

CHAPTER I

The Chair

Sunday, September 15, 1985.

Dear Diary,

My family has embarked on the most exciting adventure to Canada's far North. Mr. Munro gave us something to look forward to when he told us the story about The Old One, who had his own chair in the kitchen.

Amy

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One particular chair in the camp kitchen, where all the meals are taken, is of great interest to the young Trapps. Since their arrival five days

THE OLD ONE

ago, they have been checking to see who would occupy THE CHAIR.

Bob Munro, the mine superintendent and their host, had advised them that this chair, closest to the serving counter leaning against the table, is reserved for THE OLD ONE.

“Who is THE OLD ONE?” Amy asked.

“You’ll know when you see him, I doubt you’ve ever seen anyone like him before,” replied Mr. Munro.

“Is he one of the owners?” Ty asked as he looked at Mr. Munro.

“No, he’s actually an old Inuk, he just comes and goes as he pleases. Let me tell you something about THE OLD ONE. One night last year when my wife, Gwen, and I came for supper, it began to snow and the wind started to blow. By the time we finished supper you couldn’t see your hand in front of your face. We thought the storm would blow over but it didn’t; it just blew harder. Before we realized what was happening, we were in a full-blown Arctic blizzard. Three days later, we were still stuck in the kitchen weathering the storm,” explained Mr. Munro.

“How come you didn’t go to your house?” inquired Amy, as she stared at Mr. Munro.

THE CHAIR

“When a blizzard strikes up here, you stay where you are. Under no circumstances do you ever leave a building during a blizzard. I can tell you with a great deal of sincerity there’s nothing that will make you wish you were somewhere else more than a howling Arctic blizzard.” Munro paused to let the group appreciate the dire warning about leaving a building during a blizzard. “As I was saying, about three o’clock in the afternoon of the third day, the kitchen door opened and in walked THE OLD ONE, accompanied by the howling wind and blowing snow. He shook the snow off himself and sat down in that very chair.” Munro pointed to the chair leaning against the table. “You should have seen the Inuk cooks; they just fell over themselves getting cookies and hot tea for THE OLD ONE. Gwen and I were just dumbfounded. We couldn’t believe anyone would be out in a storm like that! After he finished eating and drinking he got up and just walked out the door into that raging blizzard. I thought for sure I would never see him alive again! But about a week after the storm ended, there he was: as big as life, out near the pit! Right then I said to myself, there is something about that old man that I will never understand, and as long as I’m the boss, that chair will be reserved for him.”

“Does he work here?” asked Amy.

THE OLD ONE

"No, he doesn't. When we started to build the mine three years ago, he would come out and watch the work being done. When I think back now it seems that he would just appear, one minute he would be there and the next he would be gone. I can't recall ever seeing him coming or going," said Mr. Munro, a bewildered look on his face.

"Wow Jiminy-Willie-Peppers, you mean like magic?" Parker blurted out, his eyes growing larger.

"That's quite a saying, Jiminy what?" asked Mr. Munro.

"Oh, don't mind him Mr. Munro, he always says that when he's excited," explained Amy.

"Oh okay, well, I don't know. I wouldn't go so far as to say it's magic, it just seems that one minute he's there and the next he's not. I had asked if he was looking for a job, but the other Inuit miners said he didn't need a job; he lives by the old ways, off the land hunting and fishing. They told me he was just curious about the mine and wanted to see what was happening. One of the miners told me he doesn't speak English; they just call him THE OLD ONE. If he wants something he always lets us know through one of the Inuk fellows or by his actions," Mr. Munro said.

"He must have a name!" Ty said to Mr. Munro.

THE CHAIR

“Yes, he probably does, but everyone refers to him as THE OLD ONE, and that’s the only name I know him by. You’ll see him, don’t worry; he’ll be along one of these days. When you do see him I doubt you’ll ever forget him, he leaves a lasting impression,” replied Mr. Munro as he shrugged his shoulders and smiled at the kids.

The kids’ minds were running wild, trying to imagine who would be so important as to have his own reserved chair in the kitchen. Even Mr. Munro doesn’t have his own chair!

The kids checked the kitchen at every opportunity; they didn’t want to miss seeing THE OLD ONE. Their curiosity had been aroused. After all, Mr. Munro had said he seemed to appear and disappear at will. Amy was almost beside herself with the anticipation of meeting the mystery man.

After five days of checking the kitchen, the kids were starting to think they would never see THE OLD ONE. Amy kept up the watch religiously and continued to visit the kitchen whenever she could. Ty and Parker got lost in their new surroundings and spent most of their time exploring their new environment.