

Remembering les Plaines D'Abraham

When Cora entered the house, it was very quiet. The sounds that would normally have greeted her, her grandmother's quiet footsteps or the squeak of the rocking chair, were absent.

"Grand-mère?" she called as she pulled off her cloak and set down her basket. There was no reply. "Grand-mère Marchand?" she called again. Puzzled, she walked into the kitchen and there was her grandmother, sitting at the kitchen table, holding something in her hand and weeping.

"Grand-mère!" Cora exclaimed. She sank down on a chair next to the old woman and hugged her. "What is it, what's the matter?" The old woman started at her touch, turning away and trying to wipe away her tears.

"Oh," she said breathlessly, trying to sound cheerful, "Corinne. I did not hear you come in chérie." As always, her grandmother's English was softly accented, a trace of her native French still audible in her tones. Cora loved to listen to her grandmother speaking French, although she didn't understand much. Cora had been born in the west, and raised in English. Her grandmother made to rise, but Cora held her in place. Her grandmother rarely called her by her full name, something must be bothering her.

"What's wrong?" Cora asked again. In all of her thirteen years she had never seen her grandmother cry.

"It is nothing," her grandmother said evasively.

"Something is bothering you." Cora said firmly, refusing to be deterred. She shifted her chair, keeping hold of the old woman's hands and looked directly into the old woman's eyes. They were still filled with tears.

"Oh, Cora," the old woman sighed resignedly. She gave sort of a half-smile. "I'm just an old woman, with old memories." She glanced down at her hands, clutched in Cora's. One of them was still curled, the object she had been holding locked tightly inside. "Do you know what day it is today?"

The question surprised Cora. "Of course," she replied, "it's a Tuesday."

Her grandmother chuckled. "C'est vrai, ma chérie, mais, do you know what the date is today?"

"Oh." Corinne thought for a moment, "It's the thirteenth, isn't it?" She frowned. She couldn't think why it was an important day.

"Bon," her grandmother said. "Today is the thirteenth of September. It has been many years..." her voice trailed off. She looked down at her hands again, and then pulled her clenched hand loose from her grand-daughter's and opened it. A large ring, silvery, but blackened with age lay inside, on her palm.

"It's terribly old." Cora said. "Who did it belong to?"

Her grandmother smiled wistfully. "It belonged to my brother," she said. "And mon père, before him." She rubbed her thumb along the edge in a familiar way.

