

# NISH

North and South

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# ELOISE

“Leon, shash a minuat tshutineti atusseu-katshi-tapa-takanif? Ka issishueiak tshetshi ashtet anite katshipaikanishit!”<sup>2</sup>

“Yeah. Just calm down. The computer’s downstairs.”

“Well, go get it then!”

“It’s only ten steps down . . . We’re watching hockey right now.”

“It’s just a pre-season game!”

“It’s October. It’s the last one before the real season. It matters!”

“Fine, but this is the last time! We leave it in the room, as we agreed.”

“Yes, sir!” laughs my brother, his hand at his brow in a salute.

Hockey. A true religion in this family, at least for my father and my brother. And Joce. Saturdays are always the same for us: Leon invites Joce over and they watch the Montreal Canadiens game with my

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2. Leon, did you take the computer again? We said we would leave it in the room!

father. My mother, on the other hand, gets on her tablet, goes to her room to read, or cooks, preparing two or three meals and the raw vegetables she'll encourage us to eat after school the following week. Since our house is very small, she can follow the game from the kitchen island, where she settles.

Sometimes I invite my friends Meli and Ati so I'm not the only one not watching the game, and we go down to the basement to watch a movie. Most of the time we're interrupted by outbursts like "Oh! Did you see that pass?", "What a goal!" or the classic "Top corner!"

Anyway, Saturdays aren't too bad at our place.

It makes sense. We don't really have anywhere else to go, especially when it's cold. Ati's house is always full and teeming with children — no room for us. And with her father often buzzed on weekends, she frequently stays over at our house. Meli lives in a quiet house — too quiet. Her parents aren't from here, and it shows in the way they live. So Meli finds herself playing two roles. She is a daughter of the South with her parents and a daughter of the North with us. Ati and I adopted her almost immediately when she arrived three years ago,

after she chose us to be part of her dodgeball team in phys. ed. We hated having balls thrown at us, but Meli gave us some tips, and we got (a little) better.

The sky-blue laptop my mother brought back from Quebec City sits on the basement couch, still open to the hockey stats site, which my brother must have checked before the game started. Mr. Know-it-all is going to impress the gallery again with his predictions and statistics.

When I click on the X to close the site, I see that my journal is still open. Crap! My brother must have read it. I'll have to be more careful. At least I was only talking about Ati and her father. Nothing Leon doesn't already know. I just hope he didn't read the part about Joce.

"Leon, you didn't read my stuff, did you?" I yell to make sure he hears me.

"I'm not interested in your girls' stuff, Elo!" Good.

I go to Google, then I type "Lac Orange Scheffer-ville."

Right away, four or five articles appear. From what I understand, a few years ago an anonymous person broke the story of a mine-polluted lake in

the area. It was my kukum who put me on the trail earlier today, when I went to bring her two hares that my brother and I had caught by snare. For a while now, my grandma has been telling us the history of our people, their good deeds as well as the injustices they have suffered. It seems that this story of Lac Orange had made a lot of noise in the province, even in Quebec City.

From the pictures I found, the lake in question was literally orange. “If they don’t know how to deal with nature, they shouldn’t come here!” Kukum’s words still resonate with me. Kukum told me that it was someone from the community who had brought attention to the situation and sent the photos to the journalists in Quebec City. But nobody really knew who it was.

Meli, who probably saw that I was online, sends me a message on Insta.

7:38 PM

**M**

Hi! Can I come to your place to watch a movie?