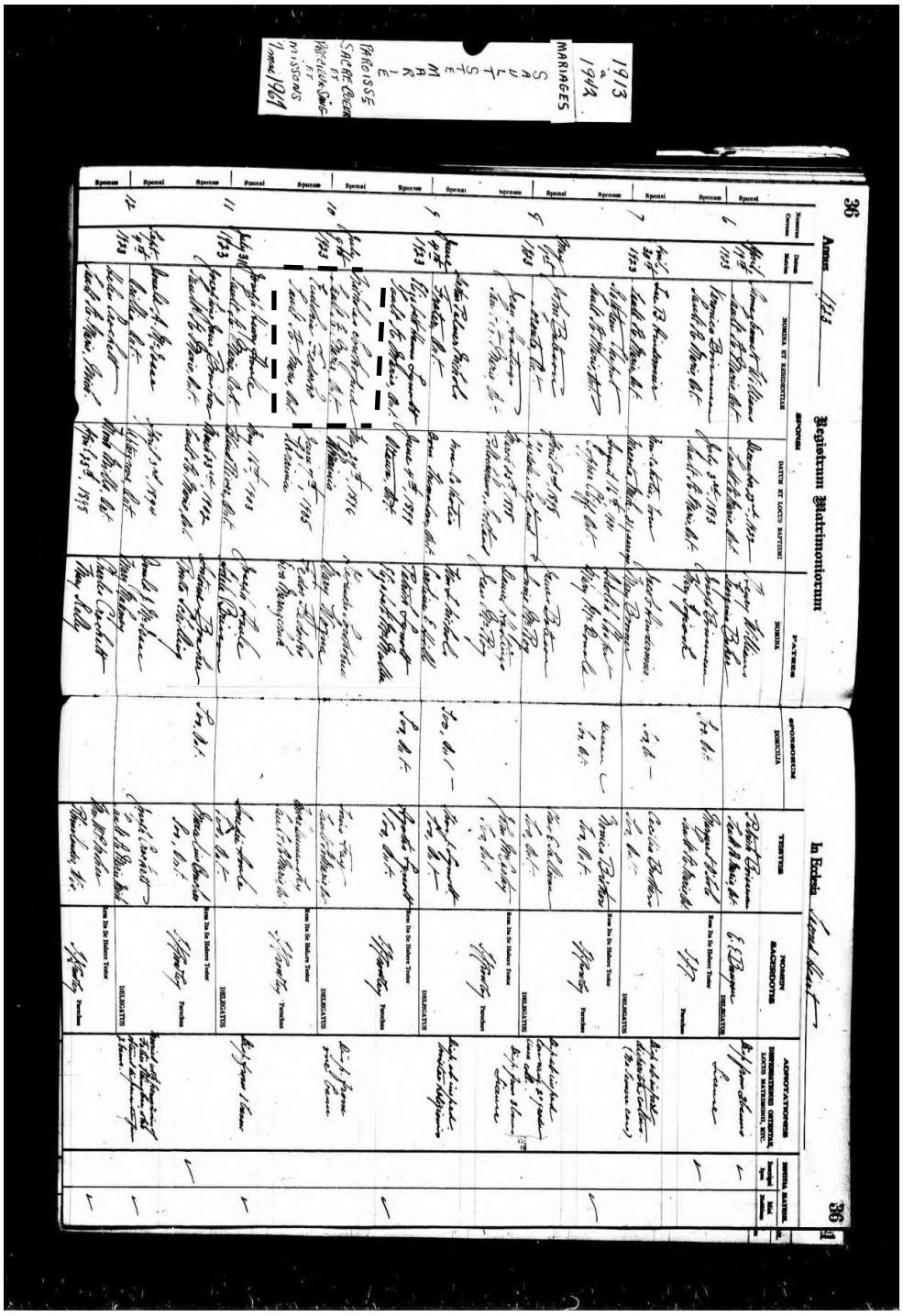
30 (2). Every perso... or omission in violati... of this Act, for whic... is provided, shall in... $20.00.

INSTRUCTIONS ... SOLEMNIZING ...

After solemnizing ... in the particulars ... CERTIFICATE ... REGISTRAR-GENE... Buildings, TORONTO ... $20.00 is provided f... "Excerpts.")

1923

Marriage Record from *Ontario, Canada, Catholic Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1747-1967.*



A Three-Story View

One day, I decided to visit my mother for no other reason than to say hello. My mother Izza was alone that day. Father was working the day shift at the Steel Plant. He wouldn't be home until five o'clock that evening. Upon entering my parents' house, I was surprised to see that my mother had gone out. I took the opportunity to read more of my mother's diary in an effort to learn about our family history. By then, everyone in my family had become aware of my epilepsy. I wondered if my mother had ever noted that disorder in anyone else in the family. I skimmed over the pages, glancing at headings such as,

> *Grandmother Eudokia, Love triangles, Men at the Steel Plant, The "broken neck" accident, Adolf in his suit.*

My curiosity was sparked.

Since childhood, my mother told me stories about my great grandparents, Eudokia and Nicholas. This is what I can remember of those family histories, like the story about the three-story boarding house.

My great grandparents, Eudokia and Nicholas, heads of the Sorokopud family, owned a boarding house on Queen Street West, close to the boundary between the east and west-end of Sault Ste. Marie. Enclosed within its blocks, Queen Street West housed a community of fellow Ukrainian immigrants. Though my great grandmother Eudokia was too stubborn to admit it, she relished in the familiarity of being surrounded by her people. The Ukrainian language she spoke with her neighbours reminded her of the Ukraine, her homeland. Eudokia was comforted by the tones of her language. It flowed with sounds of

ļi and *nya*. In addition to all that familiarity, my great grandmother's aunt Olla and uncle Bohdan lived only two streets from the boarding house.

The Sorokopud family included my great grandparents Eudokia and Nicholas' eight children, and from eldest to youngest numbered Melo, Adolf, Juanita, Oskar, No-No, Audrey, Ruby, and the youngest Brucie. All eight children had solid frames like great grandmother Eudokia. The more the children grew, the more they took after Eudokia. A devoted mother, Eudokia was stouthearted and shrewd.

In many ways, Eudokia was a single mother most of the time. My great grandfather Nicholas was either working at the Steel Plant or catching up on sleep after nightshift or resting before the graveyard post. Nicholas had little time to spend with the children after working twelve hour days. Such was the life of a shift worker.

My great grandmother Eudokia was head of the boarding house. She managed bookings for the rooms, and looked after the boarders' needs. Though busy, my great grandmother Eudokia was a constant figure around the boarding house. She remained attentive. Any of the children needed only to shout "Mom!" and the call would echo through the different levels of the house until it reached Eudokia's ears. She would respond immediately, often chastising them for shouting in the house.

That three-story boarding house was the children's playground, once their chores were done, and when Eudokia wasn't watching. Eudokia detested unnecessary noise and commotion. There were too many floors and too many people coming and going in the house, for her eight children to be running wild.

The children played hide-and-seek. They had nicknamed their home, "The Palace." The Palace didn't have marble floors, lavish drapes, rugs, or ornate furniture, nor

did it display priceless paintings and artifacts along the staircase, or the hallways, or in the rooms. The bulk of the rooms featured wooden panelling painted white, drafty windows, and cold hard-wood floors. The top floors were hot in the summer. And such a large house was expensive to heat properly in the winter. Nevertheless, the children saw their Palace as a playground. The multiple rooms provided ample hiding places. Each doorway concealed a secret land the children could explore.

Algoma Central Railway workers, ACR for short, were the main occupants of the eight rooms on the third floor. The workers needed a place to sleep between shifts or somewhere to rest during their days off. Their families and homes were far away during times when they worked on the rail. Eudokia preferred renting to fellow Ukrainians, but money was all the same colour to her. Each of the boarders' rooms was identical with a white metal bed in the centre, a bedside table, a closet, a sink, and yellowy floral curtains covering a small window.

The children never played on the third floor. It was "the quiet zone" during all hours of the day and night. There was always, at least, one boarder sleeping. The only exception allowed was when one of the children was sent to clean the boarders' rooms. Otherwise, the eight brothers and sisters had to remain on the first and second levels.

The children listened to my great grandmother when she issued the "no trespassing" rule about the third floor. Eudokia was not to be disobeyed. Besides, the rough and hairy and dirty men inhabiting the top floor were not to be trusted. The children feared what those men might do to them, if they ever stopped yawning and ranting about having to go back to work.

Eudokia and Nicholas and their eight children populated the second floor, which featured a larger bedroom and two smaller rooms for all eight children. The second floor also housed a small kitchen, dining area, and modest living room. Each of the children's rooms included two bunk beds. Bickering sounds filled the air. A thin partition wall separated the boys from the girls. The master suite had a large bed, a dresser, and a closet. When they weren't helping out, the children played board games. My great grandmother loved board games because they occupied the children for hours and kept them quiet. Board games were the Xboxes and PlayStations of the 1940s. They included *Monopoly* and *Snakes and Ladders.*

On the first floor, in the long front room, Eudokia operated a pool hall. Billiard was a game for the grownups. My great grandmother's children weren't allowed near the billiard tables. The children were too young to play pool. Rules were my great grandmother Eudokia's way of being "motherly," because it wasn't in her nature to be affectionate. The front room was equipped with two eight foot tables with slate beds, made in the late 1930s. The fee to play was five cents. Two rounds of pool equalled the cost of a ticket to the movie theatre. Eudokia was reasonable when it came to matters of money. On occasion.

Those are all things I've been told, things I remember. But the past can disappear the way Eudokia's boarding house eventually disappeared. Now, the space formerly occupied by Eudokia and her children's Palace has been taken over by a massive concrete pillar for the International Bridge between Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario and Sault, Michigan. Recently, during the summer, my mother took me to see the lot that the boarding house had stood on. I'd never saw the site before. My mother pulled the sedan over to the curb

and stopped on Queen Street West. The bridge towered above us, and concealed the afternoon sun. We stood hidden in the bridge's shadow.

"The house stood over there. Where that pillar is. But instead of a pillar imagine a tall but narrow three-story boarding house. Can you picture it?" My mother's face turned toward the pillar. It occurred to me, that my mother had inherited my grandmother No-No's nose, a trait No-No shared with her three sisters. During her heydays, my great grandmother Eudokia and the women who followed her were solid, erect, and immoveable. Things change.

Throughout her life, Eudokia would support her family. Some family members praised Eudokia for having purchased nine burial plots in a row in 1968. Eudokia was thinking of the future. She was thinking of her children. It was three years before my great grandfather passed away. Nicholas became increasingly weak and sickly. Eudokia noticed her husband's changing complexion and wanted to be prepared. She bought a plot for herself and Nicholas, and one for each of her seven living children.

In 1971, my great grandfather Nicholas died of a heart attack at the age of seventy-three. My great grandmother lived sixteen more years. Within that time, Eudokia suffered three strokes. During the one that was to be fatal, Eudokia stood alone in the basement of her home. She climbed up the stairs to the kitchen to dial for emergency. She was eighty-three.

It was sunny the day my great grandmother Eudokia died. Newspapers in the archives show that Sault Ste. Marie experienced a high of 73 degrees Fahrenheit, that

day. Family and friends gathered at the funeral home to honour my great grandmother. The room containing the casket was brimming with voices. Laughter overshadowed the expressions of mourning and grief. No one cried. Melo, the oldest in the Sorokopud family, was named the executor of my great grandmother's estate. In Eudokia's will, Melo was given the power to assign burial plots to his brothers and sisters as he saw fit, and depending on the order they died.

In 2011, Melo died at the age of seventy-nine in his home in Sault Ste. Marie. He passed away before his other siblings. Some members of the family said Melo died of lung cancer. My grandmother No-No proposed a different view, that her brother Melo died of stage fright. No-No said Melo was too timid to be the executor to Eudokia's estate. Melo hadn't given a burial plot to any of his siblings, not even to himself. As a result, Melo wasn't buried beside his parents, my great grandparents. His wife bought two plots. She and Melo weren't prepared for his passing.

Then, my great aunt Juanita became the executor, because she was the next oldest after Melo. My grandmother No-No suspected great aunt Juanita gave a burial plot to their two younger siblings. Ruby and Brucie were granted a plot each, although my grandmother No-No was not. Grandmother, though, had no way of knowing exactly what great aunt Juanita had done. She and Juanita hadn't talked in years. Juanita couldn't cope with my grandmother No-No's temper. And my grandmother No-No, well, she was angry at most of her siblings, and most of the relatives on my grandfather's side of the family. Grandmother No-No complained about not receiving a burial plot, or at least word about what happened to the sites. And she complained that great aunt Juanita inherited more of great grandmother Eudokia's money than the rest of her siblings. My great aunt Juanita

once tried to reason with No-No. Great aunt Juanita explained how all their siblings were present at the reading of great grandmother Eudokia's will. They all heard how the money was to be divided evenly among the siblings. But, still, grandmother No-No refused to accept the explanation, largely because it came from great aunt Juanita. Those two had never agreed on anything.

Everyone knew that my great grandmother Eudokia had accumulated her wealth by operating a drinking establishment. She'd also earned thousands when the City of Sault Ste. Marie bought the boarding house and most of the homes on Queen Street West. Like the rest of the homes in the neighbourhood, the boarding house was demolished in the early 1960s, so that construction on the International Bridge could begin. In 1988, two months before my birth, my great grandmother Eudokia died with savings of at least half a million dollars.

My grandparents No-No and Ollie lived only a few blocks from where my great grandparents Eudokia and Nicholas' boarding house once stood. I travel past the site about once a month, each time I visit my grandparents. The massive concrete pillar reminds me of No-No and her brothers and sisters playing hide-and-seek in that old, drafty boarding house.

I remember the wind being strong one day when I was driving to my grandparents' house. The wind carried the reek of rotten eggs from the Steel Plant. No-No and Ollie greeted me at the door. As I entered, No-No remarked rather unabashedly, "I'm used to the smell. It's almost as if I don't smell it anymore." I wasn't used to the stench having grown up in the city's east-end, further away from the Plant.

My grandmother No-No was born in Sault Ste. Marie on April thirteenth, 1932. My great grandparents actually called her "Norma," but as she grew, the name "Norma" transitioned into "No-No" because my grandmother was too outspoken, crass, and troublesome for her given name, common as it was in the 1930s. Grandmother No-No was far from common, or ordinary.

As a young girl, No-No played dominoes with the boarders, hustling them out of their drinking money. Great grandmother Eudokia wasn't pleased, "No-No, no, this must stop. You're taking food right out of your brother's and sister's mouths." Grandmother No-No didn't stop. She swindled enough money out of the boarders to purchase a dark blue, 1940s Regal Gumball Machine, which she set up in the front room by the pool hall. Billiard players received two gumballs for five cents. Grandmother stored the coins she earned under her mattress, a practice also exercised by Eudokia.

I remember visiting grandmother No-No on her eighty-second birthday at her home in the west-end. While she recounted the story of how she came to own the gumball machine, she began searching the house. Grandmother No-No was sure she still owned it, along with a mountain of other collectibles that she had gathered over many years. Her house was filled with such treasures. Grandmother No-No was a hoarder.

"I know I have that gumball machine somewhere. I'm sure I kept it."

Meanwhile, my grandfather Ollie, who had left the house in spite of the brewing thunderstorm, now returned with a birthday cake for his wife. Grandmother No-No wanted to cut the cake right away, but we had nowhere to sit and enjoy it. Everything in my grandmother's house was buried. The kitchen table was covered with glass Christmas ornaments, wood sculptures, Indian artifacts, antique purses, Avon products, un-hung

Kit-Cat Clocks, taxidermied animals, vintage hats, and what I thought was the wheel from a sewing machine that had been dismantled and thrown on the living room couch. No-No, grandfather, and I couldn't all sit on the La-Z-Boy, the sole available seat in the room. The couch was buried under sewing machine parts, issues of *National Geographic*, China dolls, and an assortment detritus, that some would call "junk." My grandparents and I could have eaten the cake outside on the picnic table. The rain persisted into the evening. Giving up on the cake, No-No recommenced searching for her dark blue, 1940s Regal Gumball Machine.

I sat down on the dusty La-Z-Boy. No-No had built a wall of collectibles in the middle of the living room. Over that divider, and through a valley of antiques, a television set was positioned against the far wall. To my surprise, the television still worked. Fortunately, my grandparents hadn't lost the remote; otherwise, they would have no other way to reach beyond the collectibles to manually change the channel.

Still rummaging for her gumball machine, grandmother No-No paused, "How about *this*? Do you like this? It's really old. I'll give it to you. As long as promise not to gift it to one of your friends." She had selected a piece of jewellery from one of her piles and offered it to me. "On second thought, maybe, maybe not, not today. I have lots of jewellery, we can go through it another time, and you can pick out something you like, but not today, today isn't good, too much going on in celebration of my birthday." Grandmother re-placed the piece of jewellery atop the pile.

Grandmother No-No's favourite words included "old," "vintage," "collectible," "collector's item," and "a *real* antique."

I kissed my grandmother on the cheek. “It’s you who should be getting presents today, grandma.” But I didn’t have a birthday gift for my grandmother. No-No had everything, literally. What could I buy her that she didn’t already have? “I thought a visit would be nice.”

Grandmother continued to dig through her collectibles. She was not about to give up her search for that gumball machine. She questioned me during her search, “I’m curious. How was lunch with my sister, Juanita, the other day? Did she have anything ready for you? Did she make yous anything to eat?”

“Sure. Mom and I had a nice time. Great aunt Juanita made dessert squares, as well as a cake. And we had tea.”

“Really? How many cakes were there? How were the desserts? Disgusting, I bet. What did yous talk about? Did Juanita talk about me? Did your mom have a good time? You know, it’s only right my sister Juanita made something to eat for your visit, seeing how you rarely get together and all.”

“Yeah. Mom and I had a nice time. One cake was served. Four different types of dessert squares. No, they were delicious. We talked about this-and-that. No, you weren’t mentioned. Great aunt Juanita did bring up your guys’ mother though, great grandma Eudokia.” I tried to stand up from the La-Z-Boy, but I kept slipping back into it.

“Really? Why? What did Juanita say? Juanita was always our mother’s favourite. I can tell you stories about our mother, too. I can probably remember more than Juanita does. She *is* eighty-six, you know? Your great grandmother Eudokia was a hard woman. She had a temper, too. But with eight children, a boarding house, and a bar to look after, she had to be hard.”

“What do you mean ‘hard’?”

“Your great grandmother was a hard woman.” Repetition was how grandmother No-No explained herself.

All of my grandmother’s sisters, great grandmother Eudokia’s daughters had the same eyes. My grandmother No-No had them too. Indecipherable, dark eyes. Eyes that absorbed light, projected almost no emotion, even when laughing or crying. Grandmother No-No rarely cried, but once in a while she’d share a smile.

I hugged and kissed her, “Happy Birthday grandma, you know I love you, right?” She smiled and hugged me back.

As I left through the alley of collectibles lining the hallway to the front door, my grandmother was still searching for her dark blue, 1940s Regal Gumball Machine. On my drive back to my apartment, I took the usual route travelling past great grandmother Eudokia’s concrete pillar on Queen Street West.

An Exact Pour

I was thirteen and sitting at my great aunt Juanita's dining room table with my mother. Juanita's husband Murray lounged on the sofa in the adjacent living room. My great aunt Bernie joined us at the table. Bernie is married to my great uncle Oskar, Juanita and my grandmother No-No's brother.

Bernie smiled at me across the table. Murray sat scratching lottery tickets on the sofa. Bernie began the conversation, "We didn't have television sets." They all nodded and my mother chimed in, "When your grandmother No-No bought our first Frigidaire, we charged it to our account. Sheila, you know your grandfather went to the appliance store and paid the bill, at the end of the month? It was a beauty, all shiny and white. That Frigidaire." They murmured in agreement, sipped on their tea. Murray jumped in, "I worked at the Steel Plant like all men did, back then." Bernie's voice interposed, "Back then, women could get jobs easy enough too. Good jobs. I'd walk along James Street, and I knew I could always get a job at any one of those shops." Juanita poured more tea. "The Depression changed things. Families were supported by Relief. Unemployment Insurance was not developed yet. Families received vouchers to buy necessities, like groceries." Murray's gruff voice erupted from the other room, "My family never went on Relief. During the Depression, my father worked one day a week. That was all the work he could find in this city. It was a pride thing. We got through it, without help, from anyone."

Juanita offered some lemon Bundt cake to mother and great aunt Bernie. I remember finding the tea bitter and only pretending to drink it. I remember my great uncle Murray swearing in the background. "Damn it! I should stop buying these goddamn things. Scratch tickets, good for nothin', waste of money. It's like I always say…"

I remember watching the sun coursing through the window, creating a spotlight on my great aunt Juanita's hands, the light spinning rainbows from the diamond rings on her fingers. Matters soon turned to the question of the burial plots inherited by the family. Now that Melo had died, Juanita served executor to great grandmother Eudokia's will.

It was great aunt Bernie who took up the topic of the will and served the group platters of accusations. I remember how Bernie burned red and kept drinking tea to cool herself. She set her tea cup down with precise deliberation. "Now listen, everyone. My Oskar was at the reading of the will. He heard what was said. And as the executor, Juanita, you sought unity for the family. Despite all this, something is amiss. Why is your sister No-No still angry after all these years? There has to be a reason. You and No-No were close before this whole affair with the will. And why did you, Juanita, become the executor to the will after Melo's passing? You are the next oldest in the family, but surely the responsibility should have gone to my Oskar. He was the next eldest male. He deserved that responsibility, that honour. Just like he deserves a burial plot beside his parents, Nicholas and Eudokia. She bought six plots for her remaining children. And as far as I know, you haven't assigned a single plot to anyone. Am I right? Have you? Why haven't you? We're all getting up there in age. Surely our children deserve some security. They deserve to know we're taken care of."

I remember great aunt Bernie's passion as she delivered her speech. She was seventy-one at the time, and even with that her voice betrayed anxiety. Her crow's feet affected her face when anger spewed out allegations. Juanita relaxed at the table adjusting the rings on her fingers. I remember wondering if she could see her reflection in those outsized diamonds.

Juanita restored a sense of decorum but retained her position of superiority by pouring more tea and changing the topic. “I do not know where my sister Norma inherited her need to shop from, definitely not from me or my side of the family.” Even though I was only thirteen and less knowledgeable about our family history, it occurred to me that my grandmother No-No was part of Juanita’s side of the family. It made me wonder why they couldn’t get along. Instead of commenting, I pushed another piece of lemon Bundt into my mouth. Grandmother No-No’s penchant for rummaging through garage sales had been passed down to my mother Izza. Juanita passed a plate of dessert squares to my mother. “It seems that Izza has inherited her mother’s hunger for indiscriminate shopping.” My mother blushed and passed the plate to my great aunt Bernie. Great aunt Juanita smiled smugly. “You know, my mother Eudokia was a bootlegger. When I was a girl, shots cost twenty-five cents at our boarding house, and while my sister Norma visited the theatre, I was the one at home cleaning. The few times I viewed a film my father came and removed me from the theatre. I had to return home to clean and cook for the boarders. My sister Norma does not know what hard work is. She might say she does…” Great aunt Juanita paused and secured the last piece of lemon cake for herself. “My brothers, Melo and Oskar, were in charge of keeping a close eye on the boarders. They collected the rent at the end of every week. Most boarders didn’t stay with us long. They had to move with the trains. Adolf, the second eldest in our family, was often too sick to help. With him it was always one thing or another. Mother told us that he had the same illness as Caesar, same as Lenin, and Dostoyevsky. Our neighbours called Adolf ‘a lunatic.’ We weren’t sure why. They said the devil’s finger touched him. Sometimes, yes, he was out of control.”

When I look back at that conversation now, I'm surprised by how much it revealed about our family history. But I didn't realize it then. Just like I didn't realize great aunt Juanita was never one for diplomacy. She would go on too long. "As you may already know, Norma was the housekeeper. She never did any housework though. She manoeuvred her way out of doing her chores one way or another. Our third youngest, Audrey, helped in the kitchen when me and mother were too busy. Audrey also learned to make soap for the family. My youngest sister and brother, Ruby and Brucie, were too little to help. They mostly got in the way." I met Juanita's eyes and then nodded. I felt she needed to know I believed her. I was listening.

Great uncle Murray was listening too, somewhat. I remember him jumping in, "I used to go to the theatre with only fifteen cents when I was young. It cost ten cents to see the film and five for a pop."

My mother tried to shift the topic away from grandmother No-No, and maybe herself, "Juanita, it's said you were born on the kitchen floor and maybe that's why you're such a good cook."

"Who says that?" Juanita gave out a laugh. "I have never heard that before. It might as well be true. I am not fond of cooking. I do it for my family. Some people say I have a good touch though."

Years later, I still think of my great aunt Juanita whenever someone pours me tea. Now, I realize that not everything everyone says is entirely accurate.

My grandmother No-No had a different story, and she wasn't there to defend herself that day. At least part of great aunt Juanita's version of the past was accurate. My

grandmother's house *was* packed with treasures she had found at endless garage sales. Perhaps the frugality of youth had shaped her.

Not long after her birthday, I visited her. Grandfather Ollie fussed about in the backyard tool shed. No-No asked me about work at the library, and without waiting for an answer started reminiscing about her own past. "People think they work hard these days, but it was tough when I was a kid. Your great grandmother Eudokia was strict. My chore was to clean all the boarders' rooms at our house. It was hard work. Took me hours to clean those eight bedrooms, not to mention the bathrooms. They were filthy! Floors were covered in mud from the men's boots. Those men trucked everyday through the mucky railway yard. Then, they brought their 'work' home with them on their boots. And their oily clothes were tossed everywhere. The oil came off the trains and other machines the men fixed. Oil coated my hands. And liquor bottles scattered about the rooms. I had to tell my mother I found liquor bottles in those boarders' rooms. Your great grandmother Eudokia didn't permit outside alcohol to enter her house. She lost out on profits that way. Oh. And some of the men pissed in the sinks. They were too lazy to walk down the hall to the bathroom at night."

"How old were you?"

"Young."

"How young?"

"I must have been around six. Each of my brothers and sisters and I had to help run the business. Mother needed us to keep the place running. Good thing she had lots of children to staff that boarding house."

"You were cleaning rooms at six years old?"

Grandmother No-No shrugged. “Yeah. That was the way it was at our house. My sister Juanita helped our mother with the cooking, and she tidied our bedrooms on the second floor. Juanita never had to work as hard as I did. I can tell you that right now. She had to clean a couple bedrooms, whereas I had eight rooms to make spotless, oh, and the boarders’ bathroom…”

Suspended Bodies

In her diary, my mother had written the following, *makes you wonder,* right after the words, *Adolf in his tiny suit.* I wondered about her wonderment.

The way the past unfolded depended upon who told it. But everybody agreed on great uncle Adolf's bad health. And there was something in great aunt Juanita's words that struck me. Only years later did I understand the connection between Caesar, Lenin, and Dostoyevsky. Great aunt Juanita's words about Adolf's hapless state echoed in my mother's diary. And Adolf emerged again as a shadow in a story my grandfather Ollie used to retell. I would visit my grandfather at his cottage on the north shore of Lake Superior, just outside the city limits.

Grandfather relaxed in a lawn chair nursing a beer. "When I was young, maybe around fifteen, some kids and I were swimming at Dean's Creek. I'm not sure why the creek was named that. Maybe we named it. That was *our* creek. All the neighbourhood kids went there. The creek was at the bottom of a five-to-six foot embankment. We had to walk in a ways for the creek to be deep enough to swim in.

I remember one time, me and the boys followed the oldest kid there. His name was Doug Moore. He was an all-round athlete, in the Sea Cadets. His uncle had just died in the war. It was the summer of 1944. Doug kind of liked to show off, figured he was in charge of us. That day, Doug dove head-first into the water. He didn't dive out far enough. His head hit the sand. He came up gagging for air. He couldn't move. He didn't know it, but he'd snapped his neck. I ran into the water and grabbed him. I held him up. His eyes were so big. He kept gasping for air. Another boy went to call for help. Some of the kids and I carried him up the bank. We were careful not to slip and drop

him. We didn't know anything. We didn't know what else to do for him. We didn't know First Aid or anything like that. The kids and I laid him on the ground at the top of the embankment. All I knew was that we had to get him out of the water so he didn't drown. An ambulance came across the farmer's field to where he was lying. The paramedics carted him off to the Sault hospital. He died a couple days later.

Doug was the only one to dive. The water was clear. But there was a clay ridge at the shore before the water got deep. Maybe Doug never saw the ridge. There was no way to know for certain. Either way, he just didn't jump out far enough. Five or six of us were there. A mixed gang of girls and boys. Poor kid. He wasn't the only one who died young. There was Adolf, too. He was your great uncle. He was Eudokia and Nicholas' second born, after Melo. He was a strong boy, not as small-boned as Melo. Despite his strength, Adolf got really sick one day, had some kind of fit, was all paralyzed kind of. Adolf died of complications by the time he reached thirteen."

It wasn't until I began investigating my family history that I learned why I am an epileptic. Doctors couldn't pinpoint a direct cause. During childhood, I experienced some head trauma: falling off my bike, a neighbourhood kid throwing a baseball at me. Maybe I was dropped on my head as a baby, as the saying goes.

After I'd discovered the specifics of Adolf's death, I read books on general seizure disorders:

> *Epilepsy is likely to develop if there's a family history of it. Heredity plays a role in many cases.*

Over the past thirteen years, I had four to five *grand mal* seizures, and multiple *petit mal* epileptic fits. I've been on medication since I was diagnosed at the age of thirteen. My

disorder has been more or less under control, but I always become uneasy when I hear distant thunder, when I feel the "aura." A sense of something coming.

Grandfather pulled on his beer. "Your grandma No-No told me all this, years later. A small funeral was held in the front room of the Sorokopud family boarding house. Streamers draped the ceiling. Twelve neighbourhood children played mandolins around the casket, two rows on either side. Adolf was displayed in an open coffin cushioned with plush, cream fabric. Adolf's hands rested on his chest. Bundles of mixed flowers were arranged around his body. He wore a black suit and tiny bowtie. Your great grandmother Eudokia had bought the best suit available, off the rack, at a local men's shop. She hung a large, purple bow on the front door announcing a death in the family."

Thinking back to grandfather Ollie's account, I mixed the young Adolf with the image of a wide-eyed young boy gagging for life. A black suit. Tiny bowtie. The clear water. Clay ridge. Children swimming. Children playing mandolins. Purple bows.

Growing up, my sister Shadyn heard the family stories my mother used to recite to us. We never heard the story about Doug Moore, the curious jumper, but we heard bits about great uncle Adolf. I knew Shadyn would be home from her nursing shift, so, I phoned her. She sounded tired, but seemed happy to hear from me. I recounted the story of Adolf that I had just heard from grandfather. Shadyn gave a wry laugh. "You know the neighbours in great grandmother Eudokia's neighbourhood used to call Adolf, 'a lunatic,' and 'the boy who wasn't right.' They would say things like he'd been touched in the head, or touched by the devil's finger, he was crazy, or dangerous, they wouldn't trust younger children around him. But he was rarely outside. He lived in the boarding house. I heard from other family members like great aunt Juanita that Adolf had the same illness

as Caesar maybe, or Dostoyevsky, then, I figured it was epilepsy. It seemed obvious. From what I've heard about Adolf, his seizures and such, I'm pretty certain he was an epileptic. In those days though, people didn't want to listen, or learn about Adolf's condition. Eudokia always heard neighbours gossiping, blathering. Meantime, inside the house, poor Adolf was having seizures. One of those attacks could have resulted in a head trauma. Maybe he fell on his head, and nobody saw. Internal hemorrhage. One day, he died from it. The truth is, no one really knows. What really happens is so close, yet so distant, you see?"

"Shadyn, it must've been awful for Adolf. He was an outcast. A recluse. He never really had a life."

"I've read how years ago people thought epilepsy was caused by the supernatural. And, Sheila, I know you've got epilepsy too, duh, so, I've been doing some reading on it, just trying to get a hold of the bigger picture. Did you know that a few centuries ago, and even recently, people thought epilepsy was caused by feeblemindedness, insanity, witchcraft, lack of religious faith, even demonic possession? People used to say that epilepsy was a punishment for those who sinned against the moon and its goddess. It was a bad omen. Epileptics were unclean, a disgrace. Lucky we live in the twenty-first century, eh? Did you know that in ancient times people spit at the sight of an epileptic in order to ward of the disease? If you look even further back in time, then, people thought epilepsy was divinely inspired. I found a book by Hippocrates, 'On the Sacred Disease,' and here's what he says:

> *It is thus with regard to the disease called Sacred: it appears to me to be nowise more divine nor more sacred than other diseases, but has a natural cause from*

the originates like other affections. Men regard its nature and cause as divine from ignorance and wonder, because it is not at all like to other diseases. And this notion of its divinity is kept up by their inability to comprehend it, and the simplicity of the mode by which it is cured, for men are freed from it by purifications and incantations.

It's pretty clear that people are afraid of things they don't understand. They'll invent divine or supernatural reasons for things they can't comprehend. And poor Adolf, nobody understood what that kid was going through."

The House Special

It was in the days during the prohibition that my great grandmother Eudokia made her move into "the business." Based on what I'd heard from family members, the profits helped Eudokia and Nicholas and their family through the Depression.

In the basement of her boarding house, my great grandmother Eudokia ran a makeshift bar selling liquor and beer. Her children weren't allowed in the bar until they were sixteen. Then, they were allowed to witness intoxicated men drinking to excess, spewing foul language, and breaking into fist-fights. Some of the older children knew what was going on in the basement. They were used to playing on the first floor and hearing the ruckus erupting from the bar below.

The basement had no windows. A few tiny lamps lit up the bar. Amidst mismatched furniture, wooden tables, stools of various heights, mixed with odd wooden kitchen chairs, neighbours, family friends, billiard players, and boarders tried to forget the daily drudgery of their jobs. Eudokia had scavenged the furnishings from neighbours' lawns or the dump, woodwork, but scarred by broken glasses, festooned with dings, dents, ring stains. Garbage.

Prohibition in Canada lasted nearly half a decade. In 1901, Prince Edward Island was the first province to enact the ban. And, in 1948, the last province to repeal the law was Prince Edward Island. At the federal level, Prohibition spanned from 1918 to 1920. Ontario went dry from 1916 to 1927. My family doesn't know where great grandmother Eudokia got the booze. Maybe she solicited bootleg alcohol from men living in outlying areas who made moonshine from illegal makeshift stills. "Bootlegging" for Saulites

meant that homeowners sold alcohol in their places of residence. Locals called it, “home sell.” Other Saulities supplied moonshine or bootleg liquor to illegal establishments.

After prohibition ended, my great grandmother Eudokia continued to run her illegal bar, during the fifties and early sixties. She didn’t have a liquor license, but she sometimes purchased alcohol legally. After Ontario repealed prohibition in 1927, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario was founded. My great grandmother bought her supplies from LCBO stores and from a beer delivery service. Door-to-door salesmen employed by different brewery companies knocked on her front door and asked how many cases of beer she wanted that week. Great grandmother’s order would be delivered, later, on her back doorstep.

“Home sell” was common in Sault Ste. Marie in the mid-forties to fifties. Though it was technically illegal, residents accepted the practice. It was considered normal, because extra income was needed by many families to survive. On any given street, there were houses that ran bars. But my great grandmother Eudokia had her four daughters. As soon as each girl turned sixteen, entry into the bar became a rite of passage. When Juanita, the eldest daughter turned sixteen my great grandmother invented a new “game.” Every morning, Juanita brewed tea and let it cool until that night. When six o’clock approached, she carried a container of the tea into the basement. Male patrons in the bar saw Eudokia’s pretty daughter and asked to buy her a drink. Eudokia poured dark liquor into one shot glass and the other she filled with the cold tea. The customer received the actual shot, Juanita the tea. The man and Juanita slammed back their drinks. Somehow, Juanita never got drunk. The men got a thrill, and were charged for two shots of alcohol each time. That was one of the ways, my great grandmother Eudokia made her money.

When they came of age, the other girls joined Juanita. Eudokia and her daughters bamboozled the men who didn't know it was all a ruse.

Eudokia's bar was always crawling with drunken men, some passed out intoxicated on tables. Among them, a woman, she came to the bar every Friday night, just after nine o'clock. Sometimes that woman brought my great grandmother bottles of homemade liquor as payment for her drinks. One bottle was worth two rounds of drinks for the next three Fridays. Each week, the woman's husband gave her a set amount of money for family necessities. The woman saved where she could, but sometimes there wasn't money left over to buy herself a drink. The homemade liquor she made was supposed to be for her husband's personal supply. She soon learned the advantages of selling moonshine on the side.

At first, the woman brewed alcohol in large barrels in her kitchen, but her husband abhorred the stench of the fermenting ingredients and the way the smell permeated the kitchen along with the entire first floor of their house. One day, the woman's husband retrieved a dirty, claw foot bathtub from the dump. He carried the tub up to the attic for the woman to make her brew out of sight, if not out of mind. The woman scrubbed the bathtub clean. The liquor she brewed removed the remaining yellow ring from inside the tub. Onions, dandelions, goldenrods, anything the woman could find or spare from her pantry fermented in that bathtub.

When she received a bottle, my great grandmother diluted the woman's homemade brew with a mixture of cheap alcohol to be sold from the bar. In return, Eudokia granted the woman credits for drinks.

Eudokia sold the woman's brew as "the house special." My great grandmother received that brew on rare occasions, which made it all the more desirable among the customers. Eudokia sold "the good stuff" for double the usual price, fifty-cents per shot. The woman's husband never purchased shots of "the good stuff." It was too expensive for his taste and his meagre wallet. And so, the husband never found out his wife was selling bottles from his personal stock. And he never bothered to count the stock of moonshine in his pantry at home. He always grabbed a bottle, uncorked it, and left the pantry without taking notice.

Meantime, the woman and her husband both visited my great grandmother Eudokia's establishment, but never at the same time. Fred, the woman's husband didn't want his wife at such a place. It was indecent for a woman to be drinking alcohol unescorted in a public setting.

One day, so I've been told, unbeknownst to her husband, the woman was in the bar drinking a glass of beer. She always sat alone at the same table close to the stairs. The woman was surrounded by men laughing, shouting, spilling their drinks on the already sticky floor. The woman's ears were attuned to the sound of her husband's heavy steps and breathing. His visits were frequent but irregular. The woman always had to beware of his presence. One day, through the stair railing, she noticed his heavy work boots enter the bar. She didn't wait to greet her husband, and slipped out the back.

As a child, I collected words about my family members by listening in on conversations. Over the years, I gathered a description of my paternal great grandfather, Fred. Words used to describe him by other family members included, "smart," "skillful," "hard," "drunk," "alcoholic," and "mean."

That woman, Henrietta, was my grandfather Ollie's mother. Fred was Ollie's father. Eudokia, my *other* great grandmother was the bartender. Henrietta was Eudokia's best customer. Eudokia's daughter, No-No Sorokopud, eventually married Henrietta's son, Ollie Salenko. Ollie and No-No's second oldest child was named, Izza, and Izza is my mother. I remember how Great Aunt Juanita often commented that our family came from good stock.

When she was twelve, my great grandmother Henrietta and her family moved to Sault Ste. Marie from Quebec. Henrietta's father, Aimery, came to work for the Algoma Central Railway. Months into his employment, Aimery met Fred, a confident, smart-mouthed twenty year old. After work, Fred visited Aimery's house and had supper with his family. That was when Fred met Aimery's daughter, Henrietta. She and Fred married in 1922.

If family lore was accurate, then a couple of years into their marriage Fred's hard ways drove Henrietta, a devoted Catholic, to join in his love of liquor. Henrietta's father, Aimery, always felt guilty for being the link that brought Henrietta and Fred together.

And my grandfather Ollie had similar feelings. I remember him talking to me about Fred. "One year, all I received for Christmas was a single balloon. Red. My father was a mean drunk. Did you know he had a job all through the Depression? And our family still had no money. My father was a head foreman for the Algoma Central Railway. Did you know he could fix anything? Loose tracks. Unhinged car railings. Signal lights. My father drank away his pay. He'd take shots of whisky and chase them with beer. And later, he'd retire for the night with a bottle or two of vino in his hand. Empty bottles would accumulate around his bed."

Loads and Laneways

In 1938, an anonymous Saulite wrote in to the Editor of *The Sault Daily Star*'s "The Women's Page." That anonymous author, a woman, protested against barring females from entering beverage rooms:

> *I've been reading quite a bit lately about closing up beverage rooms for women. Some women's clubs are going as far as sending in petitions to the government, asking them to close beer parlors to women.*
>
> *For my part, I don't care for beer, but I don't see why the women who do like it, can't drink it out in public, the same as a man. Women nowadays stand along side of men almost anywhere. This generation isn't in Grandma's time, where women were afraid to go out and get a job, in those days women couldn't support themselves, and you'd never dream of seeing a woman sitting down to a glass of beer and a cigarette. It just wasn't done. But today when a woman is just as independent as a man, why shouldn't she go to a beverage room, and have a glass of beer? It helps quiet the nerves and she can relax a little after a busy afternoon.*
>
> *Of course, I certainly don't believe that these places should be open to girls of 16 or 18. The woman who sits and drinks till she makes a fool out of herself, isn't to be compared with the respectable woman who will sit down for a drink and a chat and go about her business.*
>
> *And that last, is the kind of woman I envy. I would like to be like her, only I have too timid a soul. I hope some day to drink a glass of beer, and maybe*

smoke a cigarette (if it doesn't choke me), and feel that I'm not doing anything wrong. Signed, ENVIOUS.

Back in the 30s, locals never saw a woman smoke a cigarette in public. It just wasn't done. But my great grandmother Eudokia stood smoking alongside men, while serving them liquor. From the late 1930s to early 60s, Eudokia's booze sales made enough money to support her family. Because of this enterprise, Eudokia was arrested several times. Policemen raided the boarding house searching for contraband liquor. Storming into the nursery, the policemen flashed lights in the children's faces. Their theory was that the most innocent place to hide alcohol was in the nursery. They weren't far off. Although they never discovered the stash, if they had looked under the rug in the nursery, and then lifted a large section of floorboard, there was a space between the ceiling of the first floor and hardwood flooring of the second. In that space, Eudokia hid the contraband.

Discovery of a cache of contraband was the main goal of the police. That would have allowed them to shut the place down entirely. In the absence of a big bust, and, when they lost patience with Eudokia's flagrant disregard of the law, they would enter the bar, and would file an arrest. On the first of many such arrests, they cuffed my great grandfather Nicholas instead of Eudokia. It was improper to arrest a woman, a wife, a mother of eight young children. Eudokia demanded they arrest her; otherwise, great grandfather might lose his job at the Steel Plant. The police consented. Eudokia was imprisoned for a week and had to pay a ten dollar fine. She paid the same amount as other neighbourhood men who ran similar establishments. The men's offenses were recorded in the city's newspaper. Eudokia's was not. She was not the only one who was

in trouble with the law. Other people who came into contact with my family would get in trouble with the police.

Last month, I visited my parents' house. I was tired of using the local Laundromat, and wanted to use my parents' washing machine. Mother was hanging garments on the clothesline outside. The autumn breeze was strong and smelled of pine from nearby trees. Mother retrieved one of father's work shirts that had blown off the clothesline and re-pinned it on the line. "Maybe it's too windy to be drying clothes outside today." We both sat in lawn chairs and chatted while my load cycled through the washer.

My mother looked at me, "You know, my childhood was always busy and noisy and packed with people and daily chores and life. Your grandma No-No, my mom, boarded Indian boys from Moose Factory and Moosonee. The boys came to the Sault to attend high school. Your grandma was used to living with boarders because of her upbringing. She grew up in a boarding home, but I think you already know about that. I can never remember what stories I've already told you. When my brothers and sisters and I were kids, we'd visit Eudokia's house every Sunday. She'd always have a package of cabbage rolls and perogies defrosting on the porch. That was one thing about your great grandma Eudokia: she would always have something to offer family when they visited. Very European, you see? Your grandma No-No would talk to Eudokia, while us kids would sit outside and eat our plate of perogies. Eudokia was never chintzy when it came to food. When it came to money, *then* she was what we used to call a 'cheezler.'"

"What do you mean 'cheezler'?"

"How can I explain this? Your great grandma Eudokia was always trying to make a buck. You see?"

"Guess so."

"Eudokia told your grandma No-No to take in boarders. Eudokia gave the same old speech to everyone, your grandparents, me and my siblings. You would have probably received the same advice if she were still alive today. Eudokia would say, 'Always have a little money put away on the side. You never know what'll happen.' Your grandma No-No listened to Eudokia and boarded Indian boys to make extra money. The first load of borders came when I was in the sixth grade. After that, we had five to nine more loads of three to four students at a time. Your grandma requested to take in male boarders instead of females. Males washed their hair less, your grandma thought. No-No didn't want the water bill to be higher. She also thought males were less maintenance. I couldn't tell the difference."

Grandmother No-No was cheap. My mother Izza said it was because grandmother grew up during the Depression. That is why grandmother is the way she *is*. In those days, Saulities had to be cautious about their money. Lots of locals were out of work. People were poor. My grandmother was different than other people her age. I always knew that. I just didn't know the word to use to describe her.

Mother continued: "Your grandma made ninety dollars a month per student she boarded. The government made it so that the money any household made didn't affect their baby bonus. Your grandma's baby bonus cheque was the same amount of money with or without boarding students. And, your grandma didn't have to pay income tax on the money she earned. Necessities like aspirin, soap, and lice shampoo, our family

received for free as a part of the house-family program. Those Indian boys were *always* coming down from Moose Factory and Moosonee with lice. Thank God, the Indian boys didn't sleep in my bedroom. My younger brother and sister and I slept in one bedroom. The Indian boys slept in the room down the hall. Lots of Indian boys slept in that bedroom over the years, like the Small Brothers, George and Gabe. They hated each other and never talked."

"Never?"

"Never. Then at some point, we housed the Sullivan brothers, Ron and Ernie. They were always in trouble with the cops for possession of pot. Another Indian boy, my siblings and I called, 'David W.', because his last name was as long as a sentence and difficult to pronounce. Then, there was Tommy.

My older brother, Allen slept in the Indian boys' bedroom, too. Their room and mine had bunk beds. Otherwise those small rooms couldn't fit all of us. In my bedroom, the bunk bed could only fit if it ran along the wall with the closet, so I couldn't use it. That was my dream though. I always wanted a bedroom with a closet when I was growing up. It wasn't much of a dream, but I always kept my wishes simple. Once, I wished that your grandma No-No would change the weekly supper menu. That dream never happened, not with the mother I had. No, not with your grandma No-No.

I can still remember what we had for each meal. Your grandma made porridge every day for breakfast. It was either oatmeal, Cream of Wheat, or Red River cereal. My favourite was Red River. I used to love that stuff. Porridge was easy, meaning it was an inexpensive way to fill up our family, and the Indian boys.

Your grandma slapped together sandwiches for everyone's lunches including your grandpa Ollie's meal for work. Your grandma used to slice the Klik so thin I could see through it."

"What's Klik?"

"It's like Spam. It was disgusting. Luncheon meat in a can. That's all you need to know. Your grandma used the plastic bags bread came in to package our lunches. One Indian boarder went to the local University. He asked your grandma if he could have his sandwiches wrapped in wax paper. He was in University, after all."

"And did grandma?"

"Yeah. She wrapped his sandwiches in wax paper, only *his* mind you. Every day, we had a different meal. That way, your grandma could buy food in bulk. Our family had soup on Sundays. Well, we had soup with every meal. My mother had to fill up those Indian boys somehow. On Sundays, we also had Shake'n Bake chicken, two pizza pans' worth, roast potatoes, and some type of canned vegetable. For dessert, your grandma made Jell-o, pudding, apple squares, or raison bars. We always had some type of dessert. Your grandma had to bribe us to eat our suppers. Us kids always looked forward to dessert, even though it was never very good. It was better than the supper though. Your grandma No-No was never a very good cook or baker. Not like her older sister, your great aunt Juanita. No comparison. On Mondays, your grandma No-No prepared meatballs and homemade gravy with boiled potatoes. Wednesday was spaghetti night. Your grandma's spaghetti sauce was somewhat of a concoction. It consisted of two cans of Bravo sauce and two cans of tomato soup. The sauce was runny. As you can imagine. I

can't remember what we had on the other days. You can call your grandma later and ask her. She might remember."

"Pork chops, maybe? On Tuesdays?"

"No. No. Too expensive. It was anything cheap. Oh. And my place at dinnertime wasn't at the table with everyone else. Your grandma used to pull out the left drawer of a large cabinet we had in the dining room. The drawer stored silverware. She would place a wood cutting board across the open drawer. I'd retrieve a stool from the kitchen. And that would be my *own* little spot at dinnertime."

"So you didn't enjoy living with boarders then?"

"Not really. It meant your grandma No-No wasn't able come to the family cottage on the weekends. She had to stay home and take care of the Indian boys. She was too busy. Your grandpa Ollie, my brothers and sisters, and I went to the cottage without her. We spent some of our weekends there, and our entire summer holidays. We lived at the cottage from the day school was out until the first day back. It didn't matter if your grandpa had just got off nightshift and was tired, he would pack up the truck and head to the cottage. When your grandpa had to work, he travelled the forty minutes from the cottage to the Sault. He worked his twelve hours and come right back out."

"So you enjoyed your childhood then?"

"Not particularly. I never had many friends growing up. The other children in the neighbourhood used to walk past my house heading toward the basketball courts. They never stopped to get me."

"Why didn't they like you?"

"I don't know. Even in high school, I didn't have many friends. I wasn't very pretty," my mother shrugged. "And having the Indian boys around didn't help my popularity. It was embarrassing. No one else boarded students in our neighbourhood. Everyone knew about it, except your grandpa's friends at the cottage. One day, it came out. I can't remember how. I think I accidentally said something in front of grandpa's friend. Your grandpa was angry with me. He was more embarrassed than anything. After that day, people knew."

"Did the Indian boys like living at your house? Did they like grandma?"

"Hard to say. In their adulthoods, some of the Indian boys returned to visit your grandma."

"Really?"

"Oh yeah. Your grandma wasn't always good to them. Whatever happened at our house, it was always the Indian boys' faults. Your grandma called them, 'chornys'…only when speaking with your great grandma Eudokia, mind you."

"'Chornys'?"

"It's a slang word meaning 'black.'"

"Why use that word?"

"Maybe because they were darker skinned? But your grandma No-No *did* have good relationships with the Indian boys. She'd joke around with them and say things like, 'How'd ya get here, by canoe?', or, 'Say, if you marry a Chinese woman, what colour would your children be?' Your grandma would start laughing. You know that laugh of hers, the kind of mean spirited one?"

I learned that sometimes my mother didn't mind having the Indian boys living in their already crammed house, taking up her mother's time and attention. Sometimes, even though the Indian boys were older, they'd play with my mother and her younger sister and brother. Sometimes, my mother thought the Indian boys were "fun," because they were not like her older brother Allen, who ignored her and everything that wasn't relevant to his life.

One of the older Indian boys used to take my mother and her sister and brother for joy-rides along the laneway behind their house. Some called it, "Vimy Ridge Lane." Tommy was the name of that particular Indian boy. Tommy was different. My mother, then thirteen, noticed how most of the Indian boys who came through the house had slickly, straight hair. Not Tommy. Tommy had kinky hair, as well as a junky car. His first car. Tommy would cruise back and forth down Vimy Ridge Lane. The alley was too narrow to turn the car around, so he just went back and forth.

During one joy-ridge, with my mother and her sister and brother in the backseat, Tommy was stopped and arrested for driving without a license. His license was inside the house at the time. The police would've allowed Tommy to enter the house and retrieve his license, but he never mentioned that he had one. Tommy knew my grandmother No-No didn't like police at the house from her days of growing up in the boarding house. My grandmother No-No always remembered how the police had raided her childhood home with no concern for her safety and that of her younger siblings. "No, no, cops at your house is never a good thing," my grandmother would always instruct the Indian boys. Out of respect for No-No's wishes, Tommy took the rap, and was fined for driving without a license. Tommy spoke about it afterward. "It's because I'm Native. That's the only

reason they stopped me. Lots of white kids drive without licenses all the time. The cops saw my brown skin and wrote the ticket."

Untouched by Makeup

It was a day last June. I remember I spent it alone in the library, searching through genealogical records and sketching my family tree, links between generations, wives to husbands, children, to their children's children. I collected my findings in a scrapbook. I ruminated on the links, all those marriages, how the men and women in my family met.

It was 1950. My grandmother No-No had short black hair then. It fell to her jaw line, pointing toward her darkly painted lips. Though her eyebrows were brushed with shadow, grandmother's eyes were untouched by makeup. The darkness of her eyes was captivating.

In those days, in her late teens, she was still cleaning rooms at the boarding house. Albert, her boyfriend, helped with some of the chores. He washed the floors and fixed small appliances. He helped with maintenance at the boarding house. Great grandmother Eudokia regarded Albert as "free labour." Albert was short, his face ingrained with hard lines, a blue-collar Humphrey Bogart. Bogie and Albert, both were not classically good looking, but nevertheless they were leading men.

A year into their courtship, Albert passed away from liver disease. He tried to conceal his condition from No-No, continuing to help out around the boarding house, though he grew ill and thin. At his passing, No-No refused to cry.

Years later, Juanita told me how days after Albert's funeral, behind closed doors No-No cursed vehemently, and threw objects against her bedroom wall. Juanita remarked how Albert's death wasn't fair. Sitting at her dining room table, that day, I was confused by Juanita's sympathy for her sister, confused by Juanita's sudden gesture of affection. "I could not relate to your grandmother's sadness. I tried. She was my sister after all. I was

already married to your great uncle Murray. I was happy. I did not want to think about how it might be, to lose someone like that." Juanita told me how after Albert's death, No-No only left the house when she had to work at the local grocery store. Juanita's lips curved, a smile, a rarity for her. "After one of her shifts at the grocery store, she met your grandfather Ollie while walking back to the house."

Juanita's version on the way No-No and Ollie met was different from the way my grandmother recounted it. Grandmother No-No would always tell the story of how she met her husband to be as thus: "After he had selected some inexpensive item, Ollie would peer down every check-out aisle looking for me. He would pretend he needed to buy some small item, but I knew he just wanted to talk to me. One day, he came to my till with a can of tuna. He put a hundred dollar bill on the counter. I wasn't even sure if I had change for a hundred. As I sifted through the bills in my till, I imagined the tuna sandwich he might make for work that night. Ollie was twenty-one at the time. Rumour had it, that since eighteen, he'd been working at the Steel Plant. On our first date, he tried to impress me by talking about his job. He told me how he had worked in the Open Hearth Furnace during his first year at the Plant, before he transferred to another department. He'd say things like, 'That's where excess carbon and impurities are burnt out of pig iron to forge steel. The Open Health is dangerous, and hot. I worked with boiling liquid metals.' He talked like that for hours, and courted me for years to come."

Grandfather Ollie had another view. He always grinned before he gave his version. His emerald eyes always smiled at me. "I shopped at that grocery store where your grandma worked. No-No would always sneak a peek at me when she thought I wasn't looking. I caught her stares. I would usually go through her line. She never spoke

to me, not even to say, 'Here's your change.' I guess she was shy. I got the impression that your grandma liked me. One day, her sister Juanita called me to go on a double-date. A couple days later, I parked my brand new, 1950s two-tone Monarch Sport Sedan featuring a bold grille and a thick chrome surround—and walked up to the front door. Juanita and Murray were already there. Murray also worked at the Steel Plant, but in a different department. We sort of knew each other and hit it off. No-No hung back a bit. She was wearing a white silk blouse with a red bow at the front. We had a good time that night. And that was that. Your grandma and I met, and we were married within the same month."

Muted Possibilities

A husband. Children of my own. Someday. When I became epileptic, I started worrying about such things, though I didn't really understand the implications of my condition. My doctor said my medication could affect pregnancy. When the time came, when I was old enough and ready to have children, he could put me on a lower dosage so the possibility of a birth defect was less probable. The doctor said he was under legal obligation to divulge the side-effects of the medication I was on. "If you stop taking the medication, then there's a higher risk of having seizures. Stay on the medication, and a baby might be harmed. Potentially." Eventually, I realized I might have to bypass a future with children, or even a family. My sister Shadyn never wanted to have children either. "Mom's shit out of luck," my sister would say.

Four years back, my sister secured three jobs in order to pay her bills and accumulate savings. She acted like the women on mother's side of the family, always preoccupied with the sum in their bank accounts, saving for those "rainy days." No wonder my parents had considered her the mature daughter, "the adult." When and how such a difference between my sister and me came about was a question not easily answered. My sister, Shadyn, was born a year and a half before me. As early as elementary school, she and I learned to answer to each other's names. People often mistook us for each other. We just played along, sometimes to our advantage. We covered each other's homework assignments, chores, absences, and sometimes even attended each other's classes. Teachers rarely noticed. Growing up, we were never more than a couple of centimetres taller than each other. We were both around five foot five,

with long dark hair, and we both had our mother's dark eyes. In high school, Shadyn and I shared friends and boyfriends, until Cory. Maybe that was when Shadyn matured.

It was in grade ten that Shadyn began dating that redheaded boy. We all attended the same high school, and so did Cory's other girlfriend, Melanie. Aware that she was "the mistress," Shadyn intended to end her relationship with Cory. But she never did. Shadyn and Cory, and Cory and Melanie kept dating for a couple more months. It took Melanie too long to discover that Cory was cheating on her. Our high school had a student population of six hundred. Gossip circulated throughout the halls. At first, maybe Melanie heard the news but didn't believe it. Or, maybe, Melanie was naïve. At first I thought, maybe, like Shadyn, Melanie was unwilling to end her relationship with Cory. When Melanie finally realized what was happening, she confronted Cory in front of his locker at school, and called him "a red-faced liar," and ended the relationship right there. By third period, it was all over the school. Melanie had dumped Cory, but Shadyn was going to stay with him. Students in my class called my sister "a whore," and "bitch." Shadyn and I grew apart that day. I hadn't defended her in front of our friends.

For the next two years, Shadyn and Melanie avoided each other. After graduation, they both moved away. Shadyn heard from mutual friends that Melanie became a pharmacist in Southern Ontario. Shadyn moved to Sudbury, and became a nurse. Cory followed Shadyn. They lived together, unwed, to the disappointment of our grandparents No-No and Ollie, who thought the arrangement indecent. Shadyn ignored my grandparents' objection. She considered herself "a modern woman," because she had agreed to live common law with Cory. "He should crap or get off the pot," was the

opinion of my grandmother. I remained neutral, and I learned later that was a mistake, if I was to maintain any kind of meaningful relationship with my sister.

One day, during dinner, she was confronted by the entire family, over her co-habitation with Cory. I sat stricken, in silence. Shadyn rose abruptly, picked up her bowl of soup, and flung it against the wall. She walked out without a word. Soup has a resonant meaning in my family.

Serve Hot

At the boarding house, before the bar opened for the night, the family ate supper in their kitchen on the second floor, away from the boarders and billiard players. In a tight kitchen, Eudokia reheated a tall pot of leftover soup on the electric stove. Her daughter, Audrey, chopped up vegetables from the garden. She added them along with two cans of stock. "Leftovers are *never* to be thrown out," was my great grandmother's cooking philosophy. Even the oily, yellowy fat floating across the soup's surface was an integral ingredient in Eudokia's recipe. The soup pot was never empty, so it never required cleaning.

Great Grandmother Eudokia's Hearty Soup Recipe:

Vegetables (if summer, check the garden;

if winter, check the pantry for canned varieties).

Cans of stock (chicken or beef, whatever's in the pantry).

All parts of the chicken (guts included for flavour)

Directions:

Reheat the leftover soup until it comes to a boil.

Add new ingredients into the pot.

Cook until the newly added meat is cooked.

Note:

The texture of the vegetables may vary depending on when they were added.

Newly added vegetables may be a little hard.

Leftover vegetables may be a little mushy.

This mixture contributes to the overall flavour and dining experience.

Serves 5-20 (portion size depends on the amount of leftover soup and volume of new ingredients).

Serve hot.

Eudokia and Nicholas and their children ate soup every day for lunch and dinner. If soup wasn't the main course, it was always the starter. Soup was cheap to make. It filled up Eudokia's eight children. The family had to finish their soup before Eudokia served anything else.

Eudokia set the large pot on the table and Nicholas, husband and father, had the honour of ladling the soup into bowls for his family. "Aw, soup again!" the children always complained. Eudokia narrowed her eyes, staring at each of the children. Silence echoed through the apartment. Then, Eudokia carried the pot of soup to the hungry boarders. She trusted her eldest son, Melo, to convert the pool hall into a dining room. Melo placed large sheets of plywood atop the two billiard tables and arranged an assortment of chairs. "Aw, soup again!" the boarders always complained. Eudokia scolded them, "If ya don't like it, go somewhere else." After supper, the boarders helped transition the front room back into a pool hall.

"Carry the dishes to the kitchen," a boarder shouted.

"Put the chairs back against the walls," another hollered.

"Store the plywood."

A floor up, Eudokia's children announced what chores they were to complete. The first to yell out, received his or her choice of chore. By then, Eudokia was in the basement serving drinks. Great grandfather Nicholas relaxed on the living room sofa, puffing on his pipe while the children set to work.

"Clear the table," one of the children shouted.

"Wash," another hollered.

"Dry."

"I'll help dry."

"Put away the dishes."

"Tidy the kitchen."

"Cover up the leftover soup."

"Take out the trash."

Years later, great aunt Juanita told me how she and her siblings could hear the distant sound of billiard balls clacking together. Later on in the night, when a customer passed out intoxicated in the bar, he was carried to a room, and charged for it in the morning. Eudokia's soup was heralded as a cure for the gentleman's hangover. All for a price. Good for what ailed you.

Inside, a disaster

My sister worked three jobs. The first was as a part-time clinical nursing instructor. She also served as an advisor to nursing students. Her main employment was as a registered nurse on the oncology floor at the Sudbury Regional Hospital. Caffeine kept her awake during shift work and the consecutive hours she endured at her part-time jobs. As a nurse, she had a "profession." She was successful, and exhausted. I was different. Or so I had thought. I read books, but so did Shadyn. I became an archivist and wrote on the side. "A dreamer," my mother called me. Since the incident with the soup, my sister and I had mended our ways.

I knew that my sister had managed to get a day off work, so I telephoned her in Sudbury. Pressing the phone to my ear, I relaxed on the couch and absent-mindedly flicked through television channels. "How's life?" I asked my sister.

"I'm well. Nothin' much happening here. Work, it's not bad. Life's going. I'm thinking about changing careers, getting away from nursing. I'm sick of all the sick people. I know that's awful to say, but it's true. Sometimes it's just too much: all those patients, some of them, so young, what they and their families go through, all their stories. I can't forget any of it. Even when I sleep, I dream about working at the hospital. Walking through yellow discoloured halls. Toxic chemotherapy. Every day, the same, doing it over and over."

"Are you serious, about quitting your nursing job? Are you asking *me* for career advice? I'm not sure what to tell you."

"You never do. I supported *you* when you started having your seizures."

"I was thirteen, then. And I couldn't help it."

"Well, I was only a year and a bit older. Doesn't matter. And now I hear from mom that you're digging into our family history to learn more about your condition. I hope you realize heredity can't be the leading cause of epilepsy? Other factors are involved. You see? Don't you?"

"Stop trying to sound like mom, with the 'you see?' And yes, I do realize other factors are at play when it comes to my disorder. I need to start somewhere, don't I? Maybe what I discover about our family health history will lead to some answers, why I'm epileptic. Maybe, eventually, I can stop taking the medication. I'm sick of worrying about the side-effects: headaches, possible damage to my liver, possible birth defects. Maybe I'll visit the epilepsy clinic in London, and get a whole whack of tests done. For now, I'm going to continue looking into the family history. See what I can find."

"I guess you're right. If looking into our family helps you, then I can't see the harm in it. Sorry, I've been stressed lately, about work, my relationship with Cory. The other day, I bought new eye shadow, to make myself feel pretty, you know? Cory was angry with me for shopping again. He said our apartment is full of junk: gadgets, kitchen gizmos, beauty products, mismatched furniture. So what? I buy stuff on sale. I save money. What about his guitars, hockey equipment, NHL memorabilia, three toolsets, two televisions, blah blah blah? Our apartment is too small. At least my place isn't as crowded as our grandma No-No's house. Have you seen her place recently? Been over to visit her? I remember, when I was young, going into her house being amazed at all that stuff. I can still remember she had these really small Bibles, and I really wanted one. She wouldn't give me one though. She couldn't let go of it. Not even as a gift to her *own* granddaughter. I remember hating her for not sharing, hating her hoarding. I remember

thinking that *our grandma* was the only one with that problem. I remember our dad complaining about grandma's junky house and what'll happen when she dies. She'll leave behind plenty of junk, and work for her children and us grandchildren. Someone's going to have to clean up that mess. And the family cottage is no better. I haven't been out there in years. Does it look the same? I remember the property was so beautiful and well-maintained. Inside, the cabin was a disaster. We could barely walk to our beds because of all that stuff. And everything was so dusty and dirty. Eventually, we couldn't even sleep in the cabin."

"Yeah, the house and cottage are pretty bad, both just stuff everywhere. My apartment's starting to look a bit like it, but my place is really small, like yours. God, I hope that craziness doesn't run in our genes. Think so? Do you think we'll be hoarders?"

"You know, Sheila, I've watched that reality show on TV about people who hoard. And every person who hoards lost something in their life, a person, a career, maybe a divorce, stuff like that. Have you ever noticed how mom stashes stuff away, and then tries to cover it up? There's something there, I dunno, something missing, maybe. Mom probably misses us since we both moved out of the house."

"True, but it's been years since we moved out. Mom still can't be upset about it. Jeez, Shadyn, we have terrible genes."

"And, our family, shattered. Always fighting. Feuding. We are woven together, whether we like it or not. There's something in our genes. Get this, in each generation, the second male or female never lives past adolescence. Did you ever notice that? We're kind of cursed. I've named it, 'The Rule of Seconds.' Listen, first, there's great grandmother Eudokia's second son, Adolf. Then there's our grandparents Ollie and No-

No's second son, Greggie. He was stillborn. Born dead. And maybe you don't know about mom's misfortune. Listen, I'm the first born. Then, soon into the second pregnancy mom had a miscarriage. We could've had another sibling. Rule of Seconds, get it? And then mom and dad tried again. You were born. People in our family say the baby was supposed to be a girl. Mom never mentions the subject though. And I don't know how to bring it up. Do you believe in patterns? In superstition? I believe in the former, not the latter. It's difficult to argue concrete facts and sequences. There might be some infertility issues in our family, too."

"I dunno, Shadyn. Guess I'll have to wait and see if history does really prove this pattern. It could be a curse or maybe just a coincidence. I don't really believe in superstition, I guess. I'm not too nervous about knowing our family history. Knowing might help me, even though I don't want kids. I think. I am only twenty-six. I still have time to think about it. Mom says I have to find a man first anyways."

"True. You know, there might be something else to consider. Have you noticed lately how grandpa Ollie is showing signs of memory loss? I think it's dementia, probably Alzheimer's. As a nurse, I recognize the symptoms, even if the rest of the family is in denial. I asked mom about it the other day. She changed the subject."

"You're kidding me? Grandpa? Having Alzheimer's?"

"I think he's doing his best to hide it. But last time I saw him, he confessed to me that he felt something was wrong. He said he didn't feel right, wasn't thinking straight. So, listen, keep an eye out for any odd behaviour. Okay? And let me know if you come across anything in your search into our family history. Something might turn up. We've got to be ready, whether we like it or not."

Trapped

One day, a neighbour asked grandmother No-No if she wanted to accompany her on a tour of garage sales. The day eventually lead No-No to hoarding. No-No was in her early thirties. She kept a reasonably clean home, made sandwiches for Ollie's lunches at the Plant, cared for Allen, their first child. Allen was one at the time. Things were manageable, but soon, life got busier. In the years that followed, more and more housework would accumulate for No-No. Three more children. Indian boarders. A part time job selling beauty products door-to-door. Suitors visiting her daughters. Things piled up. Old sewing machines that looked like they could run after major repair. An assortment of Tiffany lamps stored about the house. Vintage evening clutches. Crystal figurines, some broken needing repair. Piles of *National Geographic* magazines. Family photos scattered randomly about. Small boxes containing both costume necklaces and expensive jewellery. A small fleet of novelty boats built inside of bottles. It was difficult to distinguish between the valuable pieces and the junk. No-No never commented on her collecting habit. When staring about her house, she revelled in the stuff surrounding her. These were her treasures.

Grandmother's house is bursting with collectibles. The passenger's seat in her truck is reserved for trivial possessions. My grandmother considers them to be personal and precious. Cuckoo clocks (some still functional and sounding off on the hour). Hand puppets. Empty boxes of Kraft Dinner. Plastic humanoid raisin figurines. Old Avon products (leftovers from her part-time job selling door-to-door). Bird feeders. Trucker hats. Boxes of insecticide, Raid for Ants. Wash basins. Assorted clothing in a range of sizes (men's and women's). Taxidermied animals populate the house (fishing trophies,

stuffed canaries, a complete grey wolf with its tongue sticking out). Dry goods. Preserves (jams, jellies, pickles, and the like). Stacks of envelopes stuffed with letters. A variety of furnishings, odd chairs, collapsible tables, couches. Somewhere amidst the piles—are special treasures such as grandmother No-No's dark blue, 1940s Regal Gumball Machine. Buried elsewhere are items like a slot-machine bank, a jukebox stored in the basement, and a Remington typewriter, still in good working order. I've often wondered if she would be willing to sell or give me that typewriter, but grandmother No-No is reluctant to part with any of her goods. Her bathroom is decorated with Mickey Mouse memorabilia. It is a peculiar feature of grandmother No-No's house, that there is not a single garbage can to be seen. The mattress in the master bedroom is surrounded by storage boxes filled with unknown goods, leaning precariously, only inches away from a small avalanche of items purchased at reduced prices from garage sales around the city. The bathroom sink is filled with dirty dishes because the kitchen sink is filled with assorted paraphernalia including a complete Wedgewood Tea set, partly obscured by odd towels, Brillo scrub pads, and assorted silverware. One section of the house serves as storage for hundreds of collapsed cardboard boxes stacked flat, awaiting contents and No-No's intended plan of re-organizing the rooms and their contents. The boxes have stood there for well over a decade. No-No is a hoarder, but, my family doesn't use that word, not in front of grandmother. We just talk about her "collectibles," and "garage sale items."

Memories within Memories

I remember last Canada Day. Grandmother No-No called and invited my family to her cottage on Lake Superior. Since childhood, I've been enthralled with the explosive spectacle of July first. Each year, cottagers along the shoreline bring loud, showy fireworks that illuminate the night sky. Nothing is better.

Grandfather Ollie always watched the neighbours' fireworks, but never bought his own. He was a quiet man, and liked keeping to himself. Grandmother No-No nicknamed him, "Nature Boy." His given name was Ollie Roy Salenko. He'd lived in Sault Ste. Marie, since his birth in 1929, and was familiar with annual rituals such as Canada Day.

My family set out towards the cottage, the family sedan packed with swim suits, warmer jackets for the evening, sunscreen and bug-spray, towels, hot-dogs, and watermelons. My sister couldn't accompany us. She was tied to three positions in Sudbury. I relaxed in the back seat while my mother fiddled with the radio and my father focused on the road. Upon arrival, everyone made themselves comfortable. And not long after dinner, I joined my grandfather on the two-seater swing chair, near the shoreline. Grandfather sat passively staring at the explosions illuminating the sky and lake. Grandmother No-No and my parents were uninterested in the fireworks and had gone to bed. The patio swing my grandfather and I sat on was sheltered under a towering spruce tree. The spruce was nearly eighty feet tall, and was the cottage's centerpiece.

Grandfather purchased the cottage in 1958, for one thousand dollars. The half acre property had a one hundred foot beach frontage. While his neighbours cleared their lots, grandfather cut down only what trees he needed. Grandfather stripped the logs of their bark and carried the lumber on his shoulders to the locations he had marked out. In two

years, he designed and built a cabin, boathouse, outhouse, and three bridges to cross the creek that ran through the property. The six hundred square feet log cabin he built had two bedrooms with handmade bunk beds, a living room, kitchen, breakfast nook, and a front porch.

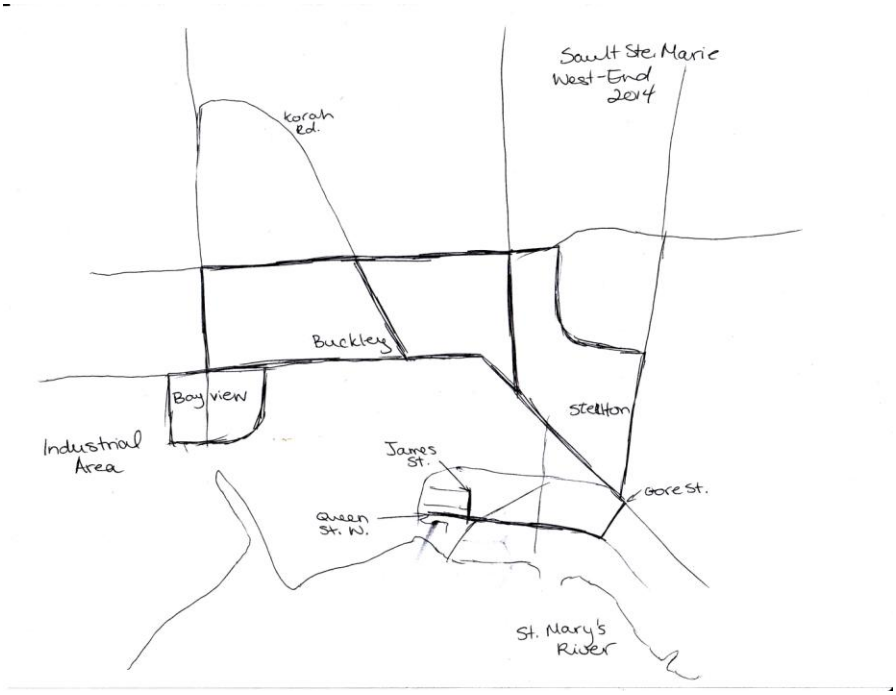
"I always liked this patio swing," grandfather mused. "It has the best view of the lake. When I was a kid, *this* was my dream. I wanted a swing like this, to stare at a lake like that, and own a piece of land like the one I'm sitting on. Don't get me wrong, I like the city, but nowadays, it's too busy. I'd rather be forty minutes away from it all. In this lake, nearby, actually," grandfather smiled, "the Edmund Fitzgerald sunk. Bad storm. November gale. Went down in 1975. Some people think there was a treasure on board. Maybe one of us will fetch it one of these days. Add it to your grandmother's collection." He laughed at his own joke, his emerald green eyes glistening.

Fireworks boomed in the near distance, but I focused on grandfather's voice. I asked him, "What was the Sault like back when you were young?"

"Did you know people didn't lock their doors when I was a kid? We had variety too, not like nowadays. There was something like five grocery stores within two blocks of James Street. There were no shopping malls back then. Each shop was individual. James Street alone had grocery, hardware, drug, shoe, and women's wear stores, and then some."

"When was that?"

"I'm not sure exactly. Around the late thirties to early forties. The west-end had distinct areas, and still does: the Steel Plant, Bayview area, Buckley, Steelton, James Street, Queen Street West, and Gore Street."



The show of fireworks ended. Solar-powered lights charged with the previous day's sunlight now glowed in the gardens surrounding us. Grandfather and I continued to swing and talk.

"Way back when, dirt roads and narrow laneways ran behind houses and shops. You didn't know which were streets and which were laneways. Most roads didn't have street signs. Laneways never did."

"How did you know what to call them?"

"By what they were close to."

Ollie Street. Ollie Lane, I thought.

Later in the library, I learned how immigrant populations had congregated to different areas in the west-end, either on purpose or by instinct. Buckley and Queen Street West had been home to many Ukrainian immigrants and their families. Elsewhere, enclosed by the Steel Plant, Bayview became known as "Little Italy." Italian immigrants

gravitated to the west-end because of commercial areas like James Street. Many Italian immigrants hadn't learned to speak English. Italian had been their first and only language. They conducted their daily lives without it. During the 1930s, in neighbouring parts of the city, some seventeen to nineteen immigrant dialects were spoken around Steelton, Gore Street, and James Street.

My grandfather's smile lifted the wrinkles around his emerald green eyes. "In places like Bayview, Italian citizens used to shout from their balconies at people across the street."

"Why were they shouting?"

"They were just talking. Bayview was like a whole other city. A city within a city. West-enders started moving eastward in the city around the 1960s. Before then, many locals didn't travel past Gore Street toward the east-end. That part of the city was less developed. The west-end was self-sufficient. White-collar folks considered the west-end to be full of immigrants, 'foreigners.' West-end communities thought east-enders were 'snobs' and 'well-heeled.' They knew that people like doctors, judges, and bankers lived in the east-end. The boat club was their social gathering spot. It kind of defined the east-end. Gore Street was the dividing line between those two worlds."

When my parents and I returned from camp, a gentle rain began to fall. We had left my grandparents' cottage at a good time, just ahead of the weather. Fronts always head in from the north, coming off of Lake Superior, trundling past the rock-faced bluffs of Gros Cap, arriving soon after in Sault Ste. Marie. I relaxed in my apartment, drinking tea, and watching rain dribble down my window. I opened a package my sister had sent

me last week. It was one of her medical books, and she had tabbed one of the pages for me. In the book's margin, she'd written: "Supernatural or natural?"

> *Nerve cells or "neurons" use chemical reactions to generate electricity, like a very complex battery. When a neuron becomes excited, it passes an electrical signal along its thin biological wire to communicate with other neurons in the brain. Those other neurons either can be excited or inhibited by the signal. If too many neurons become excited all at once, then a seizure can result. During this abnormal "electrical storm," parts of the brain cannot perform their normal tasks and people experience sudden alterations of movements, sensations, or behaviour.*

The description of an epileptic attack sounded almost supernatural, but I knew my sister couldn't conceive of anything medical as being anything but natural. She was a nurse, after all. I knew her note pencilled in the book's margin was meant to tease me. I laughed, and thought, *What else was a sister for, but to tease you?* What I knew for sure was that the forensic account was too concise, too clean.

I put the book aside. It bothered me. I remembered reading a newspaper last week. I had opened to the obituary section, a habit I'd acquired from my mother, and she from her mother. I'd scanned the columns to find that a third or fourth cousin of mine had passed away. A baby, twenty-two months old. One time, great aunt Juanita had shown me a colour photograph. The child was from her side of the family. The black and white photo in the newspaper failed to reveal the penetrating blue of the child's eyes. I'd remembered great aunt Juanita remarking rather pointedly, that the child had been diagnosed as an epileptic.

I sat absent-mindedly looking outside my window at the storm. I imagined the child tortured by similar seizures that had gripped my body. A baby, fragile, was more helpless, probably more frightened. The body out of control, and afterwards being unable to talk, unable to confide in her parents about the pain she'd felt. Endured. Too young, to even speak. Thinking of the notice in the newspaper, I knew I could never have children. I wouldn't. I couldn't watch my child endure such an attack. I couldn't bear standing by, unable to do anything to help, helplessly watching, waiting for the seizure to end, the way my mother had to when I was younger. Outside the winds had picked up, I could hear the sounds of rolling thunder as the sky periodically illuminated.

Echoes

Today, I received an anxious telephone call from grandmother No-No.

"Ollie's gone. We can't find him. I think he's wandered off."

"I'll be right there."

That wasn't the first time. It was the same thing two months ago. Grandfather Ollie had wandered off. Second time around, it would be different. It was late October then.

By the time I arrived at my grandparent's house, No-No had already called the police. The entire family went looking for grandfather Ollie: my parents, great aunt Juanita and her husband Murray, great aunt Bernie and great uncle Oskar, some of their kids. No-No stayed in the house, in case news arrived. Even my sister Shadyn and her boyfriend Cory were driving in from Sudbury to the Sault. They wanted to help. Regardless of the comments about "shacking up," they were still family. I drove through my grandparents' west-end neighbourhood, trying to think like grandfather Ollie. I asked myself where he might go if he wanted to get away. I decided to take the forty-minute drive north up Great Northern Road to the family cottage. I was sure he'd there. Upon arrival, I did a quick but thorough search of the cabin, the boathouse, and the lot. I went up to the two-seater swing chair by the shoreline. It was clear, he wasn't there.

Unbeknown to all, grandfather actually *was* sitting on the shores of Lake Superior. Not where I had imagined. While the rest of my family searched the city, and I was driving back into town for the cottage, grandfather was perched on a small outcrop of rock, his feet planted in the brown sand that ran along the shoreline of Pancake Bay. I learned about this after the fact. I learned about it, after I was unable to do anything to bring him back. When I heard what had happened, I imagined a breeze wafting over the

waves towards my grandfather's face. I heard later, that my grandfather had stood up, and brushed the sand off his trousers. He began walking towards the shoreline and into the waves. The sun's slanting rays still warmed the day. Fully clothed, he walked up to his waist and paused. The waves shifted his balance. It was then that Grandfather dove into the waves, face down, and then lay there on the undulating swells.

As it happened, a family on an outing saw my grandfather. The father of that family was Tommy, the Indian boy who used to take joy-rides along Vimy Ridge Lane behind grandmother No-No's house. Tommy was out on a picnic with his young family. While they were putting out the picnic fixings, he'd been watching grandfather out of the corner of his eye. He was curious about the old man walking towards the shoreline. Tommy didn't recognize Ollie from that distance. When Ollie dove into the waves of Lake Superior, Tommy acted. Tommy ran and pulled my grandfather out of the lake. Tommy's wife telephoned the police and ambulance, and after they had driven my grandfather away, Tommy was asked to provide a detailed account for the police. Later on, the police informed my family about what happened.

Lake Superior was the home of my family. It was where my grandfather fulfilled his dream of owning his own bit of land. That lake was where grandfather had taught my sister and me to swim. It was where we spent every summer. It was where I visited in the wintertime to walk atop the frozen lake.

I remember years earlier, when my sister Shadyn still lived in the Sault, she and I spent the day at Pancake Bay. My parents came, and so did grandmother No-No and grandfather Ollie. There was no wind. The water was glassy flat. My sister and I soaked around for a while, but we couldn't stay in for too long. Even in the summer, the water

felt cold. When the sun was at its highest, my grandfather decided to swim with us. He rarely swam in his elder years. He used to tell my sister and me stories about how he'd swim laps from one end of Lake Superior to the other and back again. My sister and I were young then. We thought grandfather was a champion.

When I heard the police report, I wondered how he could've arrived at Pancake Bay. No buses travel that far outside of the city. It didn't make sense. I concluded that my grandfather had hitched a ride. He couldn't have walked. It was too far. Especially at his age, eighty-five.

I imagined my grandfather sitting on the shoreline that day, a breeze wafting past his face. I imagined grandfather Ollie reciting his five children's names: "Allen, Izza, Greggie, Sam, Rhonda." Then, he named all six of his grandchildren: "Patrick, Lesley, Shadyn, and Sheila, Travis, and Curtis." I pictured my grandfather cycling further through his memory, into the past to recount the names of his brothers and sisters, his parents, his grandparents, his great grandparents. He could remember them all, everyone in the family. But sometimes he couldn't remember why he had left one room for another.

When I spoke to Shadyn about the incident afterwards, she wasn't surprised about what had happened. "Grandma No-No was in denial. I told you before, grandfather admitted to me that he knew something was wrong. Dementia. It wasn't hard to see that it was Alzheimer's. I'm pretty sure he knew. But if you even hinted about it to No-No, she'd go silent. The water gets awfully cold by October. Grandfather Ollie was no fool. He knew about things like hypothermia. It wouldn't take long, and it's pretty painless. Even if the cold wouldn't get him, pneumonia would kick in shortly after. Alzheimer's is

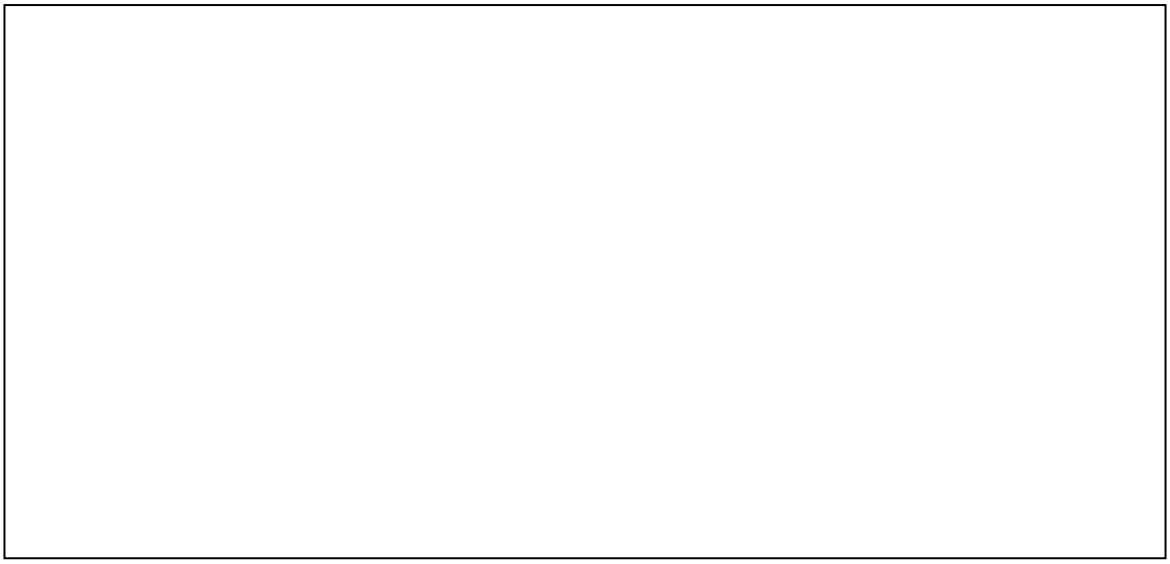
a rough way to go. I think he knew that. We have to hang one of those purple bows on each of our front doors."

After the search, I took a day, and returned to the swing chair at our family cottage. I was grateful that the overhead pine blocked the sun from glinting in my eyes. I wondered if parts of the Edmund Fitzgerald could really be salvaged, raised to the surface. I wondered if there really was some un-named treasure on board. I wondered if I was too close, to everything, if I should move to Sudbury and live with my sister for a while. Breakers were rolling into the shoreline. A breeze swept across my face, and I wondered if maybe another storm was coming in.

Scrapbook

Photograph of the Sorokopud Family

Black and white family portrait. My great grandfather Nicholas stands beside his wife, Eudokia, who is holding young Ruby. Ruby looks to be no more than one years old. Seven of the eight children are present for this photograph, Melo, Adolf, Juanita, Oskar, No-No, Audrey, and Ruby. Eudokia and Nicholas's eighth and final child, Billy has not been born yet. He'll come soon enough. The brothers and sisters are arranged in two rows on either side of their parents, the two eldest and tallest at the back, with the younger and shorter children toward the front. Girls on the left. Boys on the right. Although they are divided, all the children, even their parents, have similar expressions. No one is smiling.



The Sorokopud Family

Nicholas Sorokopud married to Eudokia Fedorko

Their children:

Melo (died at 79 in 2001; married to Mary Alston)

Adolf (died at 13 in 1937)

Juanita (86; married to Murray Showers)

Oskar (84; married to Bernie Steele)

No-No (82; married to Ollie Salenko)

Audrey (80; widow, deceased husband, Jack Daniel)

Ruby (78; married to Rick Hall)

Brucie (77; divorced from Sarah Knoll)

First Generation Salenko Family

Fred Salenko married to Henrietta Legros

Their children:

Freddie (died at 20 in France during World War Two around 1944; single)

Clara (91; married to Frankie Hale)

Lucille (died at 87 of natural causes in 2012; married to Paul Giver)

Ellen (died at 38 of lung cancer in 1965; single)

Ollie (85; married to No-No Sorokopud)

Philip (83; married to Pauline Huff)

Jimmie (died at 79 of natural causes in 2009; married to Erica Cox)

Russ (died in his 40s of some disease; bachelor)

Hazel (78; spinster)

Leroy (75; married to Lisa Pierce)

Second Generation Salenko Family

Ollie Salenko married to No-No Sorokopud

Their children:

Allen (54; married to Pamela DiPaulo)

Izza (52; married to Jon Steffen)

Greggie (stillborn; born in 1964)

Sam (49; bachelor)

Rhonda (46; married to Curtis Dewar)

The Steffen Family

Jon Steffen married to Izza Salenko

Their children:

Shadyn (27; boyfriend Cory Hall)

Sheila (26; single)

Grandmother No-No's Daily Specials

SUNDAY	SHOPPING LIST
Shake'n Bake chicken	Chicken wings for 29¢/lb. at Dominion Supermarket
Roast potatoes	4 pkgs. of Shake'n Bake for $1 at Dominion Supermarket
Canned vegetables	29 lbs. of potatoes for 99¢ at Saveway
	5 14 oz cans of vegetables for 95¢ at Loblaws
MONDAY	Ground beef for 63¢/lb. at Dominion's
Meatballs and gravy	2 2lbs. pkgs. of Primo pasta noodles for 79¢ at A&P
Boiled potatoes	4 19oz cans of pasta sauce for 99¢ at Red & White
TUESDAY	2 cans of tomato soup for 25¢ at A&P
Meatloaf	Chicken breast for 49¢/lb. at Loblaws
WEDNESDAY	Loaf of bread for 21¢ at Dominion's

Spaghetti

Pasta sauce mixed with tomato soup

THURSDAY

Hash with canned vegetables

FRIDAY

Chicken

Canned vegetables

SATURDAY

Hot chicken sandwiches and leftovers

Mother Izza's Tuesday Special

Roll ground beef into balls.

Cook and brown the meatballs in a frying pan.

Pour two cans of Campbell's Cream of Celery Soup over the meatballs.

Let simmer until the soup is warm.

Meanwhile, peel and cut six large potatoes into cubes.

Add water and the cubed potatoes into a pot.

Cook potatoes until they are soft.

Strain the potatoes.

Serve the potatoes and meatballs on a plate and coat in warm celery soup.

Enjoy.

Mother Izza's Wednesday Special

Roll ground beef into balls.

Cook and brown the meatballs in a frying pan.

Pour two cans of Campbell's Gravy (chicken, beef, or turkey) over the meatballs.

Let simmer until the gravy is warm.

Meanwhile, peel and cut six large potatoes into cubes.

Add water and the cubed potatoes into a pot.

Cook potatoes until they are soft.

Strain the potatoes.

Serve the potatoes and meatballs on a plate and coat in warm gravy.

Enjoy.

Sheila and Shadyn's Hearty Soup Recipe:

Prep Time	Cook Time	Total Time
15 mins	30 mins	45 mins

Makes: 5 quarts
Serves: 6+

Ingredients:
2.5 cups of cold water
2.5 cups of chicken broth
1.6 kg of whole skinless boneless chicken breasts
2 celery ribs, chopped
3 medium carrots, peeled and diced
5 new potatoes, peeled and chopped into cubes
1 cup of peas
1 medium onion, sliced
1 garlic clove, minced
2 bay leaves
1 tsp of sea salt
¼ tsp of pepper

Preparation:
In a tall pot, add the cold water, chicken broth, chicken breasts, and bay leaves. Bring to a boil. Remove chicken from broth. Shred into strips, and set aside. Strain the liquid. Pour the liquid back into the pot. Bring to a boil. Put in the vegetables and garlic. Sprinkle in salt and pepper. Reduce heat, partially cover, and let simmer for about 20 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender. Add chicken. Cook until the chicken is warm. Serve hot. Good for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Alcoholism: a chronic and often progressive disease that includes problems controlling your drinking, being preoccupied with alcohol, continuing to use alcohol even when it causes problems, having to drink more to get the same effect (physical dependence), or having withdrawal symptoms when you rapidly decrease or stop drinking.

Algoma Central Railway (ACR): a track in Northern Ontario that runs from Sault Ste. Marie, north 296 miles to Hearst, Ontario. The railway covers 22,000 square miles of bushed area.

Alzheimer's Disease: a progressive disease that destroys memory and other important mental functions. It's the most common cause of dementia—a group of brain disorders that result in the loss of intellectual and social skills. With Alzheimer's disease, brain cells degenerate and die, causing a steady decline in memory and mental function.

Aura: a sensation, strange feeling, warning of a seizure. Medically speaking, an aura or warning is the first symptom of a seizure, and is considered part of the seizure. Often the aura is an indescribable feeling. Other times, it's easy to recognize and maybe be a change in feeling, sensation, thought, or behaviour that is similar each time a seizure occurs. The aura can also occur alone and may be called "a simple partial seizure" or "partial seizure" without change in awareness.

Bootlegger: a word having roots that can be traced back to old time English smugglers who concealed bottles of liquor in their high-topped boots.

The "Business": my great grandmother Eudokia's makeshift bar located in the dimly lit basement of her three-story boarding house. Home to boarders, billiard players, friends of a friend, and neighbourhood folk. Such a place could also be called "the Watering Hole," "a Pig Blind," or "a Speakeasy." The two latter terms are typically used to describe larger establishments in which bootleg alcohol is served.

Cheezler: a person with an obsession for making money without much regard for the finer points of the legal system.

Chorny: derived from the East Slavic word meaning "black." May be a surname, but is also used as a racial slur.

Collectible: a collector's item.

Collector's Item: a collectible, something my grandmother No-No collects.

Epilepsy: a central nervous system disorder (neurological disorder) in which nerve cell activity in the brain becomes disrupted, causing seizures or periods of unusual behaviour, peculiar and often painful physical sensations, and sometimes loss of consciousness.

Fire water: also called "Indian Whisky." A diluted cheap whisky, and typically mixed with tobacco and cayenne pepper. Has a "bite" to it.

The Good Stuff: moonshine distilled by my great grandmother Henrietta in a pristine bathtub in her attic. Also, the liquor adulterated with inferior alcohol to dilute the substance and increase volume of the supply, and sold for a premium price in Eudokia's illegal bar. Other names used for such a concoction are: "Bathtub Gin," "Swamp Whisky," "Lightning," "Liquid Gold, "Liquid Spirits or Courage," and "Nectar of the Gods." During Prohibition, the "Good Stuff" was typically an unadulterated scotch or Canadian rye sold for a steep price.

Gore Street: in the thirties and forties, it was the dividing line between the city's east and west-end. It was one of the city's commercial areas. Now, the street is the location of some local businesses; however, many have closed over the years, and the buildings remain empty. Crime rates are high in this area. Called "Gore" by locals, the street is considered a dangerous part of town.

Grand Mal Seizure: also known as a "generalized tonic-clonic seizure," features a loss of consciousness and violent muscle contractions.

The Great Depression: a long-lasting economic downturn lasting from 1929 to 1939. In Canada, millions were unemployed, hungry, and often homeless. This decade is known as "the Dirty Thirties."

Hard: a term used to describe any female on my mother's side of the family (great grandmother Eudokia, grandmother No-No, great aunt Juanita and Bernie, mother Izza, sister Shadyn, and even myself).

Hoarding Disorder: a persistent difficulty discarding or parting with possessions because of a perceived need to save them. A person with hoarding disorder experiences distress at the thought of getting rid of the items. Excessive accumulation of items, regardless of actual value, occurs. Hoarding often creates such cramped living conditions that homes may be filled to capacity, with only narrow pathways winding through stacks of clutter. Hoarding ranges from mild to severe. In some cases, hoarding may not have much impact on your life, while in other cases it seriously affects your functioning on a daily basis.

Home Sell: when homeowners sell alcohol, legally or otherwise, in their private places of residence.

The House Special: great grandmother Henrietta's homemade brew. Good for a drink and for removing the yellow rings in your bathtub.

James Street: during the thirties and forties, it was a booming commercial area in Sault Ste. Marie's west-end. In more recent times, it has become a low-end neighbourhood, the location of low income rentals and housing, and the Soup Kitchen Community Centre. There has been a recent spike in crime in this neighbourhood, including a violent murder in July 2014. Saulities call James Street and neighbouring areas, "James Town." The area has acquired a stigma as being "rundown," "an unsafe neighbourhood," "a place many prefer not to venture into."

Klik: a premium pink, pork luncheon meat, similar to Spam.

Little Italy: in the thirties and forties, it was what locals used to call the Bayview area, which neighboured the city's heavy industrial area. It was home to many Italian immigrants.

Moonshine: made in stills "by the light of the moon."

"Near" Beer: beer with a miniscule amount of alcoholic content.

Old: an adjective that describes a vintage collectible.

The Palace: a three-story boarding house on Queen Street West. The house provided ample secret places for my great grandmother's children to hide from their brothers and sisters, and from Eudokia, during times when they were supposed to be doing their chores. Only the third floor and the basement were "off limits" to the children.

Petit Mal Seizure: a mild form of epilepsy, also called an "absence seizure," involving brief, sudden lapses of consciousness. They're more common in children than adults. Someone having an absence seizure may look like she or he is staring into space for a few seconds. This type of seizure usually doesn't lead to physical injury.

Prohibition: in Canada, Prohibition lasted nearly half a decade. At the federal level, Prohibition spanned from 1918 to 1920. Ontario was dry from 1916 to 1927. It was a period that saw the national ban on the manufacture and sale of alcohol—the epoch in which my great grandmother Eudokia made some killer money.

The Quiet Zone: Eudokia's not-to-be-disobeyed-or-forgotten rule to her eight children about stepping foot on the third floor of her boarding house. Her children were not to be up there, unless they were cleaning the boarders' rooms. No one disobeyed her rules. No one dared to disobey Eudokia.

A "Real" Antique: a vintage old collector's item or collectible.

Relief: during the Great Depression, a system of relief was set up by provincial governments to aid poor families who couldn't afford the basic necessities to sustain life. Payment was often in the form of vouchers, which were distributed by the Relief Offices situated in many cities. Vouchers could be redeemed for such items as food and clothing. Statistics show that in Canada, by 1933, thirty percent of the workforce was unemployed. One out of five people was on government relief.

Rule of Seconds: a curse, prediction, proven pattern, rule of thumb, force of nature—in each generation of my family, the second male or female never lives past adolescence.

Saulite: a resident of the Northern Ontario city of Sault Ste. Marie. In informal documents, locals either write "the Sault," or "Soo."

Seizure: is a brief episode, or changes in behaviours, and can include a variety of symptoms. Some people may simply stare blankly for a few seconds, while others repeatedly twitch their arms or legs.

Soup: a runny, oily, yellowy concoction served at every meal at Eudokia's boarding house. This particular concoction has a long shelf life. Note: recipe can be found on page fifty-seven.

Stage Fright: when an elder family member dies because he or she can't cope with the stress of pressing responsibilities. Note: situations may vary.

Steel Plant: a large industrial area alongside the St. Mary's River. Officially named the "Algoma Steel Company Limited Incorporated," it was incorporated in May 1901. It began producing steel in 1902, when the first heat was fired. In June 2007, Algoma Steel was bought by Essar Steel Holdings Ltd, a sector of the multi-national conglomerate Essar Global. In daily speech, Saulities refer to the plant as "Algoma Steel," "the Steel Plant," or "Essar," depending on age, gender, and current or former occupation. Working at the Steel Plant is often seen as a rite of passage. Many locals start at the plant when they are eighteen (the minimum age for a Steel Plant worker). Currently, the Steel Plant has approximately 3,400 employees. In my grandfather's time, during the 1950s, the Steel Plant had approximately 10,000 to 12,000 employees.

Sugar Houses: stores selling home-brewing equipment and supplies.

Vimy Ridge Lane: the laneway that used to exist behind my mother's childhood home.

Vintage: an adjective that describes an old collectible.

Well-heeled: a term used word to describe a wealthy individual, someone with "deep pockets."

Reading *Rule of Seconds:* Past and Present Woven Together

In *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, M. M. Bakhtin states that "Only that which is itself developing can comprehend development as a process" (7). Bakhtin addresses the fluid form of the novel, which changes in structure over time. For Bakhtin, the developing form can never be fully defined because it is undergoing continuous transformation. *Rule of Seconds* features an integration between subject-matter and form braiding together several storylines to depict the narrator-protagonist's experience of investigating the past. The novella moves through this process by deploying a retrospective narrative with spatio-temporal leaps that juxtapose and contrast different perspectives from the narrator-protagonist's family, past and present. The overall narrative features the narrator-protagonist's transformation as she discovers a part of her identity through the voices and stories from four generations of her family, in Sault Ste. Marie.

The novella emulates the retrospective narrative technique employed by Alice Munro in short-stories such as "Family Furnishings" and "Open Secrets," and her suite of short-stories, *Lives of Girls & Women*. In an interview with Eleanor Wachtel published in 2005, Munro states "I like to have people [characters] trying to find something of their past, and then they end up looking at what they *really* find" (Munro, "Alice Munro: A Life in Writing" 279-80). Retrospective narratives can highlight transformations in narrator-protagonists as they mature, physically transform, or experience alterations in perspective. The juxtaposition of younger and older viewpoints through a retrospective narrative view, as the narrator matures can result in ironic or humourous observations.

Munro scholars have taken notice of the writer's preferred retrospective narrative technique. In his much-quoted essay "'Clear Jelly': Alice Munro's Narrative Dialectics," Robert Thacker praises the writer's masterful retrospective narrative approach as being "the catalytic factor in Munro's substantial art" (37). Following Munro's narrative technique, *Rule of Seconds* covers the life of the narrator-protagonist Sheila, aged twenty-six, as she recalls events from her past. In this novella, Sheila is on a quest to discover the cause of her epilepsy. The novella's *analepses* (flashbacks) to Sheila's childhood, and the pasts of her relatives, offer a strong focus on the women in this family. The narrative spans from 1922 to present day, covering the life of Sheila's great grandmother Eudokia who immigrated to Canada from the Ukraine. By the end of the novella, Sheila finds out that heredity is a factor in the cause of her epilepsy, since her great uncle Adolf had the disorder, as well. Sheila also discovers more about her family than she first expected. She learns about her great grandmother Eudokia's illegal bar, her grandmother No-No's treatment of Aboriginal student boarders, and escalating hoarding disorder, and her grandfather Ollie's Alzheimer's disease. Sheila begins searching her ancestry on a quest to learn about her epilepsy. Instead, she learns more about herself, her views on the future, and disturbing details about her family's past. Sometimes, as her sister Shadyn states, "What really happens is so close, yet so distant, you see?" (34).

Rule of Seconds features changing perspectives of Sheila at different times in her life. There is a doubling effect, because two different 'I' perspectives are juxtaposed: the 'I' of Sheila's past self, and the adult 'I' who narrates the story from the present. This doubling effect is best detected during scenes of dialogue, when adult narrator Sheila recalls her youthful self. Adult Sheila's diction is slightly more elevated and formal than

that of her younger self. Adult Sheila calls people and places by their proper names, including referring to her hometown as "Sault Ste. Marie," instead of using local slang terms such as, "the Sault." Adult Sheila refers formally to family members, for example "grandmother" or "grandfather," whereas, the younger Sheila will use less formal terms such as "grandma" or "grandpa." This "double" narrative point of view permits the use of understated irony when revealing the differences between the somewhat naïve youth, and the more experienced adult, Sheila. During a visit to great aunt Juanita and great uncle Murray's house, the youthful Sheila wonders why her great aunt does not accept her own sister, No-No as part of the family. Adult Sheila explains, "Even though I was only thirteen and less knowledgeable about our family history, it occurred to me that my grandmother No-No was part of Juanita's side of the family. It made me wonder why they couldn't get along" (27). Adult Sheila remembers what her younger self had felt and thought. The irony emerges when the naivety of the younger Sheila contrasts with her older awareness. While recalling the same visit to great aunt Juanita and great uncle Murray's house, the older Sheila is amused by her past reaction to the family dispute: "Instead of commenting, I pushed another piece of lemon Bundt into my mouth" (27). The novella reveals Sheila's changing personality, and through light irony contrasts the perspectives of her younger and older self.

Bakhtin notes that the novel, and one could argue by extension, the novella, is a relatively new literary form, when one considers the entire history of literature: "It is the only genre that was born and nourished in a new era of world history and therefore it is deeply akin to that era" (4). Bakhtin adds that the novel is an ever expandable form that can envelop or embed a wide range of texts within texts. What Bakhtin states about the

novel, is also true of *Rule of Seconds*. This novella is also rooted in world history, and its form depicts the intermingling of European and Canadian cultures. The narrative treatment of history combines or "braids" three main themes beginning with European immigrants as they integrate into Canadian culture. The novella then moves through several generations of that family. All three strands are drawn from the past. One strand focuses on love triangles; the second strand highlights the different views on great grandmother Eudokia's illegal drinking establishment; and the third strand features the various types of dysfunctionality or disability within the generations of the family (e.g. alcoholism, Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, hoarding, and familial dysfunction). The three strands combine to create the larger "story." Different episodes in the family members' pasts are juxtaposed, showing how themes repeat themselves. All three strands involve some form of dysfunctionality. The narrative hints at future familial reconciliation as indicated by the way the family joins together to search for grandfather Ollie. Ollie suffers from Alzheimer's disease, and disappears near the end of the novella. The braided narrative structure weaves the family members together and unites them. In the narrative, relationships between family members are in disrepair. The narrative disjunction echoes the familial ruptures, while the braiding together of the family storylines indicates possible reconciliation.

Rule of Seconds juxtaposes intra- and inter-textual materials, forwarding a disjunctive narrative, while representing the fragmented relationships between the family members. The intra-textual elements include diary entries written by Izza, Sheila's mother, as well as postcards, recipes, genealogical trees, gossip, anecdotes, family lore, hearsay, and second-hand accounts creating a heteroglossia of voices. The voices are

distinguished by speech mannerisms including formal dialogue contrasted with colloquialisms and slang. The novella also features inter-textual sources. For example, newspaper clippings, archival materials such as marriage records, historical and medical texts on epilepsy, and actual newspaper accounts from the *Sault Star*, all of which add an air of authenticity to the novella. These intra- and inter-textual materials result in stories within stories and "Memories within Memories" (66). A similarly disjoined narrative structure featuring spatio-temporal leaps is evident in Margaret Laurence's novel *The Diviners*. Her novel juxtaposes scenes set in the present progressing in chronological order, interrupted by flashbacks into protagonist Morag Gunn's past. These flashbacks take the form of descriptive "snapshots," as well as a series of anecdotes, each classified by Laurence under the subheading, "MEMORYBANK MOVIE" (11). In *The Diviners*, the disjunctive narrative helps represent and emphasize the tense relationship between Morag and her daughter Pique. After Pique leaves home, single mother Morag is left to her work, trying to write a novel. Morag dips into her memory in search of her past and a clearer understanding of who she is. The leaps between past and present are represented by the way Laurence describes the flow of the river that is located near Morag's house:

> The river flowed both ways. The current moved from north to south, but the wind usually came from the south, rippling the bronze-green water in the opposite direction. This apparently impossible contradiction, made apparent and possible, still fascinated Morag, even after the years of river-watching. (3)

In Laurence's novel, images of the river flow throughout the entire narrative, while representing a Heraclitian flux, or the movement of time itself. As in *The Diviners*, so in *Rule of Seconds*, time seems to flow both forward *and* backward. Liquid imagery helps

depict leaps between past and present. In *Rule of Seconds*, the "flashbacks" or stories within stories, leap through time, and are echoed in the setting, which features the mutable liquid images of the St. Mary's River, Lake Superior, rain during thunderstorms, and even Eudokia's endless pots of soup. All these liquid images are represented through memories that help depict the forward and backward movement of time.

In addition, liquid images also represent conditions of disability. In the novella, Eudokia's riverside house is eventually torn down signalling the end of a familial relationship. In another episode, a young man dives into a creek, only to become paralyzed and die soon afterward. Thunderstorms are precursors to epileptic attacks. Images of thunderstorms relate to Sheila's epilepsy, indicating what happens in her brain during a seizure. Sheila describes her first seizure as "A grid of activity [that] swept across my brain until all the nerve cells fired at once" (10). The electricity flowing through her brain is echoed by the electrical storm happening outside during the seizure. In this instance, the dichotomy between outside and inside is blurred. The closing of the novella returns the reader to Lake Superior, which is emblematic of disability and death. Lake Superior is the site of the wreck of the freighter, the Edmund Fitzgerald, and later, the site of grandfather Ollie's suicide. Throughout the novella, liquid imagery conveys different forms of dysfunctionality.

Liquid imagery extends to images of eyes. The *absence* of tears is significant and is conveyed through eye imagery throughout the novella. In the opening sequence of *Rule of Seconds*, Sheila establishes the importance of eye imagery, explaining how for her, a seizure "always begins with the eyes," like "An uncontrolled blinking" (1). The eye imagery also works in connection with the theme of knowing versus not knowing. In the

narrative, seeing equates to knowing or understanding. In dialogue, Sheila's mother Izza repeats the expression "You see?" (3), meaning "Do you understand?" Izza places a high value on knowing and on Sheila becoming knowledgeable, which is ironic since many of the family members refuse to accept and discuss troubling topics. In mother Izza's side of the family, all the women are defined by the inscrutability of their eyes: "Indecipherable, dark eyes. Eyes that absorbed light, projected almost no emotion, even when laughing or crying" (24). In her late teens, "No-No refused to cry" at the passing of her then boyfriend Albert (51). Like No-No, the women in the family rarely show any feeling.

This emphasis on eyes also looks to Sheila's inquisitive nature. During her quest, she asks her relations about their pasts to learn more about her family health history and to form some kind of decision about her future, including whether she might want a husband, family, and children someday. She also feels a need to understand her family, for example grandmother No-No and her hoarding disorder, and grandfather Ollie's Alzheimer's disease and eventual suicide. Compared to the women's dark eyes, grandfather Ollie has precious, light green eyes. Sheila judges his eyes to be "glistening" (67). The liquid connotation suggested by "glistening" foreshadows his Alzheimer's disease. Grandfather Ollie's eyes single him out from the other family members. Ollie understands the deteriorating nature of his Alzheimer's disease. In deciding not to live with his illness, he travels to Lake Superior to commit suicide. During a telephone conversation with Sheila, Shadyn explains:

> It wasn't hard to see that it was Alzheimer's. I'm pretty sure he knew. But if you even hinted about it to No-No, she'd go silent. The water gets awfully cold by October. Grandfather Ollie was no fool. He knew about things like hypothermia.

> It wouldn't take long, and it's pretty painless. Even if the cold wouldn't get him, pneumonia would kick in shortly after. Alzheimer's is a rough way to go. I think he knew that. (74-5)

In these lines, Sheila's sister Shadyn repeats the word "knew" three times. Grandfather Ollie is one family member who truly "knows" or understands his own condition. Not all characters in the novella understood Ollie, and some, such as his wife No-No, are in denial about his condition. Due to denial and the withholding of information, the so-called "facts" of any situation become questionable. As suggested by the afore-mentioned liquid imagery, the purported "truth" of the past is in flux, and uncertain.

The attempt to understand is one of the features of the narrator-protagonist's quest. The novella raises questions about the gap between how individuals prefer to perceive themselves, and how those perceptions clash with actual fact and history. This dialogic approach, which involves unresolved questions, generates a sense of provisionality about the past. For example, uncertainty surrounds the issue of great grandmother Eudokia's will, as well as the inheritance and distribution of burial plots:

> Grandmother No-No complained about not receiving a burial plot, or at least word about what happened to the sites. And she complained that great aunt Juanita inherited more of great grandmother Eudokia's money than the rest of her siblings. My great aunt Juanita once tried to reason with No-No. Great aunt Juanita explained how all their siblings were present at the reading of great grandmother Eudokia's will. They all heard how the money was to be divided evenly among the siblings. (19-20)

There is a lack of trust between sisters No-No and Juanita, who is the executor to the will. No-No is not satisfied about the information she has received regarding the distribution of the inheritance money and the burial plots. She suspects Juanita of being dishonest. Uncertainties regarding the will are among many issues in the narrative that are left unresolved and open-ended.

The disputing voices in the novella result in what Bakhtin would call a "heteroglossic" approach. Instead of one stable authoritative voice, this novella weaves a multiplicity of voices, and conflicting viewpoints. The narrative's subtitle does proclaim, "*The way the past unfolded depended upon who told it*" (1). Within the narrative, family members have similar social dialects but often differing views, depending on their age as affected by when and where they grew up in Sault Ste. Marie, as well as their socio-economic class. The use of colloquial language in the narrative is congruous with the portrayal of blue-collar communities in Sault Ste. Marie. More sophisticated language or diction emerges through those of a higher social standing, or those who think themselves to have a higher standing within their respective communities. Large diamond rings indicate great aunt Juanita's relative wealth, and higher social status. Juanita's formal language in dialogue matches her character. Juanita's language avoids contractions, whereas her sister No-No's speech is often grammatically incorrect. The heteroglossia or use of multiple voices creates opportunities in the narrative for the juxtaposition of the different socio-economic groups as well as contrasting world views. In addition, the multiple voices are indicative of differences in outlook and a lack of consensus on the history of the family.

Each generation of the family consist of "outsiders" who are different and even alienated from their community because they veer from societal "norms" or expectations. The novella explores themes such as stigma, stereotyping, racism, and hypocrisy. It reveals what people say once backs are turned. Eudokia breaks the law, and takes on an unconventional parental role while running her illegal drinking establishment. Great uncle Adolf suffers from epilepsy and is treated as an outcast by the neighbours. Grandmother No-No has an extreme hoarding disorder. The narrator's paternal great grandfather Fred is a heavy alcoholic. The Aboriginal boys in the story experience racism and are not considered part of the community. Shadyn is considered an outcast by her family because she co-habits with her boyfriend. Grandfather Ollie suffers from Alzheimer's disease, but keeps the matter to himself. His wife No-No is both in denial about the illness and will not discuss it with others, thereby further isolating herself and her husband. And, the narrator-protagonist, Sheila suffers from epilepsy, and while this does not generate overt discrimination, it does cause a schism in her own mind about how she may not fit into social norms, and so, she situates herself as an "outsider."

The plot keeps returning to "outsider" figures beginning with Eudokia and her illegal drinking establishment, and ending with Ollie who commits suicide as a reaction to his Alzheimer's disease. The novella focuses on a series of "outsiders" including Ukrainian immigrants from the early 1900s to the present. In addition, *Rule of Seconds* portrays gender identities that are unconventional for the depicted periods in history, thereby further expanding the "outsider" theme. In the 1930s, it was considered unacceptable for women to smoke and drink in public (42). Not only does Eudokia smoke and drink, she runs an establishment that permits both. Eudokia is a commanding

female character who "stood smoking alongside men, while serving them liquor" (42). While she operates her boarding house, pool hall, and an illegal drinking establishment, her husband Nicholas is largely absent while working shifts at the Steel Plant. Except for grandfather Ollie, there is an absence of strong male characters in the novella. Sheila hears stories about how Eudokia "was a single mother most of the time" (15). Eudokia's character slides in significance across both feminine and masculine identities. She is the matriarch of the family, but she takes on what would have been considered at the time to be a masculine role, as she runs her "speakeasy." In "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," Judith Butler explains that "*gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original*" (1494). The act of "taking on" a gender is theatrical, performative, and inevitably compulsory (1494). "Identity," or the concept of it, must continually be "established, instituted, circulated, and confirmed" (1493). Eudokia runs her bar, with authority, and a shrewd sense of business. When the bar is raided by the police, they hesitate in sending her to face a judge and a potential jail sentence, simply because she is a woman. Instead, they plan to arrest her husband Nicholas in her place. However, Eudokia refuses the gender identity expectations or "norms" of the time by insisting that she be the one who is arrested, since she was the one who committed the crime and ran the bar. While Eudokia is taken by the police, her husband Nicholas must take on a "maternal" function by caring for the children. Consequently, both Eudokia and Nicholas adopt identities that blur "masculine" and "feminine" social expectations of the time. This disregard for the "norms" of gender convention of the period establishes Eudokia's family as "outsiders."

All of the female characters in *Rule of Seconds* are unconventional, thereby contributing to their "outsider" status. The women typically overcome adversity, and disregard what others say about them. They are not particularly concerned about how they appear to others. Great grandmother Eudokia is not a good looking woman: "Eudokia, stocky, brazen and with a strong will was considered plain. Eudokia's skin was rough, her fingers, short and thick" (7). The novella presents women who have flaws, failures and triumphs, tempers, and rocky relationships. In spite of these behavioural mannerisms, the women in the novella are still successful in their own ways. And they all display a nurturing function typically associated with the feminine. Food imagery abounds in this novella, and the often questionable quality of the food preparations indicates how these women do not entirely adhere to a conventional maternal function:

> In a tight kitchen, Eudokia reheated a tall pot of leftover soup on the electric stove. Her daughter, Audrey, chopped up vegetables from the garden. She added them along with two cans of stock. 'Leftovers are *never* to be thrown out,' was my great grandmother's cooking philosophy. Even the oily, yellowy fat floating across the soup's surface was an integral ingredient in Eudokia's recipe. The soup pot was never empty, so it never required cleaning. (57)

Food imagery recurs throughout the novella, from one generation to the next showing how meals are prepared out of necessity, and not with the intention of nurturing bonds within the family. Great grandmother Eudokia's economical meals, grandmother No-No's weekly menu, mother Izza's unimaginative meatball recipes, as well as Sheila and sister Shadyn's modern recipes based on expedience rather than dining experience are all indicative of a work ethic that considers food from a utilitarian point of view. The

exception to this family "rule" involves great aunt Juanita's decadent desserts. As someone who has achieved relative wealth, Juanita views the purpose of food beyond its utilitarian function, and as a signifier of social status. Food helps to affirm their familial connection, while establishing an unstable feminine identity that does not quite match conventional social expectations.

Other characters in the novella also stand outside of "polite societal norms" because of their disorders, or disabilities. In this book, society is inherently hypocritical. What is deemed correct in public is not often practiced in private. Gossip and criticism abound, and compassion and understanding are often lacking:

> Gossip circulated through the neighbourhood. New parts of stories surfaced or juicier rumours took precedence over yesterday's news. Every day in the neighbourhood, women waved at each other across the street, but when backs were turned whispered under their breaths. (3)

The family members provide ample material for gossip among neighbours and themselves. Eudokia's illegal business, Adolf's misunderstood illness, the courtships and break-ups, the questionable behaviour of boarders, grandmother No-No's hoarding habits, Ollie's Alzheimer's disease, and Shadyn's co-habiting with her boyfriend, all generate rumour and hearsay.

The reasons for unconventional behaviour are subtle, but present. For example, the psychological reason for No-No's hoarding arises from the fact that her family endured poverty during the Great Depression. Her sense of "lack" carries on throughout her life. No-No experiences emotive "lacks" or absences. No-No's mother, Eudokia, left the Ukraine for Canada, thereby abandoning many familial connections. No-No's lack of

grandparents is aggravated by further absences arising from the fact that her two daughters have grown up and left the house. In addition, No-No's sisters have isolated themselves from her, and her husband is ill with Alzheimer's disease, a fact that she is in denial about and refuses to share with anyone. No-No deals with the multiple losses in her life by accumulating things instead of people. The accumulation of "stuff" becomes a way of trying to fill the emptiness at the core of No-No's being. No-No's daughter, Izza, has also acquired the hoarding habit, although to a lesser degree, as have Izza's two daughters Shadyn and Sheila, demonstrating that anxiety over absence or loss can be passed on inter-generationally. No-No's hoarding ensures that she remains an "outsider." Even Sheila, No-No's own granddaughter hesitates to visit, simply because there is no room in her grandmother's house or cottage. Oddly, the accumulation of "stuff" that No-No has hoarded as a way of seeking fulfillment, has generated more emptiness.

Other characters are also "outsider" figures. Both Sheila and her great uncle Adolf have epilepsy. Adolf is part of an older generation and lived during a time when a great stigma was attached to his illness. Shadyn explains to her sister Sheila how their great grandmother Eudokia's Ukrainian neighbours would gossip about Adolf and his condition: "They would say things like he'd been touched in the head, or touched by the devil's finger, he was crazy, or dangerous, they wouldn't trust younger children around him" (33). Adolf eventually dies from his disorder. Sheila, the narrator-protagonist, also suffers from epilepsy, but she lives several generations later, and societal attitudes have changed. The stigma is not as overt as it was with Adolf. But, Sheila places internal pressure on herself when trying to come to terms with the disorder. She confesses her concerns:

> When I became epileptic, I started worrying about such things, though I didn't really understand the implications of my condition. My doctor said my medication could affect pregnancy. When the time came, when I was old enough and ready to have children, he could put me on a lower dosage so the possibility of a birth defect was less probable. (54)

Later, when speaking to her sister Shadyn, Sheila confirms the fact that she feels outside of the social norms. She doubts that she will follow the more conventional path of getting married and having children. Her experience of epileptic seizures has made her feel like an "outsider" and has become part of her isolated state of mind:

> I knew I could never have children. I wouldn't. I couldn't watch my child endure such an attack. I couldn't bear standing by, unable to do anything to help, helplessly watching, waiting for the seizure to end, the way my mother had to when I was younger. (71)

Like Sheila, grandfather Ollie also experiences a sense of psychological isolation. He is aware that he has Alzheimer's disease, but hesitates to talk to his family about it. The narrator-protagonist's sister Shadyn, recognizes his symptoms because of her medical background, and speaks to Sheila about his condition:

> Have you noticed lately how grandpa Ollie is showing signs of memory loss? I think it's dementia, probably Alzheimer's. As a nurse, I recognize the symptoms, even if the rest of the family is in denial. I asked mom about it the other day. She changed the subject. (63)

Ollie's awareness that he will be unable to deal with his own illness leads him to commit suicide by the end of the novel. His wife's reticence in discussing the illness with anyone

further contributes to his isolation, while greatly reducing the possibility of gaining helpful medical attention. Ollie's sense of isolation is aggravated by his embarrassment over the disease and the fact that he speaks to almost no one about it. He only confesses to Shadyn that something is wrong with his mind:

> I think he's doing his best to hide it. But last time I saw him, he confessed to me that he felt something was wrong. He said he didn't feel right, wasn't thinking straight. (63)

Ollie's way of coping with the disabling illness is to remove himself from his family and his environment. After he leaves his physical and social environment behind, he is ready to isolate himself completely, by committing suicide.

In *Rule of Seconds*, the socio-cultural aspects of the characters as "outsider" figures are reflected in the literary stylistics. The ruptured narration is indicative of the fractured familial relationships. The image sets are indicative of various disabilities. The linguistic patterns are suggestive of the isolation and social hypocrisy within the family and the larger community. The juxtaposition of different timeframes and conflicting stories on the family and episodes in the past reveals a dialogism that is characteristic of a larger lack of consensus over what has happened in the past. As the narrator-protagonist Sheila states, "*The way the past unfolded depended upon who told it*" (1). Many questions are left unanswered. The novella is open-ended, raising epistemological questions about what we choose to believe and why we make such choices.

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