

# NISH

## Northern Lights

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*To all those who dream,  
change the world and help children smile.*





Chapter 1

# **A New Life**

# ELOISE

2:27 PM

**M**

So? What's it like in your new home?

2:28 PM

How can I put it? Different

2:28 PM

**M**

OK explain ... EXPLAIN! 😊

2:28 PM

I don't know what to tell you yet. We've only been here two days. I have a room all to myself. FINALLY!!! The house is full of people visiting us: my grandparents, my aunt and her daughters, my mother's childhood friends. There are so many boxes that I can't find the one with my clothes. I've been wearing the same clothes for two days. And it's hot. So hot!



Eloise

2:30 PM

**M**

The girl from the North moving to the South.  
Obviously you're hot! Don't you miss us?

2:31 PM

You know I do. But with the move and all this change, I haven't had much time to think.  
Is Ati with you? Have you seen Joce?  
How is he?

2:32 PM

**M**

No I haven't seen Joce.  
Ati told me she was babysitting today

2:32 PM

She's babysitting?

2:32 PM

**M**

idk. Anyway I miss you already. School starts in 10 days and you won't be there. It's gonna be weird!  
Ati won't be there either, so I'll be all alone

## A New Life

2:33 PM

No way! There's Elliott 😊

2:33 PM

**M**

Yeah

2:34 PM

Ah come on! You were pretty close this summer weren't you?

2:34 PM

**M**

We're not talking about him. We're talking about you and your brother. It just won't be the same

2:35 PM

I know right? We're so lovable. Hahaha!

2:35 PM

**M**

Don't exaggerate! 🙄

Eloise

2:36 PM

I already miss you too! 😊

I've barely finished writing the last word when I hear my mother enter the room. She pushes open the door with her foot and places a large box on my bed. The box is labelled "ELO CLOTHES."

"Yessss! Finally!" I exclaim, without taking the time to thank my mother.

"Your cousins would like to go play in the park with you. It would be good for you to get some fresh air. Maybe you'll meet some kids your own age?" says my mom, pulling my ugliest T-shirt out of the box.

"Honestly, Mom, kids my age don't go to the park."

"Regardless, it would do you good to get some fresh air."

"But it's so hot!" I say, wiping drops of sweat from my forehead.

"Get changed! You've got everything you need now. Come on!" she orders, pointing to the box, a half-smile on her lips.

## A New Life

Anyway, I can already hear my two cousins running toward my room. The younger, less shy one pulls on my arm so I'll follow, while the other sits on my bed. My mattress, actually, since I don't have a bed frame yet.

"Okay, I'm coming, but let me put on my shorts. I'll meet you outside in two minutes," I say, gesturing to the bedroom door with my chin so they'll get out.

*Ah, shoot, Meli!*

2:40 PM

**M** Elo??

2:45 PM

**M** Are you still there? Darn connection again

2:50 PM

Sorry Meli but this place is chaos. I have to go with my cousins. I'll be back later. I promise

I watch my tablet for a few seconds to see if she replies, but there's no sign of her. Too bad!

I run off after putting on a pink T-shirt and black shorts — the first decent outfit I could find. The only shorts I have I think.

My cousins, who obviously haven't been listening to me, shout from the living room, "Are you coming, Elo?"

As I leave my room, I notice that I've swapped my two best friends for my two cousins, who aren't even ten years old. Yikes! I'll have to do something about that. At least I've got my brother.

"Well, are you coming?" I say, standing in front of them as if I'd been waiting for them for an hour.

The park isn't very far from the house. A ten-minute walk, I'd say. Everything's pretty close here. The village isn't very big. I often ask, "Is this still Wendake?" and my mother replies, "Well no, we've been in Loretteville for a long time." It's amazing how small it is!

There used to be a big forest behind here, where my mother used to play or go snowshoeing when she was little. But since then, they've built lots of houses and there's not much of it left —

## A New Life

just a little portion it seems. Tomorrow Leon and I are going out with my father. There's a river not far away.

So far what I've seen here are beautiful properties. Nicer than in Matimekush anyway. They're a bit like the beautiful cabins for white mine workers in Schefferville. But it's so different from Matimekush. Here they've put up fences between the houses. It's weird! It's as if people don't want us on their property. Personally, I think being able to move around everywhere makes it like a great big playground!

I'd already noticed all this when I came to visit my father in June, but now it seems that knowing I'll be living here all the time is changing the way I look at things. My father said he'd buy us bikes because people don't ride ATVs on the streets here. Yikes! I've never ridden a bike in my life except a tricycle when I was a toddler. That'll be a sight!

As soon as we see the park, Alice and Jeanne let go of my hand and run to the slide. They obviously know the place.

Alice says, "That's our school," pointing to the beige and brown building next to the park.

“Oh yeah?” I exclaim as if I didn’t already know. “And Watha is the name of your school? What does it mean?”

“It means *maple* in Wendat,” explains six-year-old Jeanne, proud to know the answer.

“Oh . . . maple . . .”

“Come! Let’s go to the longhouse,” says Alice, pulling me by the hand and leading me into a tiny playhouse reminiscent of traditional Wendat longhouses.

Inside everything is made of wood, and you can sit right on the dirt floor. It feels good to be here.

“This is beautiful!”

“Yeah, right?” says Jeanne, even prouder. “You don’t have that at the North Pole, do you?”

“Not really, no,” I reply with a smile.

They’re both so cute.

Looking around the playground, I notice a skate park behind the water park where Jeanne, who can’t keep still, wants to take us. There are five kids there who look about my age — four guys and a girl. The girl is on her skateboard as we walk, or rather run, toward the water park. Wow! She’s solid! The only thing I’d be able to do on a skateboard is fall. That

would be impressive. She jumps, takes her board in her hands, lands on her four wheels without falling, then rolls in our direction. She spots us but immediately returns to her acrobatics.

“Elo, are you coming with us?” asks Jeanne.

“Hmmm . . . I’d rather watch from here, okay?” I say, settling down on a bench.

My young cousin looks disappointed for three seconds, then hurries off to play in the play area, where there are three boys a little older than her who seem to have come alone, as well as a baby who can barely walk, with his mom. It’s a crowded place.

“Look, Elo! Look!” says Alice, whirling around under a big, orange flower that spits out water.

“Yes, yes, I see you!” I say, not very convincingly.

“But look at me. I’ll do it again.”

I just smile and turn my attention to the skate park, where there’s a very small boy who clumsily tries to skate and falls twice. A quick glance at my cousins and I see that Jeanne is standing back a bit, the three boys taking up all the space. Fortunately, the baby’s mother warns them. I can hear them talking to each other in Innu-aimun.



“Usham, namaieuta uinuau auassissat utapunau,”<sup>1</sup> calls out the tallest of the three, certain of not being understood.

“Tshika ui akua aitunanun,”<sup>2</sup> I reply dryly in Innu-aimun, with Jeanne and Alice watching.

The boys are stunned that I’m answering them in their own language. And then, as I expected, the tallest one signals to the others to leave. Alice and Jeanne are quick to ask me what I told them.

“Only that the water playground isn’t just for them,” which I state with a bit of a twist of the truth.

“The big one’s name is Jules. He’s in sixth grade. He’s not very nice to the little kids. Once he made Jeanne’s friend Valerie cry.”

“Oh yeah, eh? Well, they’re gone now. Would you like an ice cream?”

“We’ll stay . . . just a little longer!” says Alice, before racing off again under the spray.

Then I hear the sound of a skateboard approaching. Turning around, I see the awkward little boy, who turns out to be a short-haired girl, rolling toward me.

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1. That’s because this is no place for babies.

2. You still have to be careful.

## A New Life

“Kwe!<sup>3</sup> You’re babysitting them?” she says, pointing to my cousins with her chin.

“Not really. They’re my cousins.”

“Really? We’ve never seen you in the village, though,” she replies.

“I just got here two days ago.”

“Where are you from? Pessamit?”

“No, from Matimekush.”

“From where?”

“It’s the northernmost Innu community. Schefferville?” I ask, hoping she knows what I’m talking about.

“Ah yes . . . the mines . . . My uncle . . . Anyway, I know it a little,” says the girl, rolling her skateboard with her foot.

My interviewer doesn’t have time to finish her words when the older of the two guys cuts her off and says he’s going back home. She nods her understanding, then turns to me.

“My brother,” she says, rolling her eyes.

“Yeah, I’ve got one of those too.”

“Do you skateboard?”

---

3. Hi!

## Eloise

“Uh, no, not really. Let’s just say I’m better at snowmobiling,” I say, trying to smile.

“Anyway, we’ll be seeing each other again. My name is Frederique.”

“I’m Elo . . . Eloise.”

“Okay, well, see you later!” she says, already on her skateboard.

Jeanne is now standing next to me, shivering.

“We didn’t bring any towels. I’m cold, Elo.”

“Yeah, me too,” adds Alice, awkwardly trying to put her shoes back on. “And I want an ice cream because I’m hungry.”

“Yes, ma’am!” I say, saluting with my hand on my forehead. “Okay, well, we’ll just have to go back home.”

“Do you have ice cream at home?”

“Ah, yes we do. It’s the first thing my mother bought for two mischievous little girls I know,” which I call out before I start running, knowing they’ll join me.

The return trip takes less than five minutes, and the girls are demanding ice cream as soon as they enter the house, forgetting to dry off. My mother winks at me and tells them there’s none left, that they’d eaten it all while we were away. Undaunted,

## A New Life

Alice runs to the freezer and pulls out a small box of fudgesicles, claiming she's also seen vanilla ice cream.

“Oh, it's a magic freezer!” exclaims my mother, winking at me again.

“Not even,” says Alice before plunging her hand into the box.