

Remoulade & Ramos

*A Love Story
to New Orleans*

Byron Miller, CSsR



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“

*New Orleans, like other great cities,”
he pronounced, “has a foundational
story—one that my grandpa told me
and his grandfather told him.
And I intend to pass it on to you
today—admittedly with a few
embellishments of my own.*

”

*“Meet me under the cathedral clock
by five.”*

That was what my grandfather instructed me to do, except that now it was a quarter to six.

“Gramps, I’m on New Orleans time,” I said defensively as I ambled in his direction.

“You refuse to be rushed,” he mumbled.

“Like a Ramos gin fizz.”

He seemed more eager, though, than impatient.

We walked in the shadow of the towering Saint Louis Cathedral to a bench in Jackson Square, where a shady magnolia tree had dropped a pile of curled, antique white petals. Across from us stood a fifteen-ton equestrian statue of General Andrew Jackson, hero of the Battle of New Orleans. Chiseled

on its granite pedestal were the words: *The Union must and shall be preserved.*

"I am proud of you, my boy," Gramps lauded. "Your grandmother is smiling down upon you, too. Your graduation last week brought a lot of happiness to our family. And it brought back memories of when I got a diploma like yours and then immediately enlisted in the service."

Gramps was a month shy of his seventieth birthday. Shortly after my grandmother died of cancer three years ago, he suffered a heart attack and needed bypass surgery. Then he surprised us all and moved back into the double-shotgun in Old Algiers, where he was raised. He had kept the house as a rental property all those years. Gramps liked to say that his own father was born in a bed in

that home. He slept in that same bed every night, and eighty-eight years later, he died in the same bed he was born in. "But," Gramps said with a wink, "every thirty years or so, he would turn over the mattress!"

Now Gramps spent much of his time taking the Algiers ferry across the river to the French Quarter like he did when he was younger.



"You know what a *rite de passage* is?" Gramps asked.

I nodded confidently to give the impression that I did.

"I didn't think so. Neither did I."

He added, "I want to accompany you on one now, like my grandfather did when I

graduated high school. And—you guessed it—his grandfather did the same with him when he graduated.”

As we began walking, he placed his hand on my shoulder.

“Have you ever heard of Romulus and Remus?”

I nodded confidently to give the impression that I had.

“I didn’t think so. Neither did I.”

And then he proceeded to tell the story of the mythical twin brothers placed in a basket and abandoned on the banks of the Tiber River.

“In a flood,” he explained, “the basket floated downriver to a swamp and got entangled in the roots of a fig tree. It was there that the twins were suckled by a

she-wolf and nourished by a woodpecker. Eventually, a shepherd discovered them, and he and his wife raised the twins as their own children. Later, Romulus established a city and named it after himself. Today," Gramps concluded, "we know it as Rome, the Eternal City."

The calliope on the paddle-wheel riverboat whistled as we waited to cross Decatur Street toward the Mississippi River.

"New Orleans, like other great cities," he pronounced, "has a foundational story—one that my grandpa told me and his grandfather told him. And I intend to pass it on to you today—admittedly with a few embellishments of my own."