



# LEVEL FOUR

PERSONAL

READER



  
*The Good AND THE Beautiful*  
CURRICULUM

For use with the Level 4 Language Arts and Literature course

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# Carlotta

Written by Ella Maie Seyfert  
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## Chapter 1

# Carlotta

**Z**OOM! *Z-zoom! Tr-r-ill!* Papa Codelli was out on the porch tuning up his big, nickel-trimmed accordion. *Z-z-zoom! Z-zoom! Tr-r-ill!* Papa tugged at the heavy music wind box stretched between his arms. His head was tilted to one side as he listened for any false notes. *Z-z-oom! Z-zoom!* The accordion swelled out, then fell flat again, while Papa Codelli's stubby fingers pressed on just the right keys to bring out his favorite Italian songs.

*Z-z-zoom! Z-zoom! Tr-r-ill!* Round and round on the rickety, creaking porch floor his little Carlotta danced gaily. In her yellow blouse and bright green skirt, she looked like a swaying daffodil. Her dark eyes sparkled with excitement, and her tousled, straight black hair flew wildly around her head.

"Out of the way, Nick," she panted under her breath. "I'll step on you!"

Nick, their lazy brown dog, moved a little closer to the wall and squinted an eye at Carlotta's flying feet. He was used to these nimble feet, but tonight they seemed to be everywhere at once, so he hugged the wall a little closer.

Carlotta would dance until she dropped, but Papa did not have much time to play the accordion these summer days. Between tending to the automobiles at his gas station and garage beside the house and hoeing vegetables in their patch

in the back of the house, he was a very busy man, so Carlotta danced furiously when she had the chance.

*Z-z-zoom! Z-zoom! Tr-r-ill!* She knew that as soon as a car showed signs of stopping at the gas station, Papa would drop his accordion and the dance would be ended.

Every day hundreds of cars whizzed by Carlotta's little yellow house on the seashore road, and if only a few more would stop to fill up, Papa could soon buy a red truck to carry their vegetables to market and take the whole family on picnics by the sea.

*Z-z-z-z-z-sh-sh-h*—This time the accordion wheezed and collapsed with a groan when Papa dropped it on the seat, just as Carlotta knew he would. He ran across the sandy yard to fill up the shore bus waiting at the tank. Carlotta's dance had ended in the middle of a toe spin.

"Whew! I'm all dizzy!" she mumbled as she closed her eyes and staggered back to the kitchen where Mama was stirring grape jelly.

Mama pushed the big preserving kettle back on the hot stove and turned around. Her dark eyes beamed with motherly pride; her flushed face glowed with pleasure.



“Carlotta,” she said, “you danced beautifully today. You’re as light as a butterfly on your feet.”



Mama sniffed hopefully over the bubbling juice that would be spread on so many slices of Italian bread. “Take off your school clothes and put on your overalls,” she said above the scratching and scraping of the iron spoon in the preserving kettle. “You and Tony must weed the pepper patch until supertime. Hurry!”

Mama thought that weeding was easier than hoeing, and that was the reason she expected Tony and Carlotta to share their work. Mama was too plump to get down and weed. But Carlotta did not think weeding was such easy work! After an hour on her knees, the rows ahead of her looked so long, and her back ached from stooping over. Her short brown fingers were clogged with the sandy, muddy soil, but she reached out and grappled swiftly among the innocent green weeds, never mistaking a weed for a pepper plant. That would be very careless, for they needed many peppers to make their hot tomato sauce and to fry in olive oil.

Instead of whistling or humming, as the rest of the family did when they worked, Carlotta chanted a little song that she had made up to pass the time away:

*Eenie, meenie, minie, mo,  
How fast these weeds are sure to grow.  
If I don't pull them  
Heigh, hi, ho!  
They shoot right up and start to blow.*

Her head bobbed and kept time to each word as she repeated the catchy ditty over and over in an undertone. Far across the truck patch she could see Papa and Mama and hear their hoes clicking among the thousands of tiny stones that were impossible to get rid of. At first the sunshine had been pleasant on Carlotta's back, but now the straps and buttons on her overalls were beginning to burn like hot dots.

"I wonder if I have a blister on my neck," she muttered. "I can't feel with such muddy hands!"

She jumped up and twisted round and round on her toes, her muddy hands spread out on her hips. "Wh-e-ew!" She was hot and tired. Wouldn't a bright tin dipper of cold water taste good!

"I'd sooner dance when Papa plays his accordion," she said to herself. "Look at my muddy knees! Look at my fingers!"

"Eenie, meenie, minie—" She tried to step with the words. "My shoes are too heavy. Wouldn't shiny leather slippers be grand to dance in? Eenie, meenie, mi—"

No use. Her legs had no music in them.

"You're not quitting?" Tony asked her in surprise. "Don't quit, Carlotta," he coaxed. "Finish your row before you stop. Peppers won't grow if the weeds choke them out, you know. And if Papa has lots of vegetables to sell, he can buy the red truck soon."

At the mention of their red truck, Carlotta dropped quickly to her knees again. The weeds came out faster than ever and were tossed aside twice as far. Why, she could almost feel herself whizzing along in the red truck even now!

*Eenie, meenie, minie, mo,*

*How fast these weeds are sure to grow.*

*If I don't pull them*

*Heigh, hi, ho!*

*They shoot right up and start to blow.*

"Hey, Tony!" she said, jumping up again. "Do you think Papa will take me to picnics in our red truck?"

"Sure, any place," Tony called back. "And if he doesn't, I will—with my goat and cart. Hurry up, Carlotta, and finish your row; then we're done."

She dropped down on her knees again and grappled and stretched while big sweat drops ran off her nose. In three more "eenie meenies," her row was all weeded.

When suppertime came, Tony and Carlotta were so hungry that Mama thought she would never be able to fill them up.

"My gracious! My gracious!" she exclaimed with a merry twinkle in her soft black eyes. "It does you good to pull the weeds on your hands and knees. You eat like woodchoppers! Now, when I was a little bitty girl over in sunny Italy, we ate big roasted chestnuts because they were so cheap, very cheap. It was such fun gathering them out in the woods. *Nonna*, your grandmother, ground up the chestnuts and made them into little cakes, such funny-looking cakes! *Nonna* wrapped the cakes in dry chestnut leaves, like babies in blankets, and baked them between hot stones until they smelled delicious—yum! I



liked them! Do you think you would like chestnut cakes better than spaghetti and fried peppers, Carlotta?"

Tony and Carlotta glanced sheepishly at each other while Mama spooned more supper out on their plates. Mama told so many stories about sunny Italy where she and Papa had grown up together, but Papa never mentioned those old days. He was contented here in America.

"There," Mama said as she put an extra fried pepper on Tony's plate, "that will help you pull weeds tomorrow. Let's hurry and finish supper so Papa can read the Bible to us."

*BUMP!* The half-open kitchen door flew wide open. "Hello, Billy," Tony greeted his goat. "You want spaghetti, too?"

But Billy could only watch them from the woodshed where he was tied, for he was not permitted to cross the door. "Wait, old fellow," Tony said kindly. "I'll feed you soon."

Then, just for some fun, Papa jumped up suddenly and waved his arms over his head. "Yippi yi!" he shouted. "Get-a out! Get-a out! Ha, ha!"

Billy wheeled around and clattered out of the woodshed into the yard, making a noise like a pony.

"He's butting the washtubs. Listen!" Tony was doubled up with laughter. "He's cross because the rope holds him fast."

The kitchen rang with merriment. They did not act as though they were tired after working all day to help buy the new truck. They were never too tired to laugh and talk.

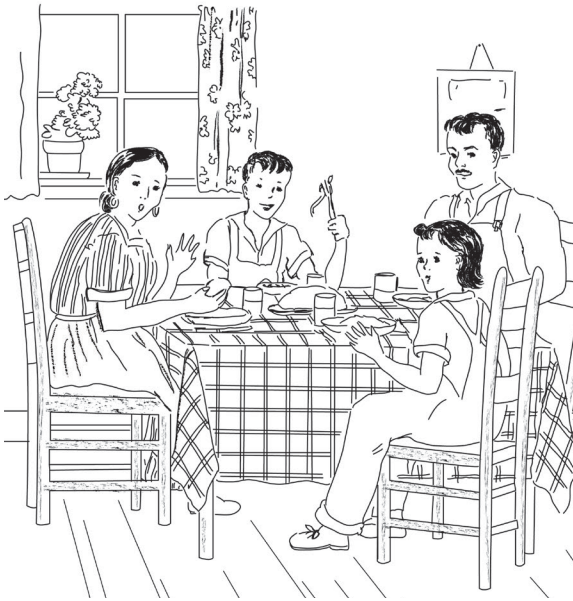
No one noticed that Carlotta was missing from the table. She had suddenly remembered an absent member of the family who would also enjoy the new truck. She was leaning out on the porch seat over sleepy old Nick.

“We’re going to buy a red truck,” she told him as she smoothed his silky brown coat with a gentle hand. “Won’t it be fun to go to picnics? I’m going to take you along. Listen! Hear the crickets under the lilac bush, Nick? Cree, cree—that’s their sleepy song.”

“Y-y-o-o-w!” he yawned and curled up tighter than ever.

“You’re too old to run around. You can sleep under the truck in its shade when we get to the park. We’re going to have a nice—” Carlotta’s voice died away in a whisper. Limplly, she

slipped down on the seat beside Nick. Her eyes blinked, then closed, and soon she was dreaming.



# PEDRO'S CHOICE



Written by Catherine Blanton | Illustrated by Harold Price



## Chapter 1

# Pedro's Ambition

**I**t was siesta time in Old Mexico. And all the people of San Juan were drowsing in the heat of the noonday sun. Only the cackle of the barnyard chickens and the grunt of a persistent hog rooting in the street broke the heavy stillness.

Pedro had tried to resist the urge to sleep that kept stealing upon him. But now, like the rest of the village folk, he had closed his eyes, slowly slipped into a more comfortable position on the ground, and was nearly asleep.

Suddenly he became aware of a long shadow passing by. He opened one eye. It was the priest.

Pedro sat up. "Buenas tardes, Padre," he said. "Should you be out when the sun is so hot?"

The father wiped his perspiring face and drew closer to the shade. "No, I suppose not, my son. But the little one of Señor Ortiz is very ill, and I felt I should not wait to go see them."

"Ah, I am sorry, Padre," said Pedro.

The priest came over and sat down on the grass by the side of Pedro. He picked up some papers lying nearby. "Drawing again," said the father. He studied the picture for a long minute. "Someday, Pedro, you may be a great artist and make all of Mexico proud of you."

But Pedro only grinned and said, "Oh, no, Father, I do not want to be an artist. I am going to be a bullfighter."

The priest shook his head sadly and said to the boy, "Bullfighting does no one any good, Pedro, and sometimes brings a great deal of sorrow. But your painting, now—it could make many people happy."

Pedro's warm smile lit up his dark-brown eyes as he replied, "But, good Father, you forget how much money I shall make." He threw back his head boastfully. "Why, I shall become the richest man in all San Juan. I shall build you a new church, and my mother will never have to work another day. You shall see that it is better for me to become a bullfighter like my Uncle José than to become a painter."

The priest laid a kind hand on Pedro's shoulder and smiled down at him. "You have fine dreams, haven't you? But I think you would be happier with a little plot of ground, your animals about you, and your pictures. Mexico needs men like that. Men who will work patiently in their fields, raising food for a hungry world, and then come in at night to enjoy the music they make on their guitars, the poetry they see in the stars, or, like you—

your pictures on paper. You should think much about it, Pedro.” He arose and brushed the dust from his black cassock. “Don’t forget to be on time for the drawing lesson in the morning,” he said at parting.

Pedro picked up his paper and looked at it closely. It was a picture of the one street in San Juan. Here was the house of Señor Reyes, the patio wall of Señora Carillo, and at the far end on a little hill stood the church. In one corner was the rooting pig, and in the center of the street stood a sleeping donkey. With a soft pencil, he traced the rough outlines of the bent and aged priest going in the direction of the church.

By the time the picture was completed, the siesta was over. Where once there had been so much quietness, there was now a storm of sound. Doors slammed; people called to one another across the street; children hurried out to play; and even the chickens, goats, and pigs became noisier than usual. The village of San Juan had awakened.

The door of Pedro’s house opened, and his mother put her head out. “Pedro,” she called loudly, then, seeing him under the tree, she dropped her voice. “Do you realize, my boy, it has been three days since I promised to get the laundry back to the hacienda? If it does not get there soon, they will think me not a lady of my word.” With her apron she shooed the flies from the door. “Come now,” she said. “It is already late, and if you do not hurry, dark will fall before you return.”

Pedro didn’t answer but continued his drawing. A fly settled on one of his big toes, and the red rooster, reaching for it, took a bite of his toe. With a loud “Ouch!” Pedro reached for the toe. When his mother began laughing, he had to grin.

“But it’s so far to the hacienda,” he complained, still rubbing his toe, “and the basket is always so heavy.”

“Ah, you lazy boy,” she scolded him. “If I wash and iron the clothes, surely you can carry them back and forth.” Her round gold earrings danced as she moved her head. “You’ll never be a bullfighter if you don’t give those legs some exercise. One doesn’t learn to be a matador sitting under a tree while the chickens eat one’s toes, you know.”

Pedro brushed off the seat of his white trousers, picked up the papers, and followed his mother into the house. Soon he came out carrying a basket on his head. There was a look of disgust on his face as he dragged his feet down the dusty road.

“Now, don’t play on the way,” called his mother, “and remember to hold on tight to the money in your handkerchief.”

Pedro answered with a grim “Sí, sí, Mamá,” and went on his way without looking back.

The afternoon was very warm, the dust in the road hot, and the basket seemed very heavy. He gave a sigh of relief and quickened his step as he caught sight of a small green bush. He’d sit and rest for a while. Surely Mamacita wouldn’t mind if he gave his tired feet and back a little rest. Of course, it would be only for a short time.

But the urge to nap that had been interrupted by the priest earlier in the day now overcame Pedro. For he had hardly set down the basket and placed himself under the small tree when he fell asleep. He couldn’t believe he had been asleep long. It seemed like such a short nap. But upon awakening he saw the sun was at the top of the mountains. Soon it would slip behind them, and the valley would be lost in darkness.



Picking up the basket, he hurried down the road, not stopping until he came to the door of the hacienda.

One of the maids came at his call and took the clothes. She told him to wait, that the señor had some dirty shirts for him to carry back.

“Ugh!” thought Pedro. “Clothes! Clothes! Always there are clothes to carry. And dirty ones will be heavier still.” He drew in a long breath, then consoled himself by saying, “But wait until I get to be a great matador, then see whose clothes I carry.” He threw back his head and laughed heartily.

An upstairs window opened, and a head came out. “Oh, it’s you, Pedro.”

Pedro smiled at the girl’s black head framed in the window. “Sí, Carmencita, it is I. I have returned the wash and am waiting for more.”

“Wait,” said the girl. “I’m coming down.”

Pedro smiled to himself. He liked the little Carmencita



who lived at the hacienda. Once she had given him some candy, and they had often played together while he waited for the clothes.

Carmencita's cheeks were rosy, and her breath was coming in quick gasps as she ran out the door. She stopped suddenly and smiled at Pedro, shyly. "W-w-we have some baby calves at the corral. Would you like to see them?"

Pedro could only nod his head dumbly, for suddenly before the happy Carmencita he had lost his tongue.

At the corrals, however, he quickly found it.

The red and brown spotted calves danced and capered about their big, fat mothers. Pedro and Carmencita looked on with admiration.

"My, there are so many," exclaimed Pedro. "What is the señor going to do with them?"

"After they are branded," replied the little girl, "they'll be turned out to pasture."

"Do you have one that is especially yours, Carmencita?"

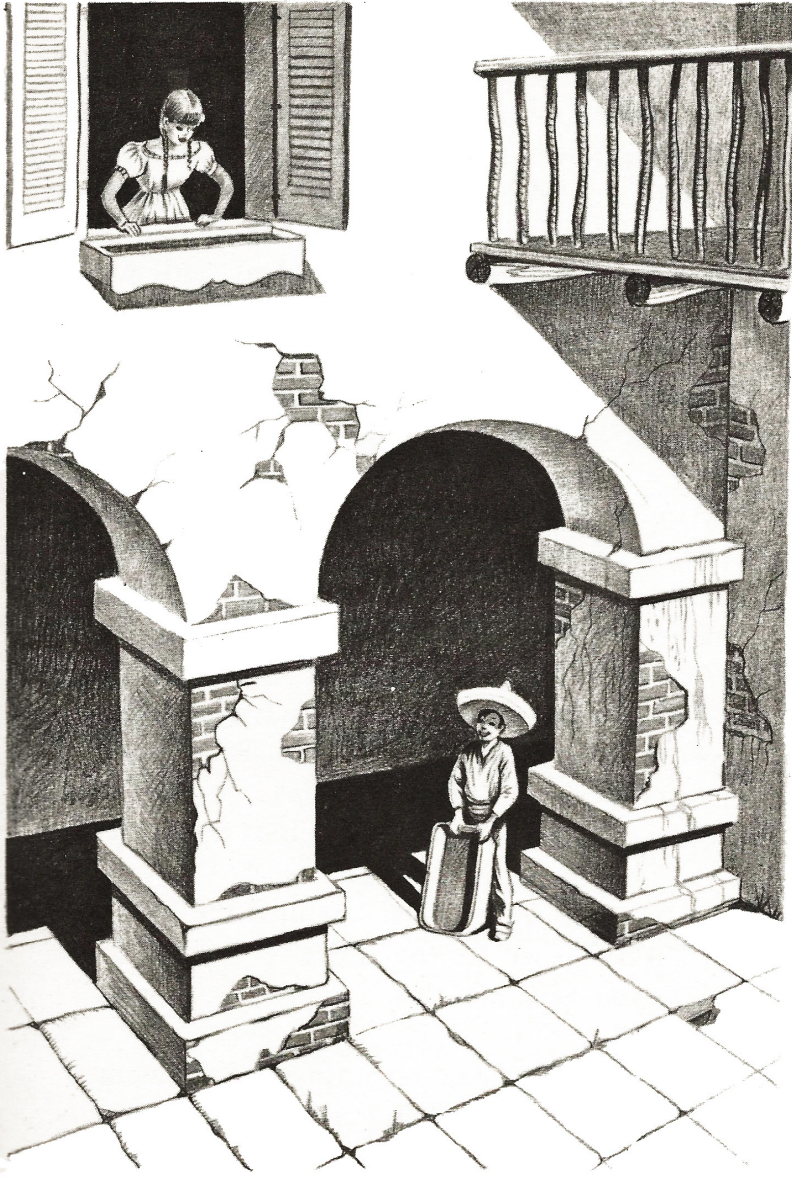
Carmencita looked a bit surprised for a moment, then tossed her long black braids and said proudly, "No, I guess they're all mine." Quickly she turned to Pedro. "Do you have a calf all your own?"

He shook his head. "No, Carmencita, my mother and I cannot afford to buy a cow." Suddenly he stood straighter. "But when I get to be a great matador like my Uncle José, then I shall own many cows. I'm going to have a hacienda much, much larger than this one," he added boastfully.

Carmencita stood very quietly, thinking. Suddenly she burst out, "How would you like me to give you a baby calf?"

Pedro stared in amazement. "Oh, but you couldn't. The señor wouldn't like it."

Again she tossed her head. "Oh, yes, I can," she exclaimed. "I can do anything." With that she turned and ran to the house.



THE

*Belgian Twins*



LUCY FITCH PERKINS

## *Chapter 1*

# The Harvest Field

It was late in the afternoon of a long summer's day in Belgium. Father Van Hove was still at work in the harvest field, though the sun hung so low in the west that his shadow, stretching far across the level, green plain, reached almost to the little red-roofed house on the edge of the village which was its home. Another shadow, not so long, and quite a little broader, stretched itself beside his, for Mother Van Hove was also in the field, helping her husband to load the golden sheaves upon an old blue farm cart which stood nearby.



There were also two short shadows which bobbed briskly about over the green meadow as their owners danced among the wheat sheaves or carried handfuls of fresh grass to Pier, the patient white farm horse hitched to the cart. These bright shadows belonged to Jan and Marie, sometimes called by their parents Janke and Mie, for short. Jan and Marie were the twin son and daughter of Father and Mother Van Hove, and though they were but eight years old, they were already quite used to helping their father and mother with the work of their little farm.

They knew how to feed the chickens and hunt the eggs and lead Pier to water and pull weeds in the garden. In the spring they had even helped sow the wheat and barley, and now in the late summer, they were helping to harvest the grain.

The children had been in the field since sunrise, but not all of the long, bright day had been given to labor. Early in the morning, their father's pitchfork had uncovered a nest of field mice, and the twins had made another nest, as much like the first as possible, to put the homeless field babies in, hoping that their mother would find them again and resume her interrupted housekeeping.

Then they had played for a long time in the tiny canal which separated the wheat field from the meadow, where Bel, their black-and-white cow, was pastured. There was also Fidel, the dog, their faithful companion and friend. The children had followed him on many an excursion among the willows along the riverbank, for Fidel might at any moment come upon the rabbit or water rat which he was always seeking, and what a pity it would be for Jan and Marie to miss a sight like that!

When the sun was high overhead, the whole family, and Fidel also, had rested under a tree by the little river, and Jan and Marie had shared with their father and mother the bread and cheese which had been brought from home for their noon meal.

Then, they had taken a nap in the shade, for it is a long day that begins and ends with the midsummer sun. The bees hummed so drowsily in the clover that Mother Van Hove also took forty winks, while Father Van Hove led Pier to the river for a drink and tied him where he could enjoy the rich meadow grass for a while.



And now the long day was nearly over. The last level rays of the disappearing sun glistened on the red roofs of the village, and the windows of the little houses gave back an answering flash of light. On the steeple of the tiny church, the gilded cross shone like fire against the gray of the eastern sky.

The village clock struck seven and was answered faintly by the sound of distant chimes from the Cathedral of Malines, miles away across the plain.

For some time Father Van Hove had been standing on

top of the load, catching the sheaves which Mother Van Hove tossed up to him and stowing them away in the farm wagon, which was already heaped high with the golden grain. As the clock struck, he paused in his labor, took off his hat, and wiped his brow. He listened for a moment to the music of the bells, and glanced at the western sky, already rosy with promise of the sunset, and at the weathercock above the cross on the church steeple. Then he looked down at the sheaves of wheat, still standing like tiny tents across the field.

“It’s no use, Mother,” he said at last. “We cannot put it all in tonight, but the sky gives promise of a fair day tomorrow, and the weathercock, also, points east. We can finish in one more load; let us go home now.”

“The clock struck seven,” cried Jan. “I counted the strokes.”

“What a scholar is our Janke!” laughed his mother, as she lifted the last sheaf of wheat on her fork and tossed it at Father Van Hove’s feet. “He can count seven when it is suppertime! As for me, I do not need a clock; I can tell the time of day by the ache in my bones; and, besides that, there is Bel at the pasture waiting to be milked and bellowing to call me.”

“I don’t need a clock either,” chimed in Marie, patting her apron tenderly. “I can tell time by my stomach. It’s a hundred years since we ate our lunch; I know it is.”

“Come, then, my starvelings,” said Mother Van Hove, pinching Marie’s fat cheek, “and you shall save your strength by riding home on the load! Here, *ma mie*, up you go!”

She swung Marie into the air as she spoke. Father Van Hove reached down from his perch on top of the load, caught her in his arms, and enthroned her upon the fragrant grain.



“And now it is your turn, my Janke!” cried Mother Van Hove. “You shall ride on the back of old Pier like a soldier going to the wars!” She lifted Jan to the horse’s back, while Father Van Hove climbed down to earth once more and took up the reins.

Fidel came back dripping wet from the river, shook himself, and fell in behind the wagon. “U—U!” cried Father Van Hove to old Pier, and the little procession moved slowly up the cart path toward the shining windows of their red-roofed house.

The home of the Van Hoves lay on the very outskirts of the little hamlet of Meer. Beside it ran a yellow ribbon of road which stretched across the green plain clear to the city of Malines. As they turned from the cart path into the road,



the old blue cart became part of a little procession of similar wagons, for the other men of Meer were also late in coming home to the village from their outlying farms.

“Good evening, neighbor,” cried Father Van Hove to Father Maes, whose home lay beyond his in the village. “How are your crops coming on?”

“Never better,” answered Father Maes. “I have more wheat to the acre than ever before.”

“So have I, thanks be to the good God,” answered Father Van Hove. “The winter will find our barns full this year.”

“Yes,” replied Father Maes a little sadly. “That is, if we have no trouble, but Jules Verhulst was in the city yesterday and heard rumors of a German army on our borders. It is very likely only an idle tale to frighten the women and children, but Jules says there are men also who believe it.”

“I shall believe nothing of the sort,” said Father Van Hove stoutly. “Are we not safe under the protection of our treaty? No, no, neighbor, there’s nothing to fear! Belgium is neutral ground.”

“I hope you may be right,” answered Father Maes, cracking his whip, and the cart moved on.

Mother Van Hove, meanwhile, had hastened ahead of the cart to stir up the kitchen fire and put the kettle on before the others should reach home, and when Father Van Hove at last drove into the farmyard, she was already on the way to the pasture with her milk pail on her arm. “Set the table for supper, *ma mie*,” she called back, “and do not let the pot boil over! Jan, you may shut up the fowls; they have already gone to roost.”

“And what shall I do, Mother?” laughed Father Van Hove.

“You,” she called back, “you may unharness Pier and turn him out in the pasture for the night! And I’ll wager I shall be back with a full milk pail before you’ve even so much as fed the pig, let alone the other chores—men are so slow!” She waved her hand gaily and disappeared behind the pasture as she spoke.

“Hurry, now, my man,” said Father Van Hove to Jan. “We must not let Mother beat us! We will let the cart stand right there near the barn, and tomorrow we can store the grain away to make room for a new load. I will let you lead Pier to the pasture while I feed the pig myself; by her squeals she is hungry enough to eat you up in one mouthful.”

# JOCKIE

A STORY OF



PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

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WRITTEN BY LILLA STIRLING | ILLUSTRATED BY BOB MEYERS

## CHAPTER 1

# A SURPRISE

*Clippity click! Cloppity click!*

The beat of clattering feet was coming from behind. Jockie looked back. A long line of trotting horses was pounding toward them.

“What’s up?” said Grandfather.

“There’s a big race coming behind us, Granddad,” said Jockie.

“That must be the quarter-mile dash from Lighthouse Point. We’d better be getting over.”

Whistling wheels and throbbing feet grew louder, louder.

“There’s three abreast,” shouted Jockie.

Two bays and a black were racing straight toward Jockie, Granddad, and Diana the horse.

“There’s a chestnut passing the others!”

The chestnut was panting, pounding right behind them. Grandfather was pulling Diana well out of the way.

Suddenly Diana stiffened back her ears and thrust her neck forward. Her feet caught the fire of the race, and she sped up to match the pace of the chestnut in the lead.

Grandfather’s feet were braced. He was pulling her back, but she wouldn’t slow down.

Pants, snorts, coughs, the ringing knock of steel and ice, the rasp of whips, shouts, and calls lashed about them.



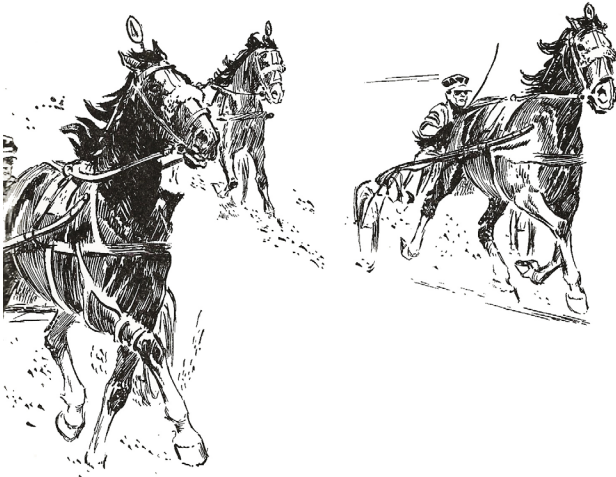
“Let her go! Let her go, Granddad!”

The chestnut turned at the flagged bush. Diana turned. The music of racing feet was in her blood.

Jockie grabbed Granddad. They were now heading back to Charlottetown, opposite to home.

“If I draw her up sharp, she’ll slide. I should have had new shoes put on her before I left town,” spluttered Grandfather.

They were thumping toward Lighthouse Point. People were racing along the bank, cheering, yelling, waving.



The two horses swept by the flagged finish line almost neck on neck—the chestnut only a few feet ahead of Diana.

Once they stopped Granddad got out and began rubbing Diana down. “I couldn’t stop her when she got going—I was afraid she’d slip and break a leg,” he was explaining.

Questions came from every side.

“How old is she?”

“A little under four,” said Grandfather.

“Will you sell her? What would you take for her?” Bob O’Shaunessey, who raised racing horses for the States, was asking. “I was watching her when she joined the race. If she can trot like that with a couple of bags of feed and a heavy sled, I’d like to see what she’d do on the track with a bike. I bet she’d match any horse on Prince Edward Island. Come on, MacQueen, what’ll you take for her?”

Grandfather shook his head. “I am sorry. She isn’t mine to

sell. She belongs to my grandson. He raised her.”

All eyes turned to a boy, small for his age, with a round red face, a freckled, turned-up nose, and smiling blue eyes.

“No!” said Jockie, shaking his head as if it were on a spring.

The crowd laughed.

“Not at any price?” asked O’Shaunessey.

“No!” said Jockie, shaking his head more violently.

The crowd roared with delight. “A mare without a price! That’s a good one on you, O’Shaunessey.”

“I’d be willing to put up money that that mare is a freak,” another man said. “My old man used to own her mother. She’s a bad breed.” Jockie’s ears burned.

Jockie looked at Grandfather. He was still talking and hadn’t heard. “I had never been thinking of her as a racer—just a good all-round little mare. We’ve a long drive ahead of us to Big Bay, so we’d better be going along.” Grandfather gathered the reins. “We want to get over the crack in the big ice before dusk.”

Above the clamor of the crowd, the announcer’s voice was ringing out.

“A handsome bridle donated by MacKenzie Brothers’ Saddlers goes to Frank Boyne, the winner of the quarter-mile dash. The second prize, a bag of oats, goes to Dick Ross.”

The hum of voices, the hearty laughter, and the clatter of feet melted into the heavy drumming of the wind.

Fine, feathery ice slivers began to dance.

Grandfather was peering through the white fuzz of snow. “If it gets much thicker, it will be hard to follow the bushes.”

Jockie wasn’t feeling, wasn’t listening. A bright parade of pictures was jogging across his mind. He was on the race track,

holding back Diana. People were calling, cheering, tossing caps and hats. He saw his father and mother home with their plants and bugs and science things from South America. They were there cheering, waving him on.

To think Diana, his Diana, was going to be a racer! Diana that had been his since that day when he stood waving on the pier, his father and mother waving back, waving until they became a gray blur against the distant boat. They'd gone. He, Grandfather, and Granny were standing alone on the pier. A cold, hard lump was gathering in his throat. He couldn't speak.

He didn't care if the jungles were full of fever and poisonous spiders; he wouldn't mind if he got sick; he wouldn't care if a poisonous spider bit him. Why weren't children allowed on jungle expeditions? He'd like the jungle. If he said anything, he knew he was going to be weak and cry. Dad had wanted Mother to go too. Jockie had thought he wouldn't mind, for he always liked to stay on the farm, but suddenly he wanted more than anything else to be on the ferry heading for the mainland.

When they had gotten home that night, Grandfather, coming in with the milk pails, had said, "I've something for you, lad. Come along out with me." Jockie had followed Grandfather to the barn, and there near Dugalina the mare, was a black foal, a long-legged, brand-new baby horse.

"She's yours, Jockie. Yours to feed, water, bed, and brush. You'll have to be gentle and train her too. When she's bigger, you'll be riding her all over the place. It's fortunate you stayed to give me a hand with her."

Suddenly the big, hard lump began to melt, to slip down.

"She's a pretty little thing!" Jockie had said.



That was almost four years ago, and since that day, the little black foal had been his big job—his friend. Jockie was her friend too . . . On the day Dugalina was first taken from her to help about the farm, long whinnies of loneliness poured from her baby throat. Jockie was there to comfort her with sugar, a sweet carrot, and rub the spots she liked best to be rubbed . . . On that nasty day when she got her first shoes, with terrifying sparks flying up from her heels, Jockie was beside her, his pockets full of carrots, his hands full of comfort, his voice low and soothing. Jockie was her friend . . .

Jockie's dreams snapped off.

"I can't see a sign of a bush. Do you see anything, Jockie?" asked Grandfather.

Jockie leaned forward, trying to peer through the curtain of spinning flakes. He wanted to push them aside with his hands.

"We could be right on the big crack in the ice and not see it. Take the reins, Jockie." Grandfather took a light crowbar from the back of the sled and began creeping along, tapping, listening.

"I can't hear or see a thing," he said.

Jockie's feet were like ice. His fingers holding the reins were stiff.

"Let me walk for a while, Granddad," he said.

"Jump round and get warm and keep a sharp lookout for the crack," said Grandfather, giving him the crowbar.

Jockie tried to run, pushing the crowbar ahead of him as if it were a hockey stick. The wind slapped icy splinters, stinging his nose and snapping his cheeks. On he crept, slipping, sliding, skidding.

*Whuff!* A sudden gust split apart the spinning white snow curtain. There stood a spruce, poking its green branches through the storm as if it were growing in the sea of ice, pointing out the way to go.

“I see a bush,” shouted Jockie. “A bush to the right!” He slithered on.

*Shlop! Shlosh!* Jockie stopped and listened. *Shlop! Shlosh!* The tide was jerking, yanking at the big crack, pulling its jaws further and further apart.

“We’re at the crack, and it’s wide open,” said Jockie.

Grandfather was out of the sled. They were looking down at the black, cold water clapping against the green wall of ice.

“It may narrow further up. Let’s follow it up toward the shore,” said Grandfather. “It’s almost dusk now. We’d never be able to follow the bushes back to town once it’s dark.”

They stepped cautiously along the crack, keeping close together.



“I think I could jump it now,” said Jockie.

“It’s not as wide as the sled now, but the mare would be afraid to try it. We’d never get her to cross it,” said Grandfather.

The wind spun a flying white web closer and closer about them. On, on they shuffled. Diana, stepping close behind, kept nudging Jockie’s back with her cold, soft nose.

“It’s just as wide here, Jockie,” said Grandfather. “It may be the same for miles.”

The wind hurled the snow clear across the ice, piling it into peaks and hollows along the shore.

“If the crack doesn’t narrow soon, we’d better make for the shore, unhitch, and follow the first light we see through the snowbanks.”

“Don’t you think, Granddad, she could jump it? I have seen her jump farther than that. Couldn’t we give her a try? Couldn’t we?” said Jockie.

“I have had horses that wouldn’t jump half that distance, not that they couldn’t easily do it. But they’re scared, like some people—they’re scared of the unfamiliar, the thing they don’t know.”

“Couldn’t we give her a try?”

“You’re right, Jockie. This snow may keep up all night unless the wind changes at sundown.”

Grandfather took the ax from the back of the sled and threw it across the crack. He jumped to the other side and began cutting notches. He fitted his two heels into the notches and began pulling Diana toward the edge of the crack with the reins.

“She’s scared, poor little creature. I knew she would be scared of what she’s not used to,” said Grandfather.

“Let me try, Granddad!”

Jockie leaped across. Instantly Diana was after him. *Scratch! Scrape! Bang!* The sleigh and Diana were on the other side, two feet beyond Grandfather. The reins shot out of his hands; his braced legs doubled up. Bang! He sat down. Jockie gaped, slipped, and slid down beside him. Jockie was rolling over and over, chortling with laughter, and Grandfather laughed too. Their laughter pealed out, echoed and re-echoed, resounding across the long gray stretches, breaking the loneliness of the drifting sea of ice. It sounded strange, indeed.

Diana stood by, waiting patiently.

“Well, did you ever!” said Grandfather. “I thought we’d have to pull and coax half the night—and then we wouldn’t be getting her across. I don’t know when I got such a start. I’ll be a little stiff after this—I can’t take the bangs as well as you young fellows can.” Still chuckling, Grandfather was pulling himself up. “I do believe the wind’s slackening. It seems to be turning.”

Through the haze of flying flakes, Jockie saw furry white knolls climbing along the shore.

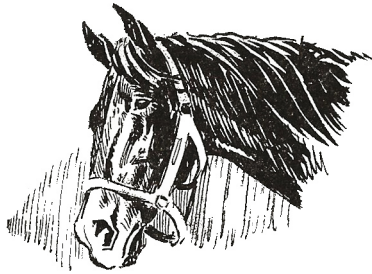
“The snow is letting up too,” he shouted. “I see the next bush and Ross’s Point.”

“Take the reins, lad. She’s your mare,” said Grandfather. “I’ll light the lantern. Your grandmother will be watching for us.”

Jockie took the reins. The wind was twisting south; the snow was easing up. They were heading for Big Bay—heading for the house on the hill with the lantern blinking on the gate. Granny had put it there to light them through the storm.

Granny was in the yard with an extra lantern when they came crunching up their lane.

“I was afraid something had happened,” she said. “Red Roary and Dannie Allan dropped by for their groceries and are milking the cows for you. You come along, Jockie, and get Diana’s mash. I have it on the stove. Are you half frozen?”



“We’re not so cold,” said Jockie. “We have lots to tell you, Granny.”

As soon as Diana was snug in the barn with a good, warm mash at her head, they came stamping in to big bowls of steaming clam chowder. They all gathered around. Granny sat by Jockie, beaming affection with her eyes and voice, listening to their news.

It was good to be home.

Talk rumbled across the table. Red Roary was speaking—“O’Shaunessey wouldn’t want to buy her on the spot if he hadn’t thought she was a good racehorse.”

Jockie sat eating his chowder. He was dying to ask a question. Would Diana race next Old Home Week? Jockie waited for a pause in the talk . . . talk . . . talk . . . Words poured back and forth; there was not a pause. “You’ve had a big day, Jockie. You’d better run along to bed,” said Granny.