

# Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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## Summer in the Bayou

Thomas Schneeweis

**Mystery: A young teenage girl visits her Aunt in the Bayou near New Orleans. She discovers that she can understand and speak to the local animals and joins their fight against those attempting to destroy the local environment.**

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### Abstract

The title of the book relates to a young teenage girl, Jean, who spends the summer at her Aunt's house in the Bayou just outside of New Orleans. The story centers on the attempt of corporate interests to take over the area for its oil and mining resources and how Jean and her newly found animal and human friends (She discovers that she has the unique skills to talk to animals) attempt to keep the land and its heritage from external development. The story also goes back in time to when the 'Bayou was formed' and how this history of the Bayou impacts Kathy, her family and those around her in the battle for ownership of 'Bayou' resources.

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# Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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## Preface

I am sure that as all of us grew up, our pets often became our best friends. They were always there, listening without questioning who we were or what we were about. So, to all of our animal friends, I am sure everyone joins me with a big thank you.

# Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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## Summer in The Bayou

<b><u>Chapters</u></b>	<b><u>Pages</u></b>
Chapter 1: The Bayou	4
Chapter 2: The Secret	18
Chapter 3: Dinner	34
Chapter 4: Church	40
Chapter 5: Townies	45
Chapter 6: The Plan	53
Chapter 7: The Levee	64
Chapter 8: The Practice	73
Chapter 9: The Opposition	83
Chapter 10: The Adventure	88
Chapter 11: The Plan	100
Chapter 12: The Standoff	105
Chapter 13: Home	111
Chapter 14: Practice	119
Chapter 15: The Game	127
Chapter 16: The Meeting	132
Chapter 17: Basketball	138
Chapter 18: The Exploration	145
Chapter 19: Sidebar	147
Chapter 20: Outside the Lines	150
Chapter 21: Surprise	152
Chapter 22: The Party	156

# Thomas Schneeweis: Books

---

## Summer in the Bayou

### Chapter 1: The Bayou

“What am I going to do here all summer?” Jean asked, as much to herself as to her Aunt. “There is nothing to do here or anywhere around here.” Jean spoke up so her Aunt could hear her.

“Why don’t you go just go down to the creek?” her Aunt called out from the kitchen. “The creek?” Jean replied as she looked out the window to the creek which ran about thirty yards from the front porch of the house.” “The land around here is full of adventures” her Aunt yelled back. “Don’t be scared. Why don’t you just walk down to the dock on the creek, take the pirogue out and see what is happening on the Bayou?” “What is a pirogue?” Jean said as she walked into the kitchen. “Oh, that is what we call that little boat that has a flat bottom so it is perfect for going up and down the Bayou.” As Jean looked out through the window again and past the tree. In the distance, she could see a small dock which reached out into a creek that headed off into the Bayou. Tied to the dock was a small boat about eight feet long and three feet wide with a flat bottom. That must be the pirogue my Aunt is talking about, Jean thought. It is certainly not the kind of boat I want to be found in.

Jean did not like to be out in the country. Jean had just turned fifteen. She missed her friends. She missed talking to them about cloths, music and, oh yes, boys. Her Aunt’s house was located on a small inlet just south of Lake Patrine. The lake was in an area south of New Orleans known as the Bayou. The Bayou area is noted for all of its wild vegetation as well as the small inlets running from the area south of New Orleans out to the ocean. The Bayou was old, but Lake

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

---

Patrine was new. The lake was formed when a Levee was constructed about two miles north of her Aunt's house as a means to control the water level in the area south of New Orleans. The land between her Aunt house and the Lake was now a natural preserve where humans were not permitted to enter and it was a center of controversy between the locals, area developers and the State of Louisiana. The nearest 'real' town to her Aunt's house was Teroit. Teroit was just two miles southwest of her Aunt's house. The Town was named after one of her Aunt's ancestors, a William Teroit, who was part of a group of French Canadians called the Acadians who came to inhabit the area in the mid 1750's. The area south of Louisiana was then the frontier of America and the water around the area reminded the Arcadians of their homes in Canada. When they arrived in New Orleans, the land was populated primarily by the local Indians as well as Spanish adventurers. The Arcadians today are known as Cajuns and over the years they kept to themselves and developed their own unique culture and lifestyle.

Jean knew little about the Bayou or the Cajuns. While her Aunt had visited Jean's family in New Orleans, she had never visited her Aunt's house in the Bayou. Her Dad simply had never made her go there and she had no interest in going. There was no mall and no friends to go with her. Her Aunt had a TV, but it was a small one and it only received one channel since cable and/or Wi-Fi had yet to make it to her Aunt's end of the Bayou. On top of it, Jean's Aunt was weird, even weird by New Orleans' standards, and that is very weird.

Jean finished her breakfast of scrambled eggs mixed with some local herbs. It tasted like nothing she had before and while she would not admit to it, they were the best eggs she had

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

---

ever eaten. “Well if there is nothing to do in the house, I might as well go down to the Creek” Jean said as she put on her boots and headed for the door. “Dinner will be ready about six,” Aunt Philomena called out again from the kitchen. Aunt Philomena was not her real Aunt. Her Dad’s Dad had disappeared on a fishing boat when her Dad was just two. He had no memory of him. When her Dad’s Mom had died unexpectedly when he was just four, his Mom’s best friend, Philomena Theroux, asked if she could raise him. He had no immediate family so there was no other real choice. Her Dad said that he had always called her ‘Aunt P’. Though she was not his real mother, her Dad always said that Aunt Philomena had dedicated her life to making sure that he felt loved and secure.

Jean understood what it meant to be raised by a single parent. Jean’s own Mother had died while giving birth to Jean’s younger brother, Ted, when Jean was only three. Ted was two months premature and when Ted was born her father was out on the Gulf working on Tulane University’s “Bio” boat or that is what he called it. Tulane University was one of the county’s major research centers on the interaction between the environment and economic development. It was not his fault, but he never forgave himself for not being home and from then on dedicated himself to raising her and Ted. This year, however, her father was taking Ted with him on the ‘Mileen Summer’. The Mileen Summer was one of the Tulane University’s newest research boats and Jean’s Father had just been appointed the new head of the Tulane Oceanographic Research Center. As head of the Center’s environmental mission of analyzing the Gulf’s water environment and the animals in and around it, her Dad had to spend each summer out in Gulf. This year he was taking Ted with him. Jean was both excited about not

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

---

having to look after her younger brother and yet at the same time she felt a little alone not having anyone to look after.



Aunt Philomena's House

"Don't be scared" her Aunt yelled out. "There is nothing out there that can hurt you." "OK, but outside looks really boring" Jean replied as she opened the door to the outside. As she exited the door, she took a right across the old wooden porch, down the worn wooden stairs, past Old Blue, her Aunt's dog, past the tire swing her father played on when he was a boy, through the old trees with the dilapidated tree house that her dad had often spoken of and down to the dock next to the creek which lead into the Bayou. "What to do?" Jean thought. She looked up into the sky and saw a hawk circling the small boat house next to the dock. Today the boat was simply tied to a post on the dock. She walked over to the boat and pushed it with her boot. It waved gently in the water. "Scared" she thought. "I'm not scared." When she and her brother were together, her brother was always trying to get her to do crazy things like taking a boat out on Lake Pontchartrain which is next to the center of New Orleans. Whenever she said no, he simply said that she was scared.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

She pushed against the boat again. It simply waved up and down in the water. "I'll show them" she said as she stepped into the boat. It rocked back and forth for a second and then settled down. "This is nothing," Jean thought. "What is there to be scared of?" She then took one of the poles that laid on the bottom of the boat and pushed it down into the thick mud beneath the dock. Small bubbles came up from the bottom of the creek but nothing else. "Well" Jean said out loud if for no other reason than to hear some sound in the quiet that surrounded her. "No snakes, no gators, no turtles, no nothing, nothing to be scared of." Just then a brisk wind came down the creek, took hold of the boat and swung it out from the dock. The rope that was holding the little boat to the dock came loose and the boat went off down the creek. Even worse, before she could get a better grip on the pole she was holding, the wind and water tore it from her hand as well.



Aunt Philomena's Boat House

Jean felt herself moved back, tripped over the one wooden seat in the middle of the boat and fall into the boat's stern. She hit her head on the back of the boat and when she woke up and looked around she could tell she was not near her Aunt's house any more. Everything was



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

---

different. The trees were different, there were stumps in the water, there was moss on the trees and the boat was resting on the edge of what looked like a small island in the middle of the creek. "Well what a fine mess I have gotten myself into" Jean said out loud. She carefully walked to the front of the boat, took the rope which was tied to the hook on the small front deck of the boat and pulled the boat further up onto land and out of the water.

From what she could see, it was a very small island, maybe about the size of the mall she went to in New Orleans. The sun was still high in the sky so she knew she could not have been unconscious for long. She thought she could see a small shack or a series of them in the distance and she started to walk towards them. She had not gone over twenty yards, when she climbed over a fallen tree, stepped into a pool of water and fell flat on her face. When she picked herself up, she heard a voice. "Well that must have hurt," Jean looked around. "Who said that?" Jean asked. "Over here" the voice called back. "Over where?" Jean repeated, "I do not see anyone." "Anyone or anything" the voice called back again. "Down here on the log next to the pool water you stepped in." Jean looked down. What she saw was a very normal looking frog holding a lily pad above his head and staring back up to her. "Yep" it said. "That's me." Jean fell back over the log and into the water again. "Well that's twice" the frog said. "Once more and you'll be wetter than I am."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

---



Zen Frog

“You’re a frog” was all that Jean could get out of her mouth. “Correct” the frog said, “but that is not all that difficult to see.” “But you can talk” Jean called out. “Again, obvious” the frog responded. “But frogs can’t talk” Jean exclaimed. “Oh yes we can” the frog replied, “it is just that most of the time we do not want you to hear us and few humans would understand us if we did.” “Well, I am sure that if we could I would have heard about it by now” Jean said emphatically. “You don’t believe everything you hear do you? Often truth is stranger than fiction” the frog said matter-of-factly. Jean did not know about that but nothing had ever prepared her for this; not her school, not her Dad, not even her very weird Aunt. “You should feel fortunate that you have the power of ‘Zoolingualism’ or what we call in the animal kingdom the ‘Dr. Dolittle’ syndrome. It is very rare.”

“Are you scared?” the frog continued. Jean was sitting on the log now, brushing off the twigs and moss from her jeans and running her fingers through her hair. Jean turned back to the frog. “A little” she said. “That is of no surprise” the frog replied. “If I woke up to find myself in the

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

---

city one day near your house I might be a little scared myself. Being a little scared at times is nothing to be ashamed of, but one must learn to be comfortable with where, who and what we are.” “What?” Jean yelled, “I am in the middle of an island, in the middle of the Bayou, talking to a frog. Be comfortable, are you crazy?”

“Are you?” the frog said. “We have a saying in my little world. Where ever you are, there you’re at. And at this moment you are right here and I must say this is not a bad place to be. You see over there, that is the home of the Murdocks. They have lived on this island their whole life. Nicest people in the world. They will take you to where you ever need to go, so in fact you are not lost, only in a different place. And alone, well around us are the trees and all of our friends in the trees. About 30 yards up the trail you will find one of my friends, 'Rippet' and a little farther down another old friend call 'Lazy'.” “Then what is your name?” Jean asked. “Oh, what’s in a name?” the frog repeated. But Jean kept looking down at him. “Ok, I am known as Zen Frog in the Bayou, but my friends call me ZF for short and yours.” Jean had never been asked her name by a frog and it kind of startled her. She rose up from the log, and raised herself to her full height of five feet eight inches tall. “I am Jean, Jean Theroux” she said “and I am almost fifteen years old.” “Well” ZF said, buffing himself up to his full size of almost six inches, “I am glad to meet you Jean and I am, well I am well over twenty years old in frog years and that is very, very old in your human years.”

“So, what are you doing here?” ZF asked. “Well, if you must know. I am just visiting family in the area. What are you doing here?” Jean asked ZF. “Well, if I don’t say, I kind of look after this

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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island and the creatures on it both animal and human.” “Well, that’s a pretty big job, especially for such a small animal” Jean spoke up. “Hold it young Lady, have you not yet come to realize that sometimes the biggest things come in the smallest packages” ZF replied.

“I am sorry, it is just that everything is so much different than I expected when I first came here. My Aunt always tells me to mind my manners, so I would love to stay and talk” Jean said, “but I have to get back to my Aunt’s house before she finds I am gone.” “Your Aunt’s house?” ZF said quizzically. “Yes” Jean answered, “my Aunt Philomena.” “Well that explains a lot” ZF replied. Jean did not pay much attention to what Zen said because she was looking down the path toward the houses in the distance. “Well” Jean said. “I look forward to talking with you in the future.” “I would hope so” ZF replied. “We do not have much of a chance to talk to humans. They are so busy doing this and doing that we hardly ever see them in the Bayou these days.” ZF gave a quick wink and disappeared under a lily pad.

Jean headed down the path toward the group of houses in the distance. As she was getting closer, a young man, Tomas, came on to the porch and looked down the path at her. “I wondered how long it would take for you to make it here” he said. “What?” Jean said, as she approached “How did you know I was coming?” “Well” Tomas replied. “If you live in the Bayou long enough you learn its secrets. In this case, I heard the birds and other animals in a fury, so I knew something had disturbed them and I knew something or somebody was coming. I guess it was just you?” “Not just me.” Jean was about to talk about the frog, but found it best to keep quiet. “I am sorry to bother you” Jean said. “But I lost my push pole when I was out on the

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

---

creek and I need help getting back to my Aunt's house, her name is Philomena Theroux. Can you or someone help me?" "Sure" Tomas said. "You have to be careful. It is pretty easy to get lost out here if you do not know the area. I will go get my boat and we will tie yours behind it and get you back to your house." "Do you know where it is?" Jean asked. "Of course," Tomas said. "Everyone knows where Philomena Theroux lives."

As Tomas towed Jean's boat up the Bayou, Jean turned to Tomas. "Thank you for helping me. My Aunt would never let me out of the house alone if she found out that I almost got lost in the Bayou. I was just bored. I have only been here about a week, but what do you do for fun?" "Well most of us work for our families during the summer", Tomas replied. "My Dad runs a Shrimping business. We were hit pretty hard by the Hurricane and then the BP Oil spill, but things have started to get better in recent years." "I guess you know my Aunt?" Jean asked. "Well my Dad knows her better than I do" Tomas said. "He and your Dad grew up together. When he heard you were coming this summer, he was looking forward to see your Dad." "Well, I really don't know when he is going to be here. My Dad is out on a special boat from the University. He is spending the summer checking out the environmental quality of the water and animal life in the Gulf just outside of the Bayou and that is why I am staying with my Aunt this summer." "Well I am glad you are," Tomas said as he continued to pole his boat up the creek. "I don't have many kids my age in the area and it would be fun to explore the Bayou with you." "Aren't you scared of the animals in the Bayou?" Jean asked. "Not really," Tomas answered. "it is just like New Orleans, as long as you know where to go and where not to go there is very little risk" Tomas replied. "So where should I not go?" Jean asked. "Well" Tomas Continued "your

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Aunt's house is on the border of what we all here the North and South Bayou. She lives in an area called the Three Forks because the Bayou breaks off into three separate streams, the right, left and central forks just about 100 yards south of your boathouse. The right fork of your Aunt's house is easily traveled and our house is on a small island about two hundred yards down the right fork. If you follow the right fork you will run into a small village, Mound Bayou. Mound Bayou was settled primarily by the slaves after end of the Civil War. If you take the central fork it takes you to Teriot Bay. Teriot Bay is the biggest town in the South Bayou. If you take the left fork you will come upon the town of Dufarge. Dufarge is the center of the old Bayou and it is where most of the original Indians and early immigrants settled."

"Indians?" Jean gulped. "Of course," Tomas replied. "Who do you think lived here before us folks showed up?" "Well in New Orleans, we never really think about it very much" Jean said. "Well maybe you should. The original Indians in this area were called the Houma's. They are an offshoot of the Choctaw tribe. There is even a town call Houma, a little bit north of here, on the other side of Lake Patrine." "So where did your ancestors come from?" Jean asked. "My great great grandfather was a pirate or that is what some people called them. My family prefers the word privateer or small independent entrepreneurs. We are direct decedents of some of the men who follow the famous pirate or I should say, privateer, Jean Pierre Lafitte, who helped save New Orleans from the British in the War of 1812."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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**Map Of Bayou Area**

“So I guess I have a lot to learn about the Bayou. So who lives north of my Aunt’s house?” Jean asked. “I think it never had much of a population.” Tomas answered. “There are stories about ancient Indian burial grounds and several years ago the County drained a portion of the North Bayou to look for Lafitte’s Treasure.” “Treasure?” Jean exclaimed. “Well,” Tomas explained, “there are always rumors of sunken treasure in the Bayou but of course nothing was found. I think it was more of a publicity stunt to encourage tourism. They say that over 500 people showed up each year to search for it. Unfortunately, a few got so lost that they had to send in police to help find them. So after that, there was an agreement with the State with the Town of Teroit Bay that no one is supposed to be in the Bayou north of your Aunt’s house.”

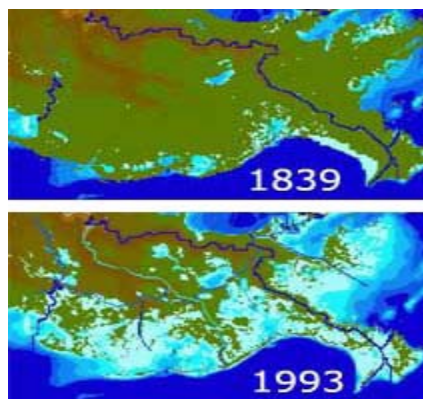
“Where does the Bayou stop?” Jean asked Tomas. “To the South it stops when it hits the Gulf and in the past, it went all the way up to the town of Houma. Today the Bayou stops about two miles above your Aunt’s house.” “What do you mean stops?” Jean asked. “This is the biggest

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

---

change to the area in the last decade” Tomas continued. “The State put in a Levee there after the last hurricane. Today a large lake, Lake Patrine, separates us and the North Bayou from the Town of Houma,” Tom replied. “There was a big controversy. The Indian tribes fought the building of the Levee since it separated them from Houma and from their ancient lands around here but the State said it was necessary to protect the towns in the South Bayou and New Orleans to the North.”

“How could anyone even live around here?” Jean asked. “It is so wet.” “My father says that back in the 1800’s most of the Bayou was dry land. It was full of forest and lakes with animals and fish capable of supporting the entire Houma tribe. But in the last 100 years we have lost most of the land to water coming in from the gulf. Some say it is global warming and others say it’s the growth of the towns and populations farther north which has changed the course of the rivers. Others blame the oil refineries who have dredged the bays near the gulf to help them get the larger ships to their gas and oil distribution centers. Whatever, it is how it is today. Just don’t go north.”



### Changes in the Topography of Bayou Over the Past Two Hundred Years



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Just then Tomas's boat turned a corner on the creek and Aunt Philomena's house could be seen in the distance. "I am sorry you got a little lost this afternoon, but it was great to have a chance to see you" Tomas said as he pulled the boat alongside the dock leading out from the boat house. "Drop down any time, we get up really early in the morning but I am back by mid-afternoon." "Thanks for all of your help" Jean said as she turned to wave goodbye. She waited until he disappeared as he headed south. Jean turned around and looked north from the boat house. It looked like an entirely different world. Only the future would determine just how different.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 2. The Secret

“So how is everything on the creek” her Aunt asked as Jean came up the path from the creek toward the house. “As usual, I suspect” Jean replied. “A few birds diving for fish and oh yes a couple of frogs passed by on a log.” “Did they say anything?” Aunt P. asked. Jean looked up startled. “Frogs don’t talk”. “Well” her Aunt replied. “Perhaps they do or perhaps they don’t. Let’s talk about your day over dinner. Set up the plates on the table on the porch. I made some gumbo for dinner.” Jean went to the cupboard and looked at the dinner plates, cups and serving platters. She had never seen any of this before. There were big blue pitchers, plates with flowers on them, small plates with pictures of fruits, and cups and saucers with names and numbers on the bottom. “Are these expensive?” Jean asked. “I don’t know if you would call them expensive but they are worth a lot to me” her Aunt replied. “I inherited these from my mother.” “Who?” Jean raised her voice. “My Mother, Jennifer Theroux. “You were named after her.” Her Aunt continued. “Named after her?” Jean replied. “How come I don’t know anything about her?” “Oh, she died many years ago” Aunt P. explained. “But you would have liked her. There is a picture of her above the fireplace. Come to think about it, you look a lot like her.” “Was my Mother a Cajun too” Jean asked. Her Aunt continued to explain “Well your Mom was from the other side of the Bayou; that is, where most of the money in the Bayou is from. When she married she gave up much of that life for your Dad. She loved him and you terribly. She was in many ways more comfortable in the Bayou than your father was. When she died, your Dad kind of left this area. I think it just held just too many memories, but I am glad you came back for the summer.”

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

Jean looked at the fireplace. On the left side of mantel above the fireplace, where pictures of her Dad, her brother Ted and herself. On the far right side of the mantel were old pictures of Jennifer Theroux and a picture of her mother. “Jennifer was a true Cajun and a witch” Her aunt winked. “My family has lived in the Bayou for over two hundred years. While some of my relatives in the City don’t admit it, in fact the New Orleans’ Theroux’s are just cleaned up French Cajuns from the Bayou. Your Dad’s family came from the Bayou too, so don’t be getting too ‘City’ on me” Aunt Philomena answered. “Ok, I may have some Cajun but and I don’t believe in witches” Jean answered. “Well time will tell” Aunt Philomena responded, as she spooned the gumbo into the bowls on the porch.



Jennifer Theroux



Jean Theroux

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Jean looked down at the bowl in front of her. The steam, like the fog in the Bayou, rose from the bowl in front of her. It smelled like nothing she had ever had before. "It is called gumbo" Her Aunt said. "It's a mix of local plants, fish, and vegetables although there are many different ways to make it. I use local fish as well as a little secret passed down through our family." Jane took her spoon and took a small bit of the broth. Later in her life, Jane would remark that it was like Ambrosia, she had never tasted anything like it before; a mix of tastes, smells, and texture. Jean was surprised. "This is great, Aunt Philomena. This is more than great. At home all I ever eat is Chinese takeaway and pizza. I did not know this even existed." "Well. Thank you" Aunt P. replied. "Out here in the Bayou we do not have any Chinese Takeaway and as for Pizza, well I make a great Pizza but we will have to wait on that. I have invited some of our neighbors over for dinner tomorrow." "Our neighbors?" Jean questioned. "We do not have any neighbors." Aunt P. continued to explain. "Oh well everyone on the Bayou is one of our neighbors. We are all very close by boat. There are the Murdocks. They have a young boy just a little older than you. Tomas, I believe is his name." Jane eyes widen but she said nothing. "Then there is Wendy Lafarge. She runs a wildlife adventure tour in the area over near a town called Dufarge. There is Ray Warterouque. He runs one of the best restaurants in the Bayou. There is Clive Wilson, who lives in Mound Bayou. His family has been in the area for as long as I can remember. He is bringing his daughter, Tea with him. Tea is just about your age."

As she began to eat the gumbo Jean stopped talking and thought that this was the best meal she had ever had. As they finished dinner, Jean helped clean up the plates to the kitchen.

"How are we going to feed a large group of people, if they all show up tomorrow" Jean asked.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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"Oh, everyone just brings their own special dish" Aunt P. explained. "What's a secret dish?"

Jean asked. Aunt P. continued, "Over the years, each family or at least someone in that family learns to make that family's "secret" dish. Mr. Murdock is a Shrimper so he has a fried shrimp you would just die for. Wendy is a tour guide and while some may question the ethics of it, she knows how to catch and cook a wild turkey hash from a turkey. Roy is the best cook in the Bayou and his specialty is Cajun Catfish with a creole sauce passed down generation to generation. And as for Clive, well just you what and see." "So what are we going to make?"

Jean asked. Aunt P. reached up into her cupboard and took down some flour. "Well I am going to make my mother's turtle/crawdada soup. I add a little bit of cream and southern jack to it to spice it a little. Now that is my secret so don't tell anyone. In the Bayou, telling tales is out of school is not considered good manners." "So what am I going to make?" Jean asked. "Well" Aunt P. said. "What do you want to make?" "I want to make gumbo just like we had tonight" Jean said. "That is just fine, but you have to make your own," Aunt P. explained., "or it is just a copy of someone else's work. It has to be you. You think about it tomorrow morning and I will help you but the recipe has to be yours."

The next morning, Jean woke up to the smell of bacon and an egg omelet. She heard her Aunt call her name from downstairs in the kitchen. Jean got up put on a black t-shirt, some jeans and black sneakers and headed down stairs and into the kitchen. Jean reached up into the cupboard to take out some plates. "This smells great" Jean said. "Can we have this every day?" "Well, not every day" her Aunt responded, "but you are going to have to start getting up a little earlier if we are going to have breakfast together and if you want eggs you will have to go out to the hen

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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house near the barn and you may want to help feed the chickens. We try to eat as much fresh food as we can.” “Why not just get them from the food market?” Jean asked. Aunt P. looked up from her plate, “The grocery store can only be reached by boat so I only go there once every two weeks or so. If we run out of something, well we can just wait.” “Just wait,” Jean thought. “My home in New Orleans is only about an hour away but it might as well be in another world.”

She and her Aunt cleaned up after breakfast and Jean headed down to the creek to think about what her special dish would be. She was sitting on the dock for about an hour, when all of a sudden (or as sudden as anything happens in the Bayou), a log floated by with a frog sitting on it, hidden only by a few branches and some moss. The log drifted over to the dock and got caught on the edge of the dock. As Jean looked a little closer, she thought she saw a frog that looked familiar. “Yep it’s me” ZF said. “Just out for a morning drift. It is a great way to see what is happening in the Bayou and checking on all of my friends and neighbors. For a frog, a log is a great means of transportation. You can sleep a little, get some sun and drift into some old friends. So how are you this wonderful morning?” Jean felt she had been friends with the frog for years. “I am a little scared” Jean said. “Still scared” ZF replied. “You just have to get over that.” “Oh not that kind of scared” Jean screamed. “My Aunt is having friends over to the house to night for a cookout and I have to make my own special recipe.” “Have you thought what it is going to be?” ZF asked. “I thought I would like to make a special gumbo.” “That is great” ZF replied “everyone loves a good gumbo but what is going to make yours special?” “That is why I am a little scared,” Jean said. “I have never thought of myself as special or having a special secret.” “Well you are and you have one,” ZF replied. “Everyone has a special secret or

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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something that at least makes them special. You have to respect theirs and they have to respect yours. Now think, I have only known you for a couple of days, and I can already see that you are special.” “What me special?” Jean asked. “Well you have a natural curiosity or you would not have headed out on your own down a creek you have never been on before.” “That was an accident” Jean cut in. “Ok,” ZF continued. “you are friendly or you would have never spent time talking with a frog and let’s face it you can speak with a frog in the Bayou that is special.” Jean was a little embarrassed. “Well maybe I am special in certain ways, though I don’t really feel it, but what special secret do I have to put into my gumbo?” “What is your favorite color?” ZF asked. “Yellow” Jean said. “Ok what is your favorite smell” ZF continued. “I love the smell of the sea grass when I am at the ocean” Jean replied. “What is your favorite taste?” ZF asked. “I like to be surprised. So it has to have something soft and something crunchy and I like Basil. But most important it has to be fresh” Jean finished. “So let’s go take a look at what around here is fresh” ZF said as he leaped onto Jean’s shoulder.

Jean had never had a frog jump onto her shoulder, but for some reason it seemed natural. They started up the path in front of Aunt P’s vegetable garden. “Well there is your yellow” ZF said as they passed a row of red tomatoes and yellow squash. “I love tomatoes and I guess the squash will give it some color” Jean exclaimed. “And there are some herbs. I was out here this morning smelling some of them and I think that plant over there is basil and Aunt P. has some homegrown Okra.” “So what is the main course and I hope it is not me.” ZF chuckled “Not on your life” Jean yelled. “That is a great relief” ZF laughed. “Well this morning we had eggs and bacon, so I know there are some leftover bacon bits. That will give it a surprise crunch and a

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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salty taste” Jean said thoughtfully. “And I think I remember seeing some cooked chicken in the back of the refrigerator but I still don’t have anything that is special.”

“Hold on,” ZF jumped in. “You are making this way too complicated. Remember food is about all the senses. See I am a frog. We have great eyes (so something has to look good), we have great tongues (so taste is important), we can smell something in the wind (so smell is a part of it) and we eat vegetables and, while I sometimes hate to admit it, other small animals. It’s how they work together that makes something special so keep it simple. But if you want something that reminds people of the Bayou, why don’t you jump into your boat and let’s go looking.”

Jean with ZF on her shoulder returned to the dock. Jean untied the pirogue and off they went down the Bayou. “How can I know how to get back here? I could get lost out here very easily?” Jean said. ZF went on to explain. “Oh, the Bayou has its secrets too but I will let you on to a couple. First the water flows gently to the Gulf. So just look where the water is flowing. Since we are below your house you just have to go with the current. Second, the Bayou, in this area, only has three major waterways and they intersect just about 100 hundred yards downstream.”

“That is why the area is called the area Three Forks, right?” Jean asked. “Yes, but how did you know?” ZF responded. “Tom Murdock explained it to me, when he towed my boat back to the house when we met the other day.” “Well Tom is right. You can look at Three Forks as a small town with three state roads all going the same direction south. So if you are ever lost all you have to do is go in one direction and you will run into one of these streams. To get back here all you have to do is head north.” “What about north of Aunt Philomena’s house?” Jean asked.

“Tomas Murdock warned me not to go there.” “Well, I agree with him,” ZF replied. “I would



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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suggest that you don't go very far in that direction. You probably have heard that they set up a Levee several miles north and since then it has become a dangerous place and unless you know the area very well you should not go there."



**Bayou Below the Boat House**

They took the right fork and then about two hundred yards, ZF asked Jean to take a right into a small inlet. "There is a friend of mine who lives here that may be able to help us." Soon Jean heard someone or something called out. "What are you doing here on such a lovely day? I thought you were taking a drift down the creek toward Mound Bayou." "I was, but I came across Jean and she needs some of your help." "Oh that's the Jean you spoke of." Jean looked around and on a Banyan tree just off to the right of a boat, was a multi-colored frog that was considerably smaller than ZF. "It is good to meet you Jean. My name is Patsy. Welcome to the

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

Bayou. How can I help you?" "I have to make a gumbo later today and my Aunt P. said it has to be my specialty and it has to have my secret ingredient." "I don't know" Patsy said. "I don't know if you can look for something that is special. I always thought that if something is special it kind of finds you."



**Patsy**

"Perhaps I can help." All Jean could see was a log bouncing in the water. "Ok Tic stop scaring the young lady" Patsy asked. "Scaring me, what is in the water that should be scaring me" Jean asked. "OK" ZF said. "Show yourself but do it slowly." Tic raise his head out of the water. Jean almost fell out of the boat as she saw a large gray alligator rise out of the water. "Don't worry" Patsy said. "Tic is just an old softy. He just happened to come to the Bayou when he escaped from a traveling carnival. So he is not a real alligator" Patsy said. "I could be if I wanted to" Tic countered. "While I was in the carnival, they did feed me a lot of fish and there is a fish that is so special that it might be just what you need." "Where do you think I can get some" Jean asked. "Well that is part of the secret. I will have to get a few for you. ZF and his friends are a little too smart to get to close to these fish. Frogs are part of 'their' special gumbo." Tic started

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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to laugh and then thought better of it. "I will bring a few of them over to your dock later this afternoon and lay them on your dock. That should give you enough time to prepare them for your gumbo."



**Tic Tock**

Jean thanked Patsy and Tic for their help and started to pole the little boat back to her Aunt P's boat house. "I never knew there was such a connection between animals in the Bayou" Jean said as she turned toward ZF. "Oh it is not like that throughout all of the Bayou," ZF explained. "In certain parts of the Bayou it is more, well as you would say, dog eat dog or as more appropriately, dog chase cat, cat chase fish, fish chase frog, frog chase insect. Don't over romanticize the Bayou. It can be very rough out here. But it is part of life. We all accept it. You come to learn what part of life you are and to live within it."

"That is very Zen of you." This time the voice came from the air. "Who is that?" Jean screamed. "Oh that's Stick" ZF said. "He is up there somewhere all the time but at times he is difficult to see amongst all the branches. All of a sudden, a kingfisher came out of the Banyan tree. He

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

swooped low and dropped a fish into the boat. “Tic found me and said you needed one of these for your special soup.” “Considered it manna from the heavens” Stick said. “Don’t mind him” ZF said. “He considers himself somewhat special.” “Heavy it is who wears the crown.” “A bunch of feathers above one’s head does not may you a king.” “OK Zen” Stick answered. “Where does the Zen in your name come from” Jean asked. “Well. I guess it’s from my view of life and how all things interconnect. As I said the biggest part of life is finding out what is your part in it.” ZF said. “And the frog part is easy to see” a voice said from the water. “Just thought I would check to see if Stick got you your special ingredient.” “OK Tic –Tock, you can get back to your guarding the Bayou.” “Tic-Tock, is that from Peter Pan and Captain Hook?” Jean asked. “Well, not necessarily” ZF said, “Tic-Tock” is his name because he seems to show up like he has a clock in his head; that is, he is never a minute early or a minute late; he is always just on or in time.”



**Stick**

“Well we should be getting back if you want to get started on your gumbo” ZF said. Jean turned the boat around and head back towards Aunt P’s boat dock. Just as quickly as they appeared her animal friends disappeared. Tic-Toc went under the water, Stick flew off, and ZF jumped onto a floating log. Before the log floated away, ZF turned toward Jean. “Have a great dinner. I

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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am sorry I will not be a part of it.” “Stick is not the only one in the Bayou with a strange sense of humor” Jean said to herself. Jean was soon back to the boat dock. She tied up the boat and started to walk toward the house. As Jean walked up the path, Jean saw Tomas Murdock coming down the path toward the dock “Your Aunt P. said you were down here but not that you went out in the boat. You are much more adventurous than you led me to believe.” “I guess it is one of things that makes me special,” Jean smiled. “I was out on the Bayou trying to find something special to put into the gumbo. I found this fish to maybe you can help me.” “Sure, but how?” Tomas asked. “I need to prepare this fish for my gumbo, but I do not know how.” Tom looked down at the fish in the boat. “Well, I thought I knew all the fish in the Bayou. I have never seen this one before.”

Tomas left to clean the fish. As Tomas left, Jean sat on the dock and looked out over the water. When she first came to the house she looked at the water with fear and now it was full of possibilities and friends. Just then she heard rustling in the grass along the shore next to the boat house. “Well you had quite a morning.” Jean looked back and saw a large turtle looking up at her. “Aren’t you surprised?” The turtle asked. “Not really,” Jean answered. “I am getting use to voices coming out of nowhere. I have run into a frog who thinks he is a philosopher, a clock obsessed alligator, a pompous bird why not an “old turtle.” “Well” the Turtle advised, “if you want to find friends on the Bayou you may not want to tell them how old they are. I heard you making some gumbo.” “Yes, I guess words travel fast on the Bayou” Jean said matter-of-factly. “And I heard that you have received advise from everyone” the Turtle said. “Yes, that to” Jean replied. “And that you are still looking for your little secret” the Turtle continued. “Well,

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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that is true too” Jean nodded. “So you won’t mind one last suggestion from an old turtle who has avoided your Aunt P’s soups these many years.” “Ok” Jean replied. “And I am sorry about the old thing and the soup thing too.” “Oh, do not worry, that is part of life as ZF would say. But this is your life and your Bayou Gumbo. So you seem like a bright young woman.” Jean blushed. She had never been called a young woman before. “And that is your, or maybe our secret. Your Gumbo will change and grow as you do. But today, your Gumbo should be as bright and young as you are. Keep it that way, and that will be your special secret.” The turtle started to turn back into the green grass. Jean took a deep breath. “You mean I spent the entire day searching for a secret which was always right here.” “Well” the Turtle said as he disappeared. “Maybe ZF is smarter than we thought. He always says, wherever you are, there you are at. Keep it simple and pure. What could be better? When you see ZF again tell him OT says hi.” “OT?” Jean asked. “Yes, it stands for Old Turtle. Even we animals on the Bayou have a sense of humor.” OT said as he slipped under the water.



**OT**

Jean head back up the path to Aunt P.’s house. As she walked toward the house, Tomas came down to meet her. I cleaned the fish but I don’t know if it is just the right kind of special



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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addition. I checked it out on the internet, and it said it is a new invasive fish that has just entered the Bayou and is driving out good fish. It doesn't seem just right." "I agree" said Jane. "I have decided to keep it simple." "Well if it is simple you want." Tomas put his bag on the ground, opened it up and took out a small bag of rice. "This is some special Bayou wild rice. It grows in only a few areas of the Bayou and it contains all the tastes of the Bayou." "Thanks" Jane said. "This is special. It is just what I need."



**Tomas Murdock**

As she reached the porch, her Aunt came out to meet her. "Well, have you come up with an idea for your soup?" Aunt P. asked. "You mean my gumbo" Jean replied. "If you don't mind, I would like to try to cook it on my own with Tomas's help." "Well it's up to you. I have just finished off my Turtle soup, so the kitchen is yours." "Turtle Soup" Jean thought. "I guess I will have to learn to get use to talking to animals that may eventually turn up in someone's dinner." Jean then turned to Tomas. "So Bayou boy, what do we do next?"

"Bayou Boy, where did that come from?" Tomas replied. "I am sorry" Jean said. "Just yesterday, I was just a city girl sitting on a dock and within the last twenty four hours I have gotten lost in

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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the Bayou, learned how to get unlost in the Bayou, met frogs, alligators, and snapping turtles. I guess I felt a little lost. It is always hard to ask others for help. So how do we make Gumbo?"

Tomas looked a little taken aback. "Well let's do what you do in the big city. We folks in the Bayou have something you call a cook book." "Again, I'm sorry" Jean said. "Apology accepted," Tomas replied. "So let's get to work." "Thanks, making this Gumbo scares me" Jean responded but don't worry, my Aunt P. has lots of old cookbooks in this house. There has to be one which will help us." Tomas and Jean went into the library and returned with an old dusty cookbook. Jean opened it up. At the bottom of the page were the initials JT. Jean thought, Jennifer Theroux. Jean opened the book and started to page through it. Her eye came upon a particular page. "–Chief Lacroix's Gumbo." It was written in an old script. Jean could make out the writing but only if she looked really hard.

In a large pot, fry down the bacon and set aside, once cooled, crumble. In four tablespoons of the bacon grease, cook down the okra until the slime is gone, about ten minutes. Add the onions, peppers, celery and bacon. Continue cooking until onions are tender add the garlic and tomato sauce. Pour in the water and bring to a boil. Add the thyme, red pepper, black pepper, cayenne pepper, allspice and paprika. Stir well and add the parsley, basil, and whatever meat is available. Bring back to a boil and cook for at least twenty minutes. Salt to taste. Serve the Gumbo over a nice helping of rice.

Soon the soup was ready for dinner. "I hope Chief Lacroix would like it," Jean thought, and I guess I will have to find out who the Chief was.



### Chapter 3: Dinner

The first guest to come to the door was Wendy Lafarge. Years later Jean would admit that she was nothing like what Jean was expecting. As Jean would say later, “Wendy was drop dead gorgeous.” She was about five feet ten inches tall and could not have been over 130 pounds. Wendy’s hair color was similar to Jean’s. It was a dark reddish brown and tied up in a braid behind her head. She had tee shirt on that read “Wendy Tours” and a pair of blue jeans that fit her perfectly. Jean was a little taken aback when she saw Wendy. Wendy seemed familiar to her, as if she had seen Wendy before but Jean could not remember where or when.

Just before Jean was going to ask her if they had met before, Wendy introduced herself. “Well” Wendy said “you must be Jean. I knew you when you were just a kid. How you have grown.” “So that must be it,” Jean thought. “So you must have known my Mother,” Jean asked. “You bet” Wendy answered. “We grew up together. She was my best friend. She was a real Bayou girl.” “Well maybe I do have a little of the Bayou in me,” Jean thought. Her Dad hardly ever talked about her mother. Until her Aunt P. had told her, Jean had no idea that her Mother had grown up in the Bayou. The pictures of her Mom that Jean had gave Jean no indication that she was a Bayou girl. Just the opposite, according to her neighbors in New Orleans her Mom was a real city girl. Jean only knew that her parents got married right out of Tulane College in New Orleans and Jean was born soon after. Her Dad stayed at the University to get his Ph.D. in Environment Science specializing in aquatic life. While he taught at the University, her mother spent most of her time at home taking care of Jean.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Wendy headed into the kitchen. “Well Aunt P. how are things going?” Wendy asked. “Well don’t you look sassy” Aunt P. replied. “How is business?” “Business is ok, but we can talk about that after dinner.” Wendy walked over to the stove and started to taste what was on the stove. “Well you have outdone yourself, this time Aunt P. This gumbo is the best I have ever had.” “Oh, that is not mine. Jean made it.” Aunt P. explained. Wendy turned to Jean, “Jean, who knew you had the secret in you. This is great. Your Mom had a real gift for cooking too.” Jean thought again. Jean generally never thought of her Mother, but she was now a teenager and she was beginning to miss not having someone to talk to about girl stuff. Her Dad did his best, and she loved him more than he would ever know. He had raised her and her brother by himself and she never felt she missed a thing until now. This could be a good time to start learning a few things about her mother. “I’m heading down to the dock” she yelled back to her Aunt and Wendy.

As Jean was sitting on the dock, she noticed a skiff heading up the Creek toward the dock. There was a young girl in the front with a large man in the back guiding the boat around the various pieces of wood and debris. “Could you catch the front of the boat” he yelled as they drifted toward the dock. The girl on the front of the boat threw a rope to Jean. “Good catch” the girl called out to Jean. As the boat came next to the dock, the girl jumped off and then helped the man in the back step onto the dock. “Thanks Tea” the man said. The man stood well over 6 feet tall and must have weighed almost 250 pounds. His arms looked like he could have picked up Jean and the young girl in each one and carried them up to the house. “Well it is

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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great to see you. Your Aunt has said so much about you. How have you found life out here in the Bayou?" Jean thought for a second. "It certainly is different from the City in some ways, but it is also more like it than I thought." "What do you mean" the girl standing next to her dad said. "Well" Jean said. "It has its own life, its own spirit. Once you get the sense of it around you, the Bayou has its own sense of home."

'Well I like your spirit. I am Clive Wilson and this is my daughter Tea." Jean thought that was who they had to be. Her Aunt said they were from Mound Bayou and Tom Murdock said the town was settled by slaves after the Civil War and they were black. Jean was very comfortable around blacks. It sounded bad when someone else said it but some of her best friends in New Orleans were black, but in truth as she got older and her Dad sent her to a private school she increasingly found herself mostly with her white friends. Clive knelt down and grabbed a big pot out of the bottom of the Skiff. Well here is our contribution to the feast. "I'll take it up to the house. You two can stay down here and get acquainted." As he walked by, Jean could get a smell of the Shrimp Creole. In New Orleans there are many restaurants that maintained they had the best Shrimp Creole in the area. They were wrong. They had never smelled what just went past her.



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## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Tea

"I am sorry that you have to spend some time here with me." "What?" Jean replied. "I am sorry that you are stuck with me." "No you're the sophisticated city girl, I'm just a little Bayou rat." "Hold it, there is nothing special about being a city girl. Most of the time all we do is sit around waiting for something to happen." Jean shot back. "I have already had more excitement in the last two days, then I have had all year in the City." "Well if you want excitement you have come to the wrong part of Louisiana." Tea responded. "Well if you want a really dull time, come to New Orleans." Jean yelled back. The two starred at each other and started to laugh. By the time they caught their breath, they sat down on the dock. "So I guess you are the welcoming committee" Tea said as she turned to Jean. Jean looked at Tea, "Well you know everyone in the Bayou here. This is the first time I have ever been at my Aunt's house." "Why?" Tea said. "My Dad said your Dad was raised here." "Well after my Mom died, I just think there were too many memories here." Tea felt a little taken aback. "I'm sorry I didn't know." "That's OK" Jean said. "I was only three when she died and though I remember her a bit, I was really raised by my Dad." "That must be different" Tea said. "My Mom doesn't trust my Dad with me for a second. I think she is afraid he will want to get me in the restaurant business." "People are always asking me what I think I will be when I grow up. Maybe I will know then, because right now I do not have a clue" Jean said. "Join the group" Tea said. "But for right now, all of my friends can hardly wait to see you. You are the big city girl." At that point Tea took the chance to step back and look at Jean. "Pardon me, if I ask. But how old are you?" "That's ok, I know what you want to ask. 'You really want to know how tall I am.'" Well I am fifteen and I am already almost 5 feet eight

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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inches. Where I get my height, I do not know. My Mom was closer to your height and my Dad is just normal height. Why do you want to know?"

"OK – here it comes. Do you play any sports?" Tea asked. "This is the last thing anyone in the city would ask. But in fact, my Dad put up a hoop on our garage in New Orleans. I spent many nights with him playing basketball. Last year I went to a private school in the City and I had to sign up for a sport. I never told my Dad, but because I was tall they put me on the girls' basketball team. I am not very good just really tall and I don't think that has anything to do with talent."

"Well I'm really small and that has its advantages too, but in basketball they can teach a lot but they can't teach height" Tea continued. "At the end of the summer, there is a festival between the Bayou kids. Each church has to set up their own team with two guys and two girls on a side. I am looking for a second girl. I would like to have you on our team my partner." "Well you know that white girls can't jump." "At five eight you don't have to jump that high" Tea responded.

Just then, they could see a pontoon approaching the dock. "Is there space for us?" The man at the wheel said. "Wait a second, Tea called back as she moved the skiff to the other side of the dock. As the boat came along side of the dock, Jean could see that there were more than ten people on the boat. "Well I guess when you have a barbecue you have a barbecue." "No barbecue in the Bayou that more of a City thing, here is just good food and great music. You haven't heard Tomas play have you. He plays a great fiddle and his whole family is so talented that you just turn green with envy."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

Everyone one in the boat introduced themselves. The skipper was a tall man about Jean's Dad's age. "I'm Roy Waterouque" the man at the helm called out as the boat came alone side the dock. "Good afternoon" a man in the back called out. "I am Bill Murdock, Tomas' father, this is Bess my wife and the rest of the Murdock clan." Tomas had come down from the house to help with the landing and noticed Jean's surprise. You do not have to know all of their names, I forget them myself. But, the as they came off the boat, Tomas introduced all of them. Bill, Mike, Christine, Pat, Michelle and the youngest, Alice. "How?" as Jeans mouth dropped. "We're Catholics. We believe in big families. What can I say." They head up the path to Aunt P. Tea walked next to Jean. "Don't worry this is just a prelim. Wait until you come over to Teroit . Six kids are normal."



**Alice Murdock has Fish at the Dinner**

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 4: The Church

“Get up and get your Sunday best on” Aunt P. yelled up at Jean. No one answered. “Where could that girl be?” Aunt P. thought. Just then, Jean came from outside with a basket of eggs. “You said I had to get up early and check out the chickens. They are a noisy lot aren’t they.” “You have not heard noise until you hear my congregation at Church this Sunday” Aunt P. replied. “Church” Jean asked. “In New Orleans we are not real Church Goer’s.” “Well out here we are Church Goers.” Aunt P. chimed in. “If you want to find out about what is going on in the Bayou, Church is where you will find out.” “Well I am not sure I know what Church I go to.” Jean said. “This could be a good place to start” Aunt P. answered. “Are you a Catholic, Methodist or Baptist.” “Are those my only choices?” Aunt P. replied. “Not really, but, you look a little bit more of the Baptist.” “Well in fact, my Dad sent me to a Catholic grade school, so maybe I should try something different.” Jean replied. Aunt P. continued. “Well I am a Methodist. In fact, we are a pretty small church out here. Most people are either Baptists or Catholics. If you Dad sent you to a Catholic school let’s start there. Later this summer we can try each of the others.” “What Church does Tea and her family go to?” Jean asked. “Well they are Baptists and Tomas Murdock and his family are Catholics. So wherever you go, there will be someone there who knows you.” Aunt P. responded. “Well I just spent a year with the Catholics, I would like to try the Baptists now.” Jean replied

“How do we get to church or to the city?” “Oh there are a number of small bridges between the islands on the Bayou, that connect Teroit with most of the small villages like Mound Bayou, but taking the water is a lot quicker. Tomas stops by on Sunday to pick me up and drops me off in

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Teroit. I keep my car just a few blocks from the boat dock.” “You have a car?” Jean looked surprised. Aunt P. smiled. “Well I do not know if one would call it a car. it’s a 1970 Cadillac so some people call it a house on wheels.” They walked down to the boathouse and waited for Tomas to show up. He came by and picked both of them up and dropped them off at Teroit. Soon Jean was in the car driving by the various churches. When Jean looked at the ‘Risen Jesus’ Baptist Church it looked the same and yet different from those in her neighborhood in New Orleans. It was off the road near a small grove of Banyan trees. It had a series of steps rising to the main door. Above the door raised a steeple with a small bell in the belfry at the top. There were four windows on each side. There was a dirt driveway from the road circling behind the church and from what Jean could see there were about 10 cars and 10 trucks. “That is where I would like to go to Church today” Jean said as she turned toward her Aunt. “OK” Aunt P. answered. “I will drop back in about an hour to pick you up. Say Hello to Paster Martin for me and enjoy the experience.” There was a small inlet off the Bayou leading to the Church. As Jean walked toward the Church she started seeing families walking toward the church from a small dock to the right of the church.

It was still some time before services started, so Jean walked over to the inlet and sat down on a bench under a large Oak tree next to the water. She heard a familiar voice. “Going to Church?” Jean turned around and, on a log, resting next to the bank of the inlet was ZF. “Well yes and good morning to you” Jean replied. “In New Orleans we hardly ever went to church and I do not know what to expect.” “There you go again. Afraid to go in are you?” ZF asked. “A little” Jean replied. “Well each time you try something a little different you have to expect to be



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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a little apprehensive but just considered it part of your journey. We are all on a journey. When you live on the Bayou, things are a mix of some things that never change and others which change almost daily. We have learned to be comfortable with both."

"Sometimes change is bad" Jean said as she gazed out over the water. "Of course," ZF responded, but it is how you handle that change. When you see a storm coming you know change is coming, some of it bad some of it good. Storms clean out the Bayou but it changes each time, new streams, new life while at the same time some storms take life. I hope you are not expecting the Church over there to answer those questions for you." "Of course not, but it would be nice" Jean said. ZF continued, "Church provides for many the stability they want in a world of change. For others, it offers a real vision for their next step on the journey. I think for most people they take out of it what they bring in to it. Well that perhaps too much for one day, I'm off for a day on the Bayou. With everyone in the city, the Bayou is ours again for a day." "So you don't go to church do you?" Jean asked. ZF seemed a little surprised, "the Bayou is our church and Sunday is our day too. Many of us in the Bayou meet in a small Island that not that far from your Aunt's house. It is surprising, how even after all these years and with all the hustle and bustle of the Bayou no humans have every come by our little island."

"What makes it so special" Jean asked. ZF puffed up a little with pride. "You just have to be there to see it. From a distance no one could even tell that it is there. The land around it is certainly not special and unless you know the streams leading to the island, it is almost

impossible to get there by boat and even if you knew the way it would have to be a flat bottom

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## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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boat similar to what you use. But if you ever get there you could see that it is special. It has a collection of what I believe are the oldest Banyan Trees in the Bayou. They almost form a canopy over an open piece of land in the middle of the Island. The water around the island is the purest in the Bayou.” “Has it always been your special place?” Jean asked. ZF continued “I can’t tell you that and it’s not that I would if I could. Frogs don’t live forever and we are not very good at writing things down but the place has a special aura around it and in it. In fact there are some markings on rocks in the area and on some of the older trees there are some symbols but you would have to find someone older than me to tell you what they mean if they mean anything.” “Well you have seen my church” Jean said, “I hope you will take me to see yours someday.” “Perhaps” ZF replied. “It is a little more difficult than you may imagine.” Just then as Jean heard a voice call out her name. “Jean. We are over here.”

Tea came down toward the dock where Jean was sitting. “What do you mean We?” Tea asked. Jean turned and saw that ZF had left. “Sometimes I say We when I mean Me” Jean said. “Well” Tea continued. “Your Aunt P. said I was supposed to come down and pick you up for services. Don’t be too surprised, if it is a little different from the Sunday services you are use to.” “Don’t worry” Jean replied. “I am not very use to any Sunday Service.” The Baptist celebration was certainly different from anything Jean had experienced before. There was certainly more music and more praying than she had been used to. After the service, Tea introduced her to the Minister as well as most of the rest of the congregation. The Minister turned to Jean. “I hope you come back soon young girl. We are a small congregation and you are always welcome.”

“Thank you” was all that Jean could think of saying. “But I can say you certainly made me feel at

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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home.” “Well”, the Minister responded. “I can’t imagine a better compliment.” As Jean looked down the street, she could see her Aunt P. coming out of the Methodist Church. At the same time, other members of the other churches began to leave their services and start to gather at the music pavilion in the center of town. Tea turned to Jean. “Well you said that you were trying to learn to handle your fear of new things. Here is a real chance to start trying.” Tea took Jean by the hand and lead her into the crowd.

Later that afternoon, as they drove back to Teroit boat launch in Aunt P’s Cadillac, Jean looked back at the day’s activities. “So how did it go”, Aunt P. asked Jean. “I have only been here a week, but there seems to be more going on here than ever happened back home in New Orleans.” “Well without some of the distractions of City life, you have more time to really live life.” “I think I am starting to learn that” Jean replied. “But I hope you understand if I am still in the learning stage.” “At your age, it would be unusual if it was anything else.” Aunt P. answered. “But if you have any questions never feel too scared to ask.” Tomas was at the boat launch and brought them back to Aunt P.’s home. “Do you mind if I go right to bed, Aunt P. ?” Jean asked. “Today has really tired me out.” “That’s OK,” her Aunt replied, “but we will still have to get up early in the morning. “

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 5: Townies

The next morning, Jean was up early but was surprised to see Aunt P already in the kitchen.

“Would you like some oatmeal? This might be a chance to put some meat on those bones of yours.” Aunt P. asked as she stirred a pot in front of her. The steam from the pot rose through the kitchen. “If it tastes like it smells, I would love some, Thank you,” Jean responded, “but I do have one question. When I was out this morning feeding the chickens, I saw an old basketball hoop on the old barn. Where did it come from? “ “Well” Aunt P. explained. “Your Dad may not have told you, but he was quite a basketball player in his youth. He spent hours out there.” Jean looked up from there breakfast, “Dad and I shot baskets at home. But I am not very good, I am still growing and a little clumsy.” Aunt P. Turned from the sink where she was washing the morning dishes, “Well I know how to fix that. After breakfast, let’s head out to the Chicken shed.”

When they reached the shed, Aunt P. went into the barn and came out with an old rubber basketball. Aunt P. walked about fifteen feet from the hoop which was attached to the side of the barn, planted her feet and launched a perfect one hand set shot that went swish through the basket. “Your Dad had to be taught be someone. I was a pretty good player in my day and I still have a few tricks.” Aunt P. then went over to the chicken cage and took out one of the hens. She brought it over to the area in front of the basket and put some grain under the hoop. She put the chicken down. The hen went right for the food, but Aunt P moved immediately to get in its way. “This is a great way to work on your quickness and one more thing.” Aunt P went

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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back into the barn and came out with three wooden scarecrows. "You can use these as defenders."

Jean looked a little disappointed. "It's not a real basketball court." Look at the bright side, Aunt P. responded. "You will be surprised how real it is. Many great basketball players started out on courts just like this. All you need is to practice." "I guess so" Jean looked a little more optimistic, "but I wish knew someone who was a real basketball player." Aunt P. was more supportive, "give this a chance and we will see. But for now we have to head into town. They are having a town meeting on some of the development issues impacting the town and our land here is at the center of the argument. I will explain it on the way to town."

Jean turned around grabbed the basketball and threw a perfect three point shot through the basket. Maybe this would work she thought. Just as the previous day, Tomas picked them up at the dock and dropped them off where Aunt P. kept her car. She walked over to the Cadillac and got into the front seat, Her Aunt got into the driver's side and Tom got into the back seat.

"What is the town meeting all about" Jean asked. "There are some recent residents of the town who would like to change its character forever. I am told that there is some evidence of natural gas and oil in an area around the levee. I own a large part of the land that the State would have to take if they wanted to run a pipe though the Bayou to the gulf. I am against it. It is our responsibility to keep the Bayou the way our ancestors found it but I am willing to listen to what they have to say." Tom spoke up. "Don't let your Aunt fool you. There is more to this than just a bunch of oil barons trying to take something that is not theirs. The whole discussion

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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is starting split the town in two. So far you have seen the good side of the Bayou, now you might start to see some of the dark side too.”

As they entered the town Jean could see the number of new cars and trucks in front of the town hall. As they entered the town hall, the Mayor of Teriot, Jim Tulley, came over to Aunt Philomena. “I hope you will not be a problem.” “I have no intention of being a problem” Aunt P. answered. “Or a solution. I have known you for years. You have always wanted something bigger for yourself and for the town. Me I just want people to be happy being what they are.” “OK” Jim Tulley responded, “But just think of what it can do for this town.” “For this Town or for you and your associates.” Aunt P. replied. “Be careful,” Jim answered. “You are standing in the way of train of progress and I know you know what can happen when you get in the way of train.” “Mayor,” Jean’s Aunt responded. “I am an old women, but I have very few years left. I wish to remind you never get in front of someone with nothing to lose. My only concern is my family, my friends and my faith. Your personal concerns are not very high on my list.”

As Aunt P. went into the Town Hall, Mayor Tulley walk over to a group of people standing near the church. “Well that did not go well.” One of the group spoke up, “This is not going to be as easy as we had hoped. I think it is time to go for Plan B.” “OK but mind you no one gets hurt” the Mayor replied. “Mayor, we have to move soon. We put a lot of money into this project. We have found the reserves north of the Bayou but the only economically efficient way to get these resources down to the refinery on the coast is through the Bayou north of your city. Not only will it help the state but it will transform this area. Your people need jobs. The hurricane has

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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changed this area, shrimping is not coming back and the tourist business I down. If you want help from your state this is the only way you are going to get it.”



**Mayor Tulley**

They looked up and saw a woman at the door of the town hall. She was waving at Mayor Tulley to come in. As he approached the door, the women went up to the Mayor. “You have to stand up to them. We need change and if you have any aspirations for a future, you need the support of those who support this change. There comes a time when you have to let the past go.”

Mayor Tulley seem a little upset. “You know Betty, I have lived here for my whole life. I know that the last years have been tough and I support your view of the necessity of change but don’t think for a second that I like what I am doing.”

As the Mayor went to the podium, he thanked the town meeting members for taking the time to show up. “I know that we are here today to get information on what are our choices as to how and if we develop our town and the area around us. We have with us, the representatives

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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of Louisiana Oil and Gas as well as representatives of your county and state government. They will provide you with a summary of the review of the oil and gas transmission plan through the Bayou.” A man from the last row yelled out. “Where are our representatives.” “Again” Mayor Tulley called out. “We, the town council, the country manager and others are here to hear your concerns, but first we need to get the information out.” Another man yells from the back row, “Who is speaking for the current Bayou residents. What about the environmental impacts, the impact on current tourism, fishing and culture. Why don’t you have an individual who represents the Bayou?” The Mayor tried to quite the crowd down. “Everyone will have a chance to speak” he continued. Two hours later all that had been resolved is that their existed two sets of people, those who wanted or looked at the pipeline as beneficial to their economic interest and those for whom the Bayou was a way of life and not just a way to make a life.

As Aunt P. got up to go, Jean turned toward her. “Is there any middle ground on this?” “Not that I can see.” Her Aunt replied. “Sometimes you have to agree to change to save a place, to save a people, to insure a future, other times you have to agree not to change to save a place, a people or a future. Many of us who live in and on the Bayou. This has been a fight for over three hundred years to keep and grow what we have, I just don’t want to hand it over to people who don’t’ care about the Bayou, us, or what we represent. But before we head back let’s have a soda at the Teriot Inn. I always have a strawberry malt when I am in town.”

As they entered the Inn, they sat down on two cane chairs near the windows that overlooked the boat slips that reached out into the inlet that lead to the various slips of water into the Gulf.

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## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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A young boy walked up to them and asked them what they wanted. Aunt P looked up from the menu that sat on a small table in front of them. “Just a strawberry malt and you Jean, what would you like” Jean looked over the menu choices. “I want a chocolate sundae with all the trimmings.” “That’s a good choice.” her Aunt replied. “You only go through life once and when you have a chance to sit back and enjoy it do it.” As they sat back and looked at the parade of life in front of them, Jane could almost feel she was going back to her Aunt’s youth, and even back to her Grandmother’s time.

Meanwhile in the back of the restaurant, there was a table where the Mayor sat surrounded by the individuals who were talking to him after the Town Meeting. “What should we do next” Bill Mulligan of Louisiana Oil and Gas asked. “If we do not get this going this year, it’s off our schedule. “What do you want us to do?” the County manager said, “Town meeting members have the final vote at the town level but at the county level we have to work through the State bureaucracy. Their principal concern is to making sure they are not breaking any laws in the process. Here is the good news, as long as we work within the rules they want to work with us to reach our common goal.” “And that common goal is a pipeline through the Bayou, right”, Bill repeated. The County Manager nodded in agreement. One of the lieutenants of LOG then asked “Well then who do we have to contend with on the Waterways” Mayor Tulley spoke up. “Well you see her over there with her nephew’s daughter. She owns the biggest area of land below the levee and the area where the Bayou breaks into three branches. If you can get her land you can control all of the land from the levee down to Teriot.” Bill Mulligan spoke up, “this sounds like time for Eminent Domain.” “Hold it” Mayor Tulley said. “The people in this area

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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don't favor the government just coming in and taking someone's land because they can and I am not sure if we have the right to do it in any case." "It is not easy, I admit" the Head of LOG replied. "But it is possible." "Possible OK, but for that to happen, we need more than just we want your land we need to show is that it is in the economic necessity for the county."

Aunt P. turned back toward Jane. "Thanks for joining me here. Often I have to sit here by myself. I have to say hello to Sarah Murray who owns this establishment, do you mind sitting by yourself for a minute." As Aunt P. got up to go, Jean turned to look out the window. As she sat back, the young man who served them earlier came up to her table. "Pardon me, but I am Jim Carey, a friend of Tom Murdock. I don't want to cause any trouble but I thought you might want to let your Aunt know that I overheard the folks at the Table in the back, talking about her land and using something called Eminent Domain to take it over. I need this job so I don't want to cause trouble but you should know. They also talked about forcing the people to make a choice on something between the old life or a new one." Jane said thank you and looked out on the water with a new look. More and more she thought of the Bayou as hers. She turned to Jim to thank him. As she looked at him, she wondered how he knew Tomas. He did not look like a Bayou boy. "Just a couple of question? How to you know Tom Murdock." "Oh he and I go to the same school in near Dufrage. He is on the baseball team and I am on the basketball team." "You play basketball?" Jane asked.

Just then Aunt P. returned to the table and Jim left to service other patrons. "Who is the young boy you were speaking to?" I don't know him," Jean replied, "but he said he overheard some individuals at the table in the back, talking about taking your land by force if they cannot get it

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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through the normal process.” “Well I don’t know what they are talking about,” Aunt P.’s voiced rose a bit, “but if they try they will have a fight on their hands. I may be an old women but I still have a lot of friends left in this area. Let’s get in the Cadillac and then head back to the house.” “Don’t we have to wait for Tom?” Jean asked. “No he will get back with his Dad. It will give us a chance to see more of the area as we can cross over the various bridges to get to Mound Bayou and someone will take us to the house from there “ Aunt P. replied. “Its time I take a look at what I may have to fight for.”

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 6. A Plan

As they drove through the small towns of the Bayou, Aunt P. turned off the radio and turned toward Jean. "So have you heard from your Dad?" Aunt P. asked. "I got a letter from him last week," Jean said. "We normally email each other but when he is out in the boat it is hard to reach him from here." "You know he thinks the world of you" Aunt P. replied. "Oh, I know but." Jean answered. "But what" Aunt P. asked. Jean looked a little embarrassed. "Oh he tries but he knows nothing about growing up a girl." Aunt P. understood. "I don't know if growing up a boy or a girl is all that different and whatever it is never easy. Your Dad ended up turning up pretty good and he was raised by an old maid Aunt out in the Bayou who knew nothing about being a boy. I do believe all you have to do is really care and believe me your Dad cares more than any two parents together." Jean was a little taken aback by her Aunts honesty. "Well for right now all I want to do is to make it to fifteen and into high school." Jean said. "You really want to grow up that fast." Her Aunt continued. "I don't know what I want," Jean replied. "So why not just let the time flow by and enjoy the moment. Believe me you will be grown up way too fast." Aunt P. concluded.

As they walked toward their house Aunt P. spoke to Jean. "Why don't you take the day off and go see Tea." "But her home is in Mound Bayou. I know that it's on the right fork of the Bayou Creek but I have never been there." "Well, it's time to take a chance. All you have to do is take the right fork about 200 yards from the dock and then take a right at the next fork about five hundred yards farther down the creek. Mound Bayou is only about another half a mile farther down. Just let the creek take you there."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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“I think I have heard something like that before,” Jean thought. As she headed down the path to the boat house and pulled the boat to the side of the dock and started get in she heard a voice. “Well how did the Dinner go?” “Jean turned and saw ZF lying on his back on a lily pad on the edge of the dock. “I am sorry I have not spoken to you for a while, a lot has happened over the past week.” Jean said. “Oh don’t worry it is not the time spent it is how you spend the time.” ZF responded. “So how did the dinner go and how do you like our little end of the world.” “Where to I start?” Jean said. ZF continued. “I find starting at the beginning is a fine idea. We have some time if you do not mind if I accompany you on your little drift.” Jean spoke up. “I am taking the boat down to Mound Bay to see Tea. I have never been there so I would really like you to help me on my little drift as you would say.” “Well let’s get drifting” ZF said as he hopped to the front of the boat.



**ZF relaxing on Lily Pad**

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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As they floated down the Creek, ZF spoke up “How did your little secret work on your gumbo”

“In fact it was a little secret taken from Tom,” Jean said “it was some Bayou rice. But that is not the only secret I have learned.” “Well what are friends for if not to tell a little secret to.” ZF replied. “I don’t know,” Jean said. “My Aunt said telling tales out of school is not regarded as good manners in the Bayou.” “I suspect she meant mostly talking to humans” ZF replied. “Well I am still learning. First of all I know is that my Mom grew up in the Bayou but that is about it and that my Dad left about fifteen years ago and has hardly ever returned. I want to know why”. “You may not want to know all that much. Sometimes the past is where is should remain, the past” ZF said. Jean continued the conversation. “Yes I know that I must move forward but until you know your past how do you know who you are?” “OK,” ZF went on “but remember you can’t change the past. It may help you understand the present, but it should never determine your future. That depends on where you want to go.”



**Mound Bayou**

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Just then Jean saw the first break in the creek. She put the oars into the water and guided the boat onto the right fork. "You did that like a pro. It must be in your genes. You have natural athletic ability." "I don't know" Jean said. "Aunt P. has me trying my basketball skills out in the back yard next to the barn. I have been out there each morning I think I am getting better but I still can't jump." "Well If at the risk of bragging, I am a pretty good jumper. I think I can help you in this." "So what is the secret?" Jean asked. "Well besides practice. Have you ever looked at how a frog jumps?" "I think so?" "Well it is all in the legs but the real secret is the rebound." "I know about rebounds in basketball." Jean asked. "This is different." ZF said. "Look at me, before I push off with my thighs, note how my knees are bent a little and I dip a little before I go up. It is the energy of the drop that I use to go higher. So before you go up remember to go down a bit and use that energy to push higher. I will help you later."

As they came around the river bend, she saw a large house situated on the water. Tea was on the front porch bouncing a basketball between her legs. "You're good" Jean called as she maneuvered the boat next to the dock alongside the house. "Whenever I grab the ball, my dad just says "college scholarship." But I am hardly five feet tall, but girls in my family grow late but someone has to get the ball to the towers like you. So how is the training going?" Jean explained, "Well I am getting a lot of help. My Aunt P. played basketball back in the ancient days, she even talks about people like Elgin Baylor and Wilt Chamberlain. But she says I am more of a Jerry West. She taught me her old push shot from outside. I think I am getting it down. I am still a little slow but she has me chasing chickens to increase my quickness and I am learning what she calls the give and go."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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**Tea's House**

“What’s the give and go?” Tea questioned. “Aunt P says it’s the most basic of basketball plays. “OK show me” Tess said. The headed to the basketball court behind her house. It was a real BB court. “My Dad likes Basketball” was all that Tea could say. Jean placed herself about ten feet out from the basket. Tea took the ball to the top of the circle bounced the ball between her legs and behind her back. Dribble the ball toward me, pass it to me and cut toward the basket”, Jean said. “Why?” “You’ll see.” Tea darted toward Jean, gave a quick pass to her and cut around Jean and headed toward the basket. As soon as she had passed Jean, Jean turned and bounced the basketball in front of Tea. Tea grabbed the ball and laid it into the basket. “How did you do that” Tea asked. “Simple you give it to me and go to the basket. If the player guarding you can’t get around me, you have a free pathway to the basket and I give it back to you. If they stay with you and in front of the basket, I can simply take the ball and shoot from out here.” Tea took the ball and stood in front of Jean. “What if someone is in front of you?” “Well I can take a step back and shoot it if they are not ready.” Jean took the ball and in a second darted by Tea and went to the basket. As she closed in on the basket she remembered ZF instructions. She bent



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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down a little before she went up for a layup. Tea looked up in amazement. "Are you sure that you don't have more than a little Cajun in you. You sure can jump."

"Well" Jean replied. "From what I have learned so far, nothing would surprise me." But we still need a fourth for our team. Have you found one yet?" "No" Tea said. "No one wants to be on a team with a shrimp and a City girl. Tomas will play with us because to tell the truth he can play defense but he is not very good shooter. So we need a fourth player and I don't know any boys who will play with us." "Well I have an idea but we will have to ask him together." "Who?" "He is a waiter at the Teroit Inn on the Waterfront."

"Well my Dad lets me use the smaller motor boat" Tea said. "Let's head down to the town." They jumped into the boat and Tea pulled the starter rope and the 5 house motor started up and they headed down the Bayou toward the town. As they weaved between the logs and stumps of the Bayou, Jean was sure she could see some of the animals watching them. They reached the town in about ten minutes and pulled the boat to the dock in front of the Inn. They walked up through the front door and sat down. A new waiter came up to them. Jean looked around. "Is Jim Carey here today?" "He was fired yesterday. Seems someone thought he was "telling tales out of school." "Do you know where he is?" Jean asked. The waiter replied, "I think he is looking for a job at any of the establishments in town. But good luck at that. Once the word is out, no one will hire him."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Jean look disappointed but then stood up. "I have an idea?" She turned to the waiter "If you see him please ask him to go over to the Waterouque." "Why the Waterouque?" Tea asked. "Well at dinner we had at Aunt P.'s house Mr. Waterouque said if I ever wanted a job at his restaurant I could. Well if not me why not Jim. Especially after I tell him what Jim told me and that it cost him his job." As they walked over to the Waterouque they saw Jim walking down the stairs. Jim said as he saw Jean. "Sorry I will not see you again this summer. That was the last job in the Town." "Don't be so sure" Jean said. Jean walked up the stairs and asked to see Ted. The man at the door said he was not available. "But I am Aunt P.'s great niece. Just then a face came out of the office behind the entrance. "Is that you Jean?" "Yes" Mr. Waterouque. "Well what brings you here? Are you ready to start working?" "Maybe next year, my Dad said I should wait until I am in High School before starting to stop being a kid. But you can help me." "This is Jim Carey. I caused him to be fired from the Heriot Inn and no one will hire him." "How did you cause that?" "Well he heard the men from LOA and some of the Town's representatives talking about their plans for developing the town and the area above Aunt P." "Well there is an unwritten rule that one does not talk about what you hear as a waiter but one should be careful not to talk about something you do not want anyone to hear." Ted turned to Jim. "You are a little young to be working as a waiter. Where are you staying?" "I am staying with my uncle's family out on the peninsula." "And your Uncle's name?" "Joe Carey." "Well if you have your Uncle call me and if he says its ok with him you can start Monday. It's just \$10 an hour but if all goes well I will raise it to \$12 by the end of the month. But you will not get to share tips with the real waiters. They have to feed families." "Thanks" was all Jim could say. "I will have him call you later today." As they walked through the town Jim turned to Tea and

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## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Jean. "I owe you big time. If I could not find a job it was back to the city and to spend the summer with my Dad and work his firm. I just wanted a year off to see what else there is."

"That is ok," Jean said. "We have a way for you to pay us." "Name it." Jim offered. Jean continued, "Well at the end of the summer, there is a contest among the local kids. You have to be sixteen and younger. There is a basketball tournament and its four on four; that is, two boys and two girls on each team. We have the two girls." "That's us" Tea inserted. "And for the two guys, we have one, Tomas Murdock but we need another." "Sure why not, but we should practice a bit. I play a little and I won't even charge you for my teaching." "Oh, I don't know" Tea said. "I have seen Jean play, she might even teach you a few things."

"So we have the rest of the day for ourselves. What should we do?" "Well I have the boat" Tea spoke up, "what about taking a tour of the Bayou." They walked over to the dock and saw someone standing over their boat. "Do you have a permit to park your boat here?" "A permit?" Tea asked. "I never needed a permit before." "We have new rules," the dock manager explained. "We need to leave this area for the big boats, boats like yours have to land down near "Dinky Town." "But that is almost a quarter mile away" Tea spoke up. "If you don't like the rules get a bigger boat" the gentlemen said. "Things are changing by the day." Tea said. "But we should have a voice in that change" Jean replied.

"What is the nearest town to Teroit" Jim asked as they walked toward the mooring where Tea parked her boat. "Well there is Mound Bayou north of the town, that is where I live" Tea said.

"But it is just a small Bayou intersection. Then toward New Orleans there is Great Biscayne. It

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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was a shrimping center before the Hurricane but by now it is just getting back to normal. As they walked along the canal toward the boat slip they saw Tomas on one of his Dad's shrimping boat going by. They called over and the boat slowed down. "You are coming back early" Jean called out to Tom. "They have shut down some of the slips for shrimpers. It looks like a lot of new towboats and barges are coming in. Something is happening but I do not know what." "So how is the shrimping" Jim asked. "OK, but even there things are strange. We used to net some local fish along with the shrimp. We would sell the local fish to the local restaurants. The last couple months we have increasingly netted less local fish and more of these." He threw one of the fish toward Jim who caught it and then dropped it into the bottom of the boat. Tom continued "It reminds me of one of the fish Jean showed me earlier in the week. It looks like one of the invasive fish that is starting to grow in the Bayou?" "Well if you need some help" Jean replied, "My Dad is studying the eco system of the Bayou. He could be of help." "Anything you could do to help us that would be of great help. It is hard enough making a living these days and we need all the help we can." Tomas said.



### Tomas's Father's Shrimp Boat

Soon after they arrived at the boat slip where Tea had moored her boat. "We have to get going but I am glad you can find a way to spend some time in the Bayou this summer. I'm a city girl

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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and I getting to like it here and I am sure you would to.” Jean said as she turned toward Jim Carey. “I can bet on it” Jim replied. “Thanks for all your help. When can we meet next?” “Well we would like to start practicing soon.” Jim replied. “So how about next Sunday after church?” Jean asked. “What Church?” Jim asked. “Oh” Jean said. “It doesn’t really seem to matter. Just pick one and after church there is a get together at the port about noon and all are invited.”

Tea turned to Jean. “Well here only three weeks and you have a boyfriend already.” “I don’t know about that” then Jean blushed and said. “But he is kind of cute isn’t he.” As they motored back up to Mound Bayou, Tea looked at the water. She could see a small oil slick on top of the water as it rushed by her. “This is unusual” she said. “Every once and while someone will spill a gas can or spill some gas filling up on of their tanks but never like this.” “It only took about twenty minutes to get back to Mound Bayou. Tea parked the boat and Jean got into her skiff and headed back to Aunt P’s house. Along the way she ran into two or three oil slicks. When she got back to the house, she went up to here Aunt. “When I was on the creek I saw some oil slicks. Where is it coming from?” Jean asked. “That is every confusing” her Aunt replied. “Why” Jean said. “Well we are the last home on the creek before the levee about a mile up the creek. Almost no one ever takes a boat up there and there is a restriction on the use of any motor boats up there.” “So you haven’t been there yourself? Jean asked.” “I think the last time I was up there was over fifteen years ago, just before you were born, but I forbid you to go there. It is very risky and your Dad would never allow it.” Aunt P. replied. “Never allow it,” Jean thought. “I guess I will just need to find it out for myself.”

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 7: The Levee

The next morning, Jean went down to the dock. She looked up and down the creek. There was no evidence of any other activity on the Bayou. She had told her Aunt that she was going to visit Tea, so her Aunt would not be expecting her back until almost dinner time. She put the boat into the water, attached the oars to their sockets and pushed off from the dock, but instead of heading down river she pointed the boat upstream toward the Levee. She only intended to go a little bit North. How difficult could it be, Jean thought to herself. All the water heads downstream so all she would ever have to do to turn around is to point the boat south and it would drift past right back to the boat house.

As she poled up toward the Levee she started to wonder just how smart she had been.

Everyone was right, as you headed farther toward the Levee the area became stranger and stranger. More moss hung from the trees and the Bayou became more of one great swamp that a series of creeks each with a set of banks. She also heard more of nature than she had ever heard before, animals of all kinds, birds, reptiles, insects. Everyonce and while she would turn around to make sure she knew where she had come from.



### Bayou Near the Upper Levee

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## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Then she heard a voice. “So what are you doing here?” She looked around and could see no one. “Over here on the grass near the shore.” Jane looked a little closer. It was a large frog, but its tone was different from ZF or any of his friends who lived below Aunt P.s. “What do you mean what I am doing here” Jean said. “What does it look like I am doing here? I am poling up the creek.” “I mean what are you doing here. Ever since they put in the Levee no humans are supposed to be here.” The frog said sternly. “I don’t see any signs” Jean said. “You don’t see any because none of your type is supposed to be here” the frog replied. “What makes you so special?” Jean asked. The frog jumped over to a log next to Jean. “I am Khan. I watch over this area of the Bayou. No one and I mean no one and no thing come through this area without me knowing about it.”



**Khan**

“Well that seems very mean of you. I mean if no one is meaning any harm to you or to others why can’t they just pole on by?” Jean asked. “Because I said so young lady” Khan spoke up.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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"There is more to this area than you can think, and I don't want anything happening to you that might bring more of your kind into my little part of this kingdom." Khan said. "Well if this is your kingdom, I presume you have a host of subjects under your control" Jean spoke up. "Don't be so uppity young lady" Khan replied. "You don't know me" Jean said. "I do not know you and I do not want to" Khan continued to speak. "But you do interest me. Most humans cannot speak 'utmoss'. I have not seen one or spoken with any human one since I spoke with that young women who was with that old witch Philomena. But that was almost fifteen years ago." "I do not know who the young woman was" Jean said. "but I am that old witch's great niece" Jean said. Jean regretted saying it the moment it came out of her mouth.

Khan let out a bellow "then get out of my kingdom. You and your kind are not welcome here nor will they ever be. I have made new friends. Friends who will insure that me and my friends will rule over this part of the swamp and as time passes, your part of the Bayou too." Jean took a look to the left and to the right. All of a sudden there were more swamp creatures than she had ever seen before. Khan turned to the left. "That's Bibi she has venom that could put you to sleep in an instant. Next to her is Zebra and next to Zebra is Bat. If you want to come back to this area you will have to deal with all of us and a whole lot more." Just then a large log, or what seemed like a large log, pulled up alongside of Jane and raised itself up out of the water.



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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**Bibi**



**Zebra**

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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**Bat**

All of a sudden out a frog dropped out of the and latched itself on the the log or wht turned out to be the jaws of an alligator. “If you know what is good for you, you will simple slip back under the water.” It was ZF. Soon a large toad leaped on the alligator b next to Khan’s lieutenants and Khan’s group seemed to be a little unsure of him, also.



**ZF on Alligator**



**Chief Ware Head of Toad Tribe**

“Well” the toad said. “Bat and Zebra it’s not so nice to see you again and Tick-Tock it is nice to see that you are just in time.” ZF raised his voice and turned to the Toad that was next to him, “Thanks for showing up, Chief Ware. This would be a good time for everyone to kind of go back to what they were doing.” Khan turned to ZF. “Your time will come” Khan said as he slipped into the water along with his fellow frogs. “Time follows all of us. My good friend” ZF replied as he turned to Jean. “Now young lady. This would be a good time to thank Chief Ware, he is the one who sent the message to warn us that you were here.” Jean turned toward the Chief. “I guess I should thank you, but I am confused. How are you a Chief”. Chief Ware started to explain. “as humans, many animals vote an individual to be their lead. In the Bayou, toads in the various parts had an election and voted me the Chief of the Toads. We have a Toad Council which helps us make decisions but as people in your world, all of the animals in various parts of the Bayou do try to communicate. But this area is different.” ZF then cut in, “So listen to Chief

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Ware, Jean, do not go off on your own into an area you know nothing about? We in the Bayou know both the meaning of friends and the need for them. If you wanted to go up to the Bayou near the Levee all you had to do was ask.” “And you would have let me go or gone with me” Jane asked. “Of course not” ZF replied. “This creek is not some yellow brick road that brings you from Kansas or in your case, New Orleans, to the Wizard of Oz or whatever source of wisdom you are looking for.”

“Well I want to thank you for all of your help” Jean said to ZF, but If I want an answer to a question, I guess I have the right to try to find out what it is.” “And what is so important a question that you almost have to get yourself in real, and I mean real trouble, to find out. You have no idea how close you came to not getting out of the Swamp. Khan is not to be trifled with. He has a lot of friends in the animal kingdom who simply do not trust humans and want all of them and those of us who have learned to live with or amongst them gone” ZF said in a stern voice.

“But how can he achieve that.” Jean asked. “Well each of us is really dependent on a very unique set of circumstances” ZF continued to explain. “You for instance. Humans need fresh water, clean air, and on top of that protein which comes from eating some form of us. Oh don’t worry we accept that. We frogs need fresh water and clean air too but we need insects and often small fish to survive. Those insects also feed the birds such as kingfishers as well as the small fish that the kingfisher needs to stay alive. And good old Tick Tock needs all of us. But he eats the larger fish to make sure that there are not too many of them. He also keeps the

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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number of turtles down so that there are enough small fish to feed the rest of us. If one part of this chain is broken, no clean water, no clean air, no insects, no fish, no frogs, no birds, no alligators and soon no people. Khan thinks he can protect his little piece of the pie and let all the rest of it disappear. Kingfisher and Tick Tock have been taking a few forays up here over the past weeks and things are happening” Jean took a look at her friends. They and their families had lived in the Bayou centuries longer than Jane’s ancestors. Yet in a snap of your fingers they could be gone and what they did not realize was how close it was coming for someone to snap those fingers. If developers got the rights to bring the oil and gas down to Teroit or the rights to bring barges up to the levee to get the resources, the Bayou would change forever and all that they had or knew would be gone. “What have you seen?” Jean asked. “Well there are a few boats in the area and it looks like they are doing some drilling in the area but that might just be them testing the Levee.” “I saw some oil slicks passing in front of our house where to you think that is coming from” Jean asked. “From what we can see it is coming over the Levee from some of the areas that the developers are working at” ZF replied. “Something needs to be done but frogs, alligators, birds have very little power in the Mayor’s office or the state house.” “Well most humans do not either” Jean said.

“What is the hurry now” Toad turned toward ZF. “Well when faced with desperate times, people will do desperate things, and right now are desperate times. If the decision is no jobs or any job, the any job will win” Jean continued. So then we have to find any job for them” ZF said. “But as I said, their jobs are disappearing” Jean responded “How are they disappearing? “Well, for decades the primary jobs in the area were related to the Shrimp business. After the

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Hurricane and then the BP oil spill much of the industry moved to other shores and the government cut back on supporting local fisheries. It was just coming back when there has been a drop in local fish population. It looks like an invasive fish has entered the eco stream. If there is no attempt to remove it, the entire ecosystem of the Bayou can be destroyed.”

“So where do we start?” Rippet asked. “When faced with complex problems, I always believed in searching for a simple solution” ZF replied. “Even simple solutions require lots of work and lots of luck. We need to find out what they are really doing up there. We need to find out what this fish is and where it came from, and lastly we need to see if there is a solution which gives us the power to act.” “OK” Jean responded. “I can help. My Dad can help us on the fish issue and I am going to check with Wendy LaFarge. Aunt P. said she was once a lawyer and may help us to know what are legal rights are.” “That is a good idea. I will will also stop by her home to see if she knows what going on in the North” ZF replied. “How can ZF work with Wendy? Are there others who can speak with frogs and find out who was the young woman that Khan spoke of who was with Aunt P. over fifteen years ago?” “bOther questions for another time,” Jean thought as she turned the boat around and headed back home.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 8: Practice

“I am heading down to meet Tea and Jim to practice basketball.” “Be back by five” Aunt P replied. Jean had no intention of playing basketball. She was taking the opportunity of dropping by Wendy’s Adventure Tours. If anyone, Wendy knew the Bayou by heart. She took tourist tours into the edges of that area so she more than anyone could be aware of what was happening. and, according to her Aunt P., she had a degree in environment law and might be able to help if laws were broken. Second, she wanted to find out if Wendy could speak ‘Utmoss’. Lastly, Wendy was her mother’s best friend and had to have some answers for the questions Jean had.



**Wendy’s House**

Wendy lived in a small Bayou Town, Lafarge, just north of Teroit. It was in the area where many of the Indians moved to when they were forced out of the Northern Bayou almost 150 years ago. Jean stopped the boat just outside of the dock leading up to Wendy’s house. It was a small house even by Bayou standards. She could see that the tour boat was not outside. She got off her boat and went up to the house. The sign on the door read Bayou Women Adventures. Jean looked

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

inside the window. She could see that no one was at home. Through the window she could see a small writing table. Well, Jean thought. I can at least leave a note to tell Wendy I was here and that I need to see her.



**Wendy's sign**

Jean pushed the door open slowly and called out Wendy's name. No one answered. Yes the house was small but clean. There was a small living room to the right with the writing desk next to a window which looked out on the Bayou. From there one could see if anyone was coming down the Bayou. To the left was a small kitchen and a round kitchen table. Toward the back of the house, Jean could see two rooms, one looked like a business office and the other was Wendy's bedroom. Jean walked into the Wendy's office. Jean walked over to the desk to see if there was something to write on. It was a simple desk with a small clock and a calendar but nothing to leave a note on. There was a picture of what looked like Wendy with a young child



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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about three years old. Jean presumed that it must have been her daughter or someone very close to her. Jean was a little surprised. The young girl in the photo could have been her twin, albeit at a younger age. Jean looked around but could see nothing to leave a note on. She did not want to go into Wendy's bedroom but she did not see if she had any choice. Her Dad would say, in for an ounce in for a pound.

When she walked into the bedroom, what she saw shocked her. The bedroom was painted yellow Jean's favorite color. There were pictures of herself on the wall and on the desk which was under a window facing the back of the house were pictures of her as a baby and a picture of her at every birthday party and holiday from then on. On Wendy's desk was a picture of Jean scoring a layup at one of her grade school's basketball games. "This is spooky," Jean thought. She went over to the small desk and opened up one of the right draw. In the drawer were a stack of letters. Jean knew the handwriting on the outside of the envelopes. It was her Dad's.

Jean reached in, opened the top letter and started to read. "Jean should be spending the summer with Aunt P. as Ted and I are out on the boat. She is about to turn fifteen and is a young girl on her way to becoming a young woman. I know that we decided that it was best for her that we would wait on telling her Mom's special secret. When and if you tell her is up to you. Whatever you do I will support you." Just then Jean heard the door open and started to leave the bedroom. Wendy seemed more than startled when she saw her standing just outside the bedroom. "I am sorry" Jean said. "I was going to Teroit but thought I would stop by." "You can always drop by when you want" Wendy replied. "But whatever your excuse you do not go

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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into someone's house uninvited and certainly not into their private spaces. I am sure your Dad taught you better." Wendy went over to the Kitchen. "Do you drink coffee, I don't even know if you are permitted to or not. My social skills were never as good as your Mothers. Sit down I even think I have some Beignets that are not very old and tell me about your summer." Wendy was slowly capturing some of her composure as she took out two coffee cups and started up the coffee. "Do you take milk and sugar?" "Only milk please" Jean replied. In fact, Jean had never had much coffee in the past, but this looked like a good as any time to start.

"So what about your summer?" Wendy Asked. "It sure has been a strange one" Jean replied. "I had never really spent much time with Aunt P. and I always had thought about her as a little strange but every day she seems more and more normal. In fact, every day I am here the Bayou seems more and more normal and New Orleans seems more and more strange." "Well the Bayou can grow on you" Wendy said as she placed the coffee and Beignets on the table and sat down. "What else have you found out about yourself?" "Well that is another reason I came by" Jean said. "What do you mean?" Wendy's voice rose as she asked. "Well, I have found out that there are some individuals who want to take over Aunt P's land for commercial purposes and I thought you might help" "I am always will to help your Aunt" Wendy replied. Jean took a better look at Wendy. She was sure she had seen Wendy before. "And, I have some questions about my Mother" Jean asked. "I have only been in the Bayou a couple of weeks but I am increasingly getting a little confused about where in the Bayou my Mother was from." What do you mean?" Wendy asked. Wendy got up from the table and walked back to the stove where the coffee was brewing. "I am sorry I went into your bedroom, but I read something about Mom's special

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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secret. I really do not know how to ask this. Did my Mom ever talk to you about her special secret?" "What do you think was her special secret?" Wendy asked. "You must know" Jean raised her voice.

"I don't know" Wendy continued. "Everyone in the Bayou has secrets." "I understand" Jean said. "This may sound crazy but I can talk to animals." Wendy blurted out suddenly "You Too!!! Your Mom always thought I was a little crazy. We were in high school together when I asked her if she had ever heard voices when she I was out in the Bayou. Of course we all hear voices, but I told her that I could talk to them. One of the reasons she wanted to leave the Bayou was that I was driving her crazy." So it was Wendy that was with Aunt P. when they meet Khan up North. Wendy spoke "Utmost" and she must have been the women whom Khan said looked like me.

Jean was starting to feel really strange. Every kid at some time feels so different but Jean always felt really different. She was always the tallest kid in my class and she did not look at all like her Dad and certainly not like her Mother. Her Mom had the bluest eyes and blond hair while she had brown hair and brown eyes. "What secret should I not know?" All of a sudden Jean asked an entirely different question. "Why didn't my Dad tell me, before I met you? He had to know I would see you?" Wendy was taken aback and all of a sudden she broke down crying. "Your Dad loved your Mom." "I know" Jean replied. "But what difference does that make." Wendy did not know what to say. "Let's just say that your Mom had a special secret and keep it at that." Jean did not know where to stop. She took a better look at Wendy. Tall, dark brown hair, it was looking at a mirror.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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“OK this is going to sound bad when I say it, but I went into your bedroom to leave you a note. I saw all the pictures. Why?” Jean asked. “I just know your Dad.” Wendy replied. Jean could see the pain in her face and the hesitancy in her voice. “That is no answer.” Jean said There is only one reason for anyone keeping all those pictures.” “There are only two reasons for keeping all those picture. Either you are a stalker or I am special to you in some strange way?”

Wendy stepped back a bit and it seemed the air just went out of her. She fell back onto the chair next to the table in the kitchen, put her head in her hands and started to cry. “I am sorry I had to let you go, I had no other answer” Wendy sobbed into her hands. “What are you talking about?” Jean asked. “The special secret is that I am your birth mother” Wendy voice quivered. This may be an answer to a question, but this is not the answer one ever expects to hear. Jean just stood there. “Just tell me why.” Jean asked. “In the months before your Dad meet your Mom, your Dad and I were together.” When he met her, he knew she was special, he married your Mother and went to New Orleans. “I left to get my law degree and found out that I was pregnant with you. I did not know what to do. I told your Dad that I could not keep you, I had no money, I had no future, and I was a Bayou girl with nothing to offer. Your Mom never knew, she was my best friend and I said the father was a fellow student at law school. I asked if they could adopt you and raise you as their own. Your Mom was a much better Mother than I would or ever could be.” “Then why not tell me after my Mom died.” Jean was very confused. Seeing her real Mom in front of her seemed more than surreal. “I wanted to tell you, but you were so young and the experts we spoke to said we should wait a couple of years until you were older.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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But I always cared and tried to be as close to you as I could. I think one of the reasons your Dad had you come to the Bayou this year was for you to find out a little more about me and where I live. When I saw you at dinner you were such a beautiful young woman, I could have broken down then and there but I decided that it was best just to let you move ahead. Being a woman in the Bayou is always been tough. In the end, running the tour business for mostly law firms in New Orleans seems to just give me a place that I needed. It also gave me time to push decisions off. But I never stopped thinking of you, I saw you whenever I could, I followed every one of your successes and cried when I knew you were hurt. Your Dad sent me pictures of you at every occasion and I have saved copies of all of your grade cards”

Jean was both mad and sad at the same time. Mad at her Dad for never telling her, mad at Wendy for staying away for these years, yet feeling the pain that Wendy must have felt. The pictures on the wall, the small toys she played with as a kid. She remembered that on the couch in Wendy’s office was the blanket she held as a kid. The more she looked back at it, Wendy was there after her Mom died. She remembered seeing her when she was at school. “I tried to be there as much as I could, but you started asking a lot of questions. The specialists said I should step back. It was the hardest thing I ever did.”

Both Wendy and Jean sat back in their chairs exhausted. “Well that is a lot over a coffee. I always thought I would let you know in a more civilized way and without so much crying.” Jean looked again at Wendy, her eyes were red and she still was gasping for air off and on.” Jean was almost in shock and thought that she would have to come to grips with this later on. “Don’t

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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tell your Dad” Wendy continue. “He wanted to tell you when he thought it was right. He loves you terribly. If it is anyone’s fault it is mine.”

Jean thought a bit. She had been in the Bayou long enough to see how tough it is on men much less women. Maybe she did not have much of a choice but a choice she did have. But that choice would have ruined her Mother. Being an adult cannot be easy. “It is not the end” Jean said. “I understand.” Wendy said softly. “let’s just take it slowly” Jean continued to describe what she saw on the Bayou, what Jim had told her and her aunt, her experience with Tea and her Dad, and most importantly her interaction with some of the animals in the North Bayou. “Well you certainly in the middle of it aren’t you.” Wendy said. “Well you are right” Jean relied. Wendy continued, “there seems to be something going on. The various developers especially Jim Wilsons firm, LOG, certainly has its goals. It sees the resources beyond the Levee as a means to bring it back to power in Baton Rouge. The politicians in New Orleans see this as a means to invigorate the area west and south of New Orleans and worst of all some of the local politicians and businessmen and women see this new world of energy as a simple solution to the lack of development. No one seems willing to work to bring back the best of the past and want a simple way into the future.”

Well why haven’t they acted yet?” Jean asked. “Well in truth it’s the law.” Wendy explained. “Your Aunt owns a large portion of the water rights and land rights for where they want to take the pipe or send up the barges and I do not have to tell you, your Aunt simply is not ready to

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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give up.” “What happens when my Aunt dies.” Jean asked. “Good question” Wendy replied.

“She has no children and your Dad has little interest in coming back from what I can tell.”

“So what do we do next?” “Well you only do what you can do and I am a lawyer and I know that in the law, as in most areas, big beats small and we have to find someone or something that trumps local politics and business. I spent most of my time in environment law. The question is how to use that law to slow or stop what is happening.” Jean came up with a question. “We spoke of my Aunt. What if her land was under the supervision of a non-profit or even more importantly a non-profit environment center that would protect it from being appropriate by the state or county?” “Good question, You must be a smart young lady” Wendy replied. “I will have to check it out but it can’t hurt what we really need is something which makes the land special so that no one can touch it. We need our own little snail darter.” “What?” Jean asked. Wendy stood up from her chair. “The snail darter is a small animal that stop an entire dame project in the state of Washington.” “Well I know who to ask” Jean said. Before she got up to go, she took Wendy’s hand in hers and they held each other tight for a long time.

“It is getting late. Let me give you a boat ride home. They arrived back at Aunt P.’s house in about ten minutes. “When do we tell Aunt P. what I know?” Jean said as she got out of the boat. Wendy was right behind her. “How about never?” Wendy asked. “No” Jean spoke up. “I think both of us would agree that that did not work out in our case.” “You are of course right” Wendy replied. “Do you know how difficult it is to have a daughter who is more mature than the Mother? I guess we might as well get it done.”

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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“As they walked into the kitchen, Aunt P. knew immediately the truth was out.” Wendy started to say something, but Aunt P. cut in. “I wondered where Jean went to. After she left on the boat, Tea called for her. It was obvious that she did not head down to Mounds Park. I guess this answers where she went and from the red of your eyes I guess you two have had a talk.” “Yes” Jean replied. “Are you two OK with where you stand right now?” Aunt P. asked. Both Wendy and Jean nodded yes. “But how did you know” Jean asked. “Look in the mirror. Even I have eyes. Then I guess that is enough for right now. It is time to sit down and have dinner as a family.”

Jean went and got the plates from the cupboard. Wendy went upstairs to freshen up, and Aunt P. took the chicken jambalaya from the stove. “I hope you understand why I could not tell you and had to let things work themselves out” Aunt P. said to Jean. “I may never understand why, sometimes telling the truth from the start works better.” “Maybe, but that is something we will never know.”



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 9. The Opposition

At the same time that Jean was finding out about the “secret” of her birth, actions which would affect other part of her life. Jim Wilson of LOG, Becky Lefebvre, Mayor Tulley, and the chairman of the Country Board were all meeting at Becky’s Inn. “The country board is meeting this month” Becky said. “This is our chance to put forward our Eminent Domain proposal. We had the town meeting so we passed that legal hurdle. No problem, I am the legal trustee of the Theroux estate. Philomena Theroux is the current beneficiary but the Trust has a catch phrase that if she dies childless the next heir must be in her bloodline or the land must be first offered to the county she lives in to cover any costs associated with the land.” “What of Dave Theroux?” “Well he took her name when he moved in but she never officially adopted him. “Are there any other known heirs?” “Not that I can tell but I am continuing to search.” “Do we have a backup plan? That woman seems like she could live forever.” “Well, two years ago we passed a special water tax based on land ownership that goes into effect next year. I don’t see any one on the other side getting together a plan, so that should hit them by surprise. We can show the decrease in the fish population, that the water quality is hurt by the increase in oil slicks we are sending down the bayou from the lake behind the Levee. With the newspaper behind us, I think this is a slam dunk.” “But what if they find out about what are the sources of the drop in fish or the oil slicks?” “How are they going to find out? No one is allowed in the area and we have even put up some cameras to check if anyone is in the area.” “That may be a little problem” One of the lieutenants of Wilson spoke up. “What do you mean” Jim responded. “Well we just went over the film from last night we have a film with a young lady in a boat in the area just below the levee.” He pulled the film up on his iPad. The group looked at the film.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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“That’s Jean Thoreau; she is the niece of Philomena Thoreau. What is she doing there? This cannot be good.” “Maybe she is just exploring?” Mayor Tulley said. Jim Wilson cut in, “Maybe so but this is too important to take a chance. How can we find out what she knows or why she is there in the first place?”

“Who are her friends?” The LOG representative asked. “She is just here for the summer” Mayor Tulley responded. “But I see her with Tea Wilson and Tomas Murdock and they will never talk, they have been turned against us by their parents.” “Who else does she talk to?” the representative asked. “She helped a young boy named Jim Cary get a job at Waterouque but I do not know what he knows. He is staying with his Uncle and Aunt for the summer. They live out on the Peninsula so they must have some money. His parents probably send the rich boy to the Bayou to meet the poor folk,” Mayor Tulley said. The head of LOG broke in “I know Jim Cary’s Uncle and I can always ask him.”



**House of The Bayou**

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Betsy raised her voice. "This is for the best of the Bayou, its people, and our lives. It is time for a change. We may have to back door it and we may have to spread a little money around we will. I know that Tea wants to go to college, maybe we can help. I know her father's restaurant business has had a few problems and Tomas Murdock is from a family of eight and they could always use some help. Once they see the writing on the wall maybe they can be turned. Where is Jean's father in all this?" Mayor Tulley stood up, " he is an Associate Professor of Environmental Science at the University but their operation is funded by the state. He is currently out on one their new experimental ship. The ship requires annual funding and if he wants to keep testing the gulf his Dean or Department head might see the benefit of putting a little pressure on him to get his daughter in line." "I like that idea" Jim Wilson said. "He turned to his lieutenants. Make it happen."

"It was the end of his first month on the ship. Weather had been great and they had a chance to check out not only the deep water samples but had the opportunity of checking out some of the shallow areas near the delta. The results there were more mixed. Certain areas had seen a rebound to the water quality and fish diversity before the storm and the spill. Other area had seen harder time. From what Dave could tell it had more to do with the quality of the water coming out of the Bayou system which drains into the delta. Using the sophisticated equipment of the day one could almost track the source of the water coming through the delta to its source in the Bayou. As Dave told his students "if the Kidneys (the Bayou) are sick you can never cure the other diseases" But this summer was special. Jean was staying with Aunt P. He hoped that spending some time in the Bayou would let her be a little more independent. He knew that

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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she had spent too much time helping take care of Ted. He was born premature and a number of issues growing up, but that was all behind him. A summer on her own, making her own friends could only be good for her. In addition he had an alternative motive. He knew he would have to tell her sooner or later. Maybe she would have a chance to meet Wendy and maybe even get to like her a bit. In any event he had decided that before her next birthday he would have to tell her the truth. The truth is that Jill, his wife, had been told that they never could ever have children, so when Wendy asked if they would adopt Jean or she would have to give it up to another family, it seems a natural answer. Then Jill and he were taken by surprise by her pregnancy with Ted. Jill wanted the child more than anything. There were risks but she refused to listen to any of them. She was never fully well after the birth of Ted and died soon after. As he looked down at the deck of the ship onto the young boy holding spyglasses and looking at the shore he thought how proud she would have been of him. He had her natural curiosity and looks. He had his wife's blond hair and was fine boned but he was much less risk adverse than Jean. I guess if you are small you push the frontiers but if you are tall for your age like Jean one is a little more reserved. When Jill died, Dave was a basket case. Wendy had her law degree by then but had moved back to the Bayou. She returned almost every weekend for the next four years to help with Ted and Jean. He did not know how much they remembered, but the psychologist said that she should reduce her interaction in case Dave married again. Jean was getting a little older and might ask questions and Ted was already asking questions but any indication that his sister was really a half-sister was not needed.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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As the Mileen Summer passed the smaller towns on the delta, it turned up one of the tributaries toward the Bayou Teriot. "This where the Battle of 1814 took place" Dave said to Ted. "It was just up a ways from here and a little farther up near where Aunt Philomena lives is where Jean Lafitte had his camp." "Who is Jean Lafitte?" Ted asked. "Depending on who you ask, he was a patriot, a pirate, and privateer" his Dad responded. "A pirate near where you grew up, how cool" Ted answered. "How can I find out about him? I need a summer report and pirates are always more interesting than fish." "Well the computer is yours." His Dad replied. Ted headed back into the captains room where the computer was. His Dad took one look at him as he left the bridge. Kids are kids, he wondered how Jean was doing.

Well after we get back, we will surprise Jean and visit all of Lafitte's territory. This was going to be a surprise. He did not know how much of a surprise it was going to be. Just then he received a phone call on the ship's phone. It was from his Department Chairman.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 10: The Adventure

Aunt P. came in the room and Jean was going through some of the old books she had on the geography of the Bayou. "You are really getting into this Bayou history" Aunt P. spoke up. "Well since I am part of it, I thought it made sense and I have to have to report on something when I go back to school" Jean answered. "Well you're welcome to whatever you find here but you are here to have some fun. So take a break if you need to" Aunt P said as she left the room.

"Thanks I check out the rest when I get back from my basketball practice. Jim is coming over to help me with my shooting and I will check it out then." Jean headed out to the basketball court. Jim was already there trying out 10 foot jumpers. He threw the ball to Jean. Let's see how your practice has gone. Jean took the ball and immediately sank a twenty foot set shot. "Well you can certainly hit it when no one is one you but what can you do when someone is guarding you." Jim went and stood between Jean and the basket. He took the ball threw it at Jean and said now what. Jean took a few dribbles left and right without looking at the ball she took a quick faint toward the hoop, took a step back and sank the shot. "Let me see you do that again" Jean took the ball again but this time as she fainted toward the basket and he moved toward her to block her shot, she moved quickly to the right around his left shoulder and drove to the basket. But instead of simply laying the ball up, she went under the basket and put in a reverse layup. Jim just stood there with his eyes wide open. "From now on no more guy girl stuff from now on this is basketball player on basketball player. For the next 30 minutes it was just two kids playing ball, jump shots, layups, and when they were done it was 15 (Jean)) to 12 "Next

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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time no mercy” Jim said as he pulled himself off of the court. “I agree” Jean said. “Next time no Mercy and NO points.” “Ouch you’re harsh” Jim replied.

They took the ball back into the barn and through it up in the rafters. It started to roll back down, so Jean when up the stairs to make sure it remained there. As she got to the top of the stairs, she saw an old trunk off in the corner. “What are you looking at” Jim called up. “Just some old junk, I think.” Jean replied. “I am doing a summer project on the history of the Bayou and there are some old books in here.” Jim came up the stairs. “This is cool. As he pulled some of the books out of the trunk. There is stuff here from over 100 years ago. One dusty book was tied with a string around it. When Jean untied the bow, an old map fell out. It looks like a notebook. The map shows the geology of the Bayou back in the 1800’s and how each of the inlets led down to the Delta. “This is strange?” Jean spoke up. “The map has a stamp at the bottom.” “Anything unique about it?” “Just that it has the JL initialed next to it with a circle around a spot near the Levee.” “JL” Jim said. “I have no idea what that means.”

### Put in copy of Map

There is also an old Bible here with a genealogy of the Theroux family.” “What? Let me see?” Jean opened up the Bible. It was an old Vulgate version originally printed in 1860. On the back page was a list of the decedents of several families from the 1800’s down through 1950.

## The list explained a lot.



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Jean headed down to the dock. Wendy was already there with her tour boat. Jean showed her the Bible. "If you had come across this earlier, this would have been a real surprise to you. It answers a lot." "I agree but I do not know most of these people when we get back you are going to have to explain it all to me" Jean said. "We will have to use your boat. It has a shallow bottom and can go about anywhere. Take me to where you went last week." Twenty minutes later they were in the last of the open water before they entered the North Bayou. "Where is the Levee?" Jean asked. "I believe it is north about a mile. It is basically an earthen dam with several sluices that permit water to be let out if water rises to high." Wendy said. "But" I do not understand," Jean replied "we have had no significant rain all month, how could it be that oil slick could make it down into the Bayou. Just as important how do invasive fish make it here they must have come from the lake behind the levee into the Bayou?" "Well" Wendy took up the conversation "we have a lot of questions but very few answers. It is still early. Let's head up one of these canals and see where it goes." Jean was amazed at how Wendy could move the boat through the wooden trunks' and trees. As they moved father up, Jean saw something shinning in the trees. "Could you go a little closer to that tree over there" As Wendy took the boat closer, Jean grab a root on one of the trees and started to climb up the trunk. "Be a little careful, Jean that there are snakes in those trees and I don't think it wants to be surprised." "Now you tell me." Jean thought as she reached the top branch and she pulled off a small camera with a Wi-Fi connection. "What is it" Wendy called up. "Do cameras grow naturally in the Bayou" Jean called back. "What are you talking about" Wendy called back. "Well I think this is what you call a double deal – we both have been found out." Jean brought the camera down to the boat."

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## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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"Well where do we go next?" Jean asked. "I want to check out just a little a little farther."

Wendy replied. As they weaved through the moss covered Banyans, they came across a small piece of what Jean would later say paradise. The water seemed to be bluer, the trees higher, there were fish Jean had never seen before. I have never seen such a garden spot in the Bayou. I have been travelling the Bayou for almost fifteen years and I have never seen anything like this. They both suddenly hear a voice. "Up in the air. It me Stick. "What are you doing here?" Jean asked." "Well you asked ZF to have us checkout the North Bayou and that's what I am doing. From what I can tell, this is the only part of the North Bayou that has remained the same since I was here last year. All around us, the Bayou has become overrun with weeds and stagnant water. "Oh pardon me, Stick this is Wendy." "Oh we know about Wendy but it has been a while since we have talked." "I am sorry my friends, but I just disappeared for a while." "Well you chose the wrong time to come back." "Why" Jean asked. "Well ZF and the rest of the South Bayou are on their way here to help the Toad Family." Stick replied. "The Toad Family?" Wendy asked. "Yes over the past year, ZF had noticed fewer and fewer toads at the Sunday gathering. This is one of the last holdouts of Toads in the Bayou." Stick replied.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Tip Toad on Lily pad

Stick continued, "But at this moment we do not have to answer that problem. The real problem we have is that Zen Frog and his army is heading this way. This part of the Bayou is special to all of us. Khan takes special concern to anyone coming into this area." Jean took a look back. So this must be the area that ZF had spoke to her about during the church services. Through the swamp she thought she could just see a small island in the distance and around it were the largest Banyan Trees she ever saw. "What is special about the Tip Toad family?" Jean asked. "Well" Stick said. "This is the only part of the Bayou where they live. They live off a certain lily pad that only exists in this part of the Bayou. I have warned ZF. He and many of the Bayou animals are on their way here to protect them. We have to stay here until they arrive". "Why, Wendy said "this is their battle, we humans cannot get involved." "We are already involved." Jean answered. "We dictate where they live, we determine the environment they live in and they impact how we live. We are in all of this together. There is no them and us and

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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there is a more important reason.” “What?” Wendy asked. “These are my friends.” Jean replied.



**King Toad**

Just then the Bayou went quite. “This can’t be good.” Wendy positioned the boat at the main entrance to the pond which backed up towards the levee. “At least we can use the levee to protect our back. What does Khan’s army look like.” “Don’t be too taken aback.” Stick said. “Mostly it is his own support in the frog community, but he has aligned himself with some of the reptiles, fish, and alligators. They even have some bats and other birds.” “How long before ZF is here?” Jean asked. “Soon, but I do not know if it is soon enough.” Stick answered. Just then ten small storks came swoop down at Wendy and Jean. Jean picked up one of the poles and took out the lead bird. The others veered off. At the same time, a school of saw fish tried to break through into the pond, but Wendy had placed the boat in the deepest part of the ponds entrance, the fish were forced to head for the shallower edges. “Wendy took one of her anchors and threw it around a tree to the right and pulled it down onto the shallow part of the

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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entrance, just in time to stop the school of saw fish. To the right, she could see Khan and his followers, there was Zebra and his cohorts, there was Flash and his hordes of flash frogs. Their goal was to rip out the lily pads so that nothing would be left for the Tip Toads to eat. Just then from behind the Levee, came a host of larger Toads. The Toad formed a phalanx to the left of Wendy's Boat. Sorry we are a little late but we are here to help. The Toads threw themselves into the frontal attack of the Khan's army. Khan had not expected such a resistance. He had sent all of his army in the first wave, but he had a backup. In the distance, Wendy and Jane could see what looked like logs coming up the Bayou. "I think this is where we lose." Jean said. "I am responsible for you, if they come at us we have to leave" Wendy turned around. 'Leave Where?" Jean asked.



**Toad**

One could hear a new rush in the Banyan trees. Wendy and Jean looked up and saw a band of orange frogs were in the branches above them. But just as things looked the worst, a small frog's head peaked out of the water next to them. "Need some help" ZF asked. "Time I think for reinforcements. In a moment Kingfisher and his flock returned. They started to drop rocks and small logs. This seemed to stop what was coming up the stream for a second, but it was only a

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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matter of time. Just then Wendy and Jean felt something hit their boat. “It must be one of them” “Nope it’s just me” Tick Tock rose out of the water and put himself between the boat and the oncoming group of alligators. You are just in time.” “Of course.”



**Khan’s army in the trees**

The Bayou alligators had never seen a ‘Circus Alligator’ the size of Tick Tock. He swung his tail and four of the smaller quicker crocks went flying. He stared straight at the leader who came straight at Tic until Tic raised himself fully out of the water on this tail. He was more than twice the size of the other leader, one roar out of Tick and the others turned. Khan sent what was the rest of his army to out flank Wendy and Jean but just as he did, they were met with a host of Frogs and small reptiles from the South Bayou. ZF raised himself out of the water and gave a yell. Suddenly OT appeared on the Bow of Wendy’s boat. OT let out a roar and as the eyes were on him ZF made a quick jump that Jean had never seen to fast he flew thought the air with his legs outstretched right into the chest of Khan who went flying off the log he had used as his command post. As soon as Khan went down, the rest of his army turned.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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**OT**

As Khan's group melted back into the north Bayou, Wendy, Jean, ZF and the group got together on the small island next to the Tip Frog Pond. "This was strange. Why here and why now?" ZF asked.

"We have other battles to win in the future" but Khan and his group always have sided with those they think can help him control this area. There must be something here that has real value to someone."

"Well it has special meaning to us" ZF said. "If this area was destroyed I doubt it the Bayou would ever be the same. Life holds together at times by a very thin tread. You pull one end of it and you never know how it affects other parts of the sweater." Wendy said as she started to turn the boat around. As she headed to the back of the boat she saw the old Turtle. "Well OT. I have not seen you in years. "So you remember your old Friend " OT replied. "Of course. But you

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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haven't changed at all over the years." "Well the Bayou has been before us and it will be here after us." Wendy turned to Jean. "OT was a friend of my Mother's and I believe my grandmother was a friend of his too." "OK I was younger then, but I have seen several of your generations come and go. But It looks like you have a new one to keep the peace and the Bayou sacred. We need constant vigilance. I fear the battle is just about to start."

"But more to the point. Why have you not looked up your old friend since you have been back?" OT asked. "Oh I have been back in the Bayou for almost ten years." Wendy answered. "Ten years." OT said. "You humans live in such a time focused world. Few of you learn that years are just part of a longer stream of time. Some dip their toes in it for a very brief time and others float in the river it seems forever. But the time does not matter, sometimes those who dip their toes for the shortest period have the biggest impact on how the river twists and turns. Others become almost part of the river until they know that it is time for them to join it. Before you left I was hoping to talk to you about your part in the river. But you left. You did not even come back after your mother died. She left rather suddenly I hope it was not something I had done."

Wendy had not often thought of her these fifteen years. Her mother had left to go to the city just after she had graduated from high school. She very rarely visited her. For most of her life her mom looked like she never aged, But in the last years of her life she seemed to age so fast. "Life took control of me a little. I am back now." "Now is good" OT said.



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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"You never talked to me about your family" Jean said to Wendy as they rowed the boat back to the boat house. "I really do not know that much. I never knew my Dad. My Mom said he died in a boating accident just after I was born. I don't even have a picture of him. My Mother had me when she was relatively old. I think almost fifty. It made quite a stir around here especially among those who believe in witches and all that. My Mom raised me by herself. When she was about seventy she just got up and moved to the city. "She was born in the Bayou at the start of the Depression so she had it pretty hard. She moved into the old house that Aunt Jennifer had purchased years ago when she left the Bayou. The page in the Bible says Aunt Jennifer was your grandmother and my great grandmother. "How old was Aunt Jennifer when she left the Bayou and moved into the City?" "I don't really know" Wendy responded. There is just that one picture of her in Aunt P's house but she must have been born sometime in the late 1800's." Jean knew that was consistent with what was in the Bible but said nothing. "People say she lived forever." "One last question?" Jennifer asked. "How were your mother, Aunt Jennifer and Aunt P. related,". "Well Aunt P and Aunt Jennifer were sisters but I do not know how they were related to my mother? We need to find out". Wendy answered.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 11: The Plan

“As they walked toward the house, Wendy turned to Jean. “As I understand it, we are faced with not only LOG but the entire political structure of the town, county and parts of the state bureaucracy including the university trying to get Aunt P’s land. “Ok” Jean asked.” What do we have on our side?” “Well, Wendy said. “We have the fact that they have little idea as to what we know about their intentions or how they plan to do it.” “OK then what do we know.” Jean asked. “In fact, very little.” Wendy responded. “We know that they want to disrupt the ecosystem of the Bayou north and south of Aunt P. I thought they wanted to put a pipeline from the area north of the Levee to transfer gas down to Teroit and set up a transfer station but why spend all their time in the North Bayou. The fact that they have cameras in the area to find out who is in that area leads me to believe that there is something special about the area. It does not look like the oil spills are on purpose so the idea that they are trying to track the movement of the Bayou leads me to believe that the primary purpose is not to find an alternative route for traffic down the Bayou.”

“What of traffic up the Bayou” Jean asked. Wendy looked a little stumped. “Out of Babes” she said. “We have been so concerned about them coming down the Bayou we never thought that their goal was only to go up the Bayou a little way or at least to the area just south of the North Bayou.” “That would make your land the number one goal. Your Aunt owns the only accessible public land into the North Bayou.” “But they can’t get a hold of her land can they.” Jean asked. “I don’t know. This could be a good time to ask her.” Wendy replied.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Jean summarized the whole story for Aunt P. as Wendy came down the stairs. Aunt P. turned to Wendy. "I understand that the town is going to try to get this land from us and you want to know what the legal situation may be as to the ownership of my property. Well from what your Mom told me, it is in trust. It is past down from generation to generation." "Who is the executer of the trust" Wendy asked. Aunt P. went silent for a second. "Mayor Tulley is. When the trust was set up in the early 1900's it made sense that the trust be overseen by the executive of the Town since it would be easier for that person to make sure that town activities would not infringe on the trust. I never thought of it, the other way around; that is, how the trust would impact the development of the town."

Wendy raised her voice. "Do you have a copy of the trust document?" Aunt P. left the room and returned with a brown folder with a yellowed document in it. Here is the original document, signed by my father Alan Theroux and the then Mayor of the time, Hiram Baxter. It shows the boundaries of the property as well as the rights of the then and future owners as well as the responsibilities of the current and futures owners as well as that of the town. Aunt P. handed the document over to Wendy. "Look, you're the lawyer." "Is there a copy of this in the town records?" "Well I haven't looked lately. In fact I never looked." "I presume that the Town kept a copy and I presume that the country must have a copy for tax purposes." "The first thing we have to do is to make sure that additional copies exist and that they are officially recorded" Wendy said. "And that they correspond directly to this document. There is often a slip between the cup and the lip." Jean looked confused. "It's an old saying" Aunt P. said.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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"How do we do that without causing any suspicion?" Aunt P. asked. "If any of us go in, they're going to start putting up firewalls immediately." "Well" Jean spoke up, "Jim has a summer project is on the history of the Bayou, so if he goes in it should not raise any questions." Wendy pointed out. "Well we have to trust someone. He can have a letter from say his high school principal on official high school stationary asking permission for him to study old records, no one will question him". Jean cut in. "And I know where I can get official "Preston High School" stationary. Tomas has reams of it at home. He has borrowed some of it for his computer at home." "Where do we get the Principal's Signature?" Aunt P. asked. "Well, we have an email from his office, and it is easy to copy that signature onto the typed document" Jean added. "Most importantly, from a legal standpoint, we can say honestly that it is his signature only be careful not to say that is his document." "Isn't that a lie" Jean asked. "In the words of our great Southern President from Arkansas. It all depends on what your definition of is, is." "I think it is time to bring in some reinforcements." "Do we tell Dad?" Jean asked. "Tell your Dad what?" Wendy replied. "Nothing on all fronts" Aunt P cut in. "He is busy enough and he doesn't need this at this moment. He will find out about all of this soon enough." The three women all took deep breadths, sat down at the table and started to eat. No one spoke as each was lost in their own thoughts.

The next day, Aunt P., Wendy and Jean drove to town. They had called George Murdock and ask that he meet them at Roy Waterouques restaurant for lunch. They also asked Jim Cary and Tomas Murdock to join them. Jean simply would have it no other way. After lunch, Aunt P gave

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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everyone a rundown on the events of the last several days. "That still does not answer why they want to destroy the fish population south of the Aunt P's house or why the fish they have introduced have infiltrated most of the Bayou but not the area where Wendy and Jean were yesterday. There must be something special about that one area. It is where they concentrated the cameras" Roy questioned. "What of the camera you have. Does it tell you anything?"

"I gave it to one of the individuals who took a cruise with me last month. He is a tech wizard and is into environment law big time. He is very suspicious of the government as well as business setting up plans to usurp and use the environment. He is supposed to get back to me by the end of the week." Wendy responded.

"Just one question" Jean asked. "We have our timetable, do we have any idea what is there's."

"I have a suggestion" Aunt P. said. "Let's up the ante." "What do you mean Wendy asked.

"Well, what if I just walk into Mayor Tulley's office and suggest to him that I want to break the trust and find a way to sell the land or to turn it over to a non-profit agency to insure its continuance into the future in case something happens to me. I can always say that having Jean up here this summer has shown me that I cannot live forever and that I want to make sure that the land is protected and that she and any of her family has access to the land now and into the future." "Well, that should but a light under them" Wendy replied. "Tell them that you want, but wait a day until Jim can make photos of the original documents. Then you and I must take this document to the records office in New Orleans tomorrow morning and get it registered as the official version at least in that jurisdiction. If this ever goes to trial and that is where we end

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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up, I want all the evidence on my side. I can go over to the State law office at the same time to make sure my law status is up to date and then we can stop off at the Mayor's office on our return." "For the short time, I'm your lawyer, Pro Bono of course, that way everything and anything you say to me is confidential from this point forward." "I am sure learning more than I thought I would this summer." Jean said as she looked at the floor. "That what growing up is all about. I just hope it is not just too much too fast for you" Wendy said as she put her arms around Jean's shoulders.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 12: The Standoff

"I have not been in New Orleans for at least five years" Aunt P. remarked as they crossed the bridge into the city. "Well" Wendy responded. "A lot has changed since the Hurricane yet for the most part it has remained the same. The big question is where does it go from here. There is almost 25% less people but in terms of business we are almost back to normal. But despite all the changes, New Orleans is New Orleans." As they parked the car, in front of the Records Building Aunt P. grabbed the document more tightly. "I never thought I would have to be here protecting myself against my own neighbors and friends." "It is a whole new world. I am not saying it is worse or better." Wendy said. "It's worse" Aunt P. said. As they entered the building and walked into the Records Office, one of the attendants called out Wendy's name. "I haven't seen you in years. What happened to you?" "Well after I got my degree and passed the bar, I just wanted to take a break so I headed back home and just have never made it back."

"What can I do for you" the attendant asked. "It is a simple request. We have an old trust document from the early 1900's. We presume that it is on record back in Bayou Teroit or in the County office, but you know how old those offices are and we just wanted to make sure it was on record in a more modern office with proper backup in case there is any need for a copy." "Let's take a look at it" The clerk turned it over and over. "It seems in order. Who is the current Trust officer?" "It is Mayor Tulley of Teriot. That was the standard when it was original written." "Who represents the beneficiary of the trust? We have had new regulations since this was written and there is often a someone who represents the beneficiaries of the trust in case there is a disagreement." "That should be you Wendy." Aunt P. said. "That's OK unless you have any

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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benefit in the trust” The clerk said. “I don’t see a problem, Wendy said. “Aunt P. held back for a second. “Maybe we should find someone else.” “What do you mean” Wendy said. “Your grandmother and I are sisters.” “you mean Jean Thoreau was my Mom,s mom and we are related. Yes, so you may be seen as having a benefit, what if we put Dave just to be on the safe side.” Wendy was somewhat taken aback. “Let’s be honest Dave is not related to me and I never officially adopted him so he should be OK”, There is not much else to say so just put Dave’s name on it and I will call him and tell him he needs to stop down later to sign it.” “Are you telling me the whole story?” Wendy asked.

“Just have the Clerk filled out the documents and registered the document. I would recommend that you get a box at one of the local banks and keep the original copy in it, just in case.” “Do you have any reason to be concerned?” “Of course not, but it is strange that someone was in the office earlier this week to check if anyone had registered a document on this area of land. They wanted to be informed in any one attempted to register such a document.” “Are you required to do so” Wendy asked. “Well they did fill out the form, so we are legally required to inform them. But we are really busy here and it could be weeks before we get a chance to send them an email and one often types in the name wrong and we might never know.” “Thanks, Becky” That’s ok Wendy, don’t take so long next time to get in touch.” “Well I have to go to lunch. Please give me a call the next time you are in the City. Your records are right here on the table next to the request for an email. Just make sure you pick up the right one.”



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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"I did not know you were so well respected here" Aunt P. said as they got back into the car. "If you treat people equally most people respond with similar respect " Wendy responded. "But it does worry me that someone was here requesting information." "Not just someone, but a Drug company based in Texas" Aunt P. responded. "Right, Right. But given these details should we still drop off at the Mayor's office to let him know our plans to sell or turn the land over to a non-profit." "Yes now more than ever." Wendy replied. "It is obvious that someone is moving forward relatively quickly and we must at least put a little sand in their screws. However, we have to move up the date. Let us just say that we have already hired a lawyer to set up the transfer of the land to a non-profit with long term oversight and control." As they drove back to Teriot Wendy called Bill Simpson and informed him of their experience at the Records office and to be their lawyer on the planned transfer of the trust into a non-profit trust rather than depend on a family progenitor." "I agree." Bill replied. "But I have looked at the document you sent and things are much more complicated than you may think. Your Aunt P. is the current family representative, the question is what happens when she dies. There is an assumption in the current trust that an immediate heir or an heir with long roots in the community is the trust overseer. But from what I understand, Aunt P has no direct decedents." "There is David" Aunt Philomena said. "But he was never officially adopted. You just were his foster mother and he changed his name. I am not sure if any of your family has remained in the area on a continuous basis but if someone objects this is going to trial and given the current political pressures one never knows where this goes. This is especially true if the local judge is in the pocket of you opponents."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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"Well should we go forward?" I think we have to, at least for force their hand. One last thing, I got a message from my tech friend. The camera is a very sophisticated transfer process. One can presume that they think it is damaged or merely off line for whatever reason. I am not telling you what to do, but you may want one of your people to contact him. Since it is one public land you may be able to upload whatever it's up. What is in the air is open to anyone."

"Thanks Bill. " Wendy replied "Well I never thought all those years at law school would be of value in the Bayou but that shows how much I know. Thanks for reminding me. I have to stop off at the state bar association to confirm my status. I only hope I remembered to send in my dues this year." A quick check at the association confirmed that Wendy was still in good standing. "So you have never been convicted or taken to court for malpractice" One of the benefits of never practicing at least."

"Three hours later, they walked into the office of Mayor Tulley. "It is great to see you Aunt P and you too Wendy. What can I do for you?" Wendy began to talk. "Well as you know you are the represent the trust on the land held by Aunt P's family." "Well yes," the Mayor responded, "but to be more precise the land is held by the trust for the benefit of the family and others." "Well that is true and that is why we are here." Wendy continued. "Aunt P. is concerned that she is no longer young". We want to insure that going forward we can be certain that the land remains in perpetuity for the benefits of the Bayou and the people of the Bayou." "But the current trust insures that, does it not" Mayor Tulley responded. "Well yes but since that is true permitting the change of the trust to a non-profit should simply insure what we already accept." Wendy said. "Well as legal trustee of the trust I have to insure that any change to the

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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document is legal and provides for the continued interests of the town, country and the people of the Bayou.” “What of the interests of the Theroux family” Wendy asked. “Well as long as those interests are in concert with the interests of the people and the progenitor assumptions are met I can’t see any conflict.” “Well we just wanted to let you know that the Theroux family has hired a lawyer in New Orleans to set up the transfer to a non-profit form and you will be seeing the new form by the end of the week.”

It was only minutes after Wendy and Aunt P. had left his office that Mayor Tulley was on the phone. “Becky we have to meet. Wendy Lafarge and Philomena Theroux were in the office today. They informed me that they had hired a lawyer to look at the change to change the trust document from a family centered trust to a Non-profit status. I have checked into it and there are new regulations which permit them to put forth a lawyer which personally supports the family’s rights. Someone may support that means the right to protect their rights under new and permanent forms of rights transfer.” “Do you think they have any idea what we are planning?” Becky asked. “I don’t think so but I don’t believe in coincidences” Mayor Tulley replied. “Have you and your associates come up with a time line. From what I understand, they have almost completed the necessary analysis. They are returning this week to obtain a final few samples to complete the analysis. Once that is done, we can present our results to the FDA special unit analysis group. If they confirm our results then we can take it to the next level. Recent government rules permit governments to take over land for the benefit of the populous. With Shrimp fishing in the trouble and the local tourist and fishing destroyed by the new invasive fish, this would be a slam dunk.” Becky concluded.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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“Skip Teriot Bay” the Dean asked Dan. “But that is the primary focus of the summer’s expedition. All the other sections confirm our conclusions that this is the only Bayou outlet for which the area in and around the delta has shown significant deterioration since the Hurricane and Oil disaster. This is especially troubling since the area was proscribed as a special preserve and the land within the Bayou parameters has one of the lowest population densities in the whole delta area.” “I don’t care” His Dean replied. “There are a lot of studies that need analysis. The recent concern over the gas fracking close to the shores east of New Orleans as well as the potential impact on oil and gas being released into adjacent water supplies and rivers require us to a quick update analysis on the East New Orleans flow thorough” Dean Culbertson continued. “But this makes no sense.” Dave continued. “We just did a water analysis of that area last month before we headed out to this area. If anything had been happening we would have found it out then.” “Listen Dave. I have given the orders. The Boat goes to East New Orleans for the analysis. You are on the boat or out of a job. You decide.”

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 13: The Homecoming

“Well are you ready for it” ZF replied. “Know” Jean was quick to answer “I do not. “Look, I may not be the wisest Frog in the Delta but I can see when a friend is in pain.” ZF said. “Look, being scared is normal if there is something to be scared about. I saw you in the battle in the North Bayou, you were scared. I was scared. Even Tic Tock was scared. Everyone was scared. Anyone who was not was insane.” “Maybe for you, but not for me” Jean replied. “How soon before your father shows up.” Aunt P. said he landed at Teriot Bay about 9AM, it takes about an hour or so to make it up the Bayou. So it should be here within the hour.” “You’re excited to see him right.” “More than you know. This has been a very scary summer for me, I just want him to hold me and tell me everything is all right.” “Well remember our first conversation.” ZF continued. “This is not a bad place to be. You have found out a lot. You can speak to animals in the Bayou. That’s good. You have found out how to row a boat about anywhere in the Bayou, that’s good. You can make a good and I would say a great gumbo, that’s great. And Oh by the way, you found several friends that you will have forever, and an Aunt who cares about you and did I leave anything out, oh yes you found a women who gave you birth out of love, gave you up out of love, and now wants to be back in your life and why because she loves you. Seems like you are just in the right place.”

But that way, Jean thought it was not as scary as she thought, but she was not about to admit to it. “No I was thinking about the basketball game this afternoon. Do I tell my Dad about it or not.” “It all depends on how much of a surprise you want to give him.” “What if I do terrible?”

“He will say how good you did and help you get better and if you do well he will say how good

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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you did and help you get better. You see I have a lot of kids. In truth hundreds of them and all I want is for them to grow up and be happy and in frog land that is a lot harder than in yours. Just pretend that the person guarding you is Jim and it is 15 to 14 and this is your last shot. No matter where you are the basket is eight feet high and the free throw line is 10 feet from the basket. Despite all the changes in the world, that has never changed. And your Dad's love will never change. That should calm you down a little." ZF concluded. "Only a little" Jean replied.

Just then she could see the boat moving up the channel. Her Dad was in the back of the Channel Taxi and Ted was in the very front. Ted jump up when he saw Jean and pointed toward the boathouse. As the boat came along the dock, he immediately jumped out of the boat and ran to hug Jean. "I have so much to tell you" Ted said. She did not realize how much she had missed his voice and his excitement. He had seemed to grow so much over the last two months. He was tanned and his blond hair was even blonder. He had put on some weight he had never looked healthier. "You should see what I have learned. I can make ten different knots, I know all the fish in the sea, I can work a computer and short wave radio. Dad even made me a junior advisor." Her Dad waited for Ted to stop talking, put the luggage on the dock and step up on to the planks. Jean took one look at him and rushed into his arms and started crying.

"I was not gone that long" her Dad said. "It seemed forever" Jean replied. "He wiped her eyes. "Your right, it seemed forever. Well let's go see the rest of the family." Well at least part of the family, Jean thought as they walked up the path toward Aunt P. house. Aunt Philomena was on the porch when they came to the house. "This is a pleasant surprise" she said. "I thought you

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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were out on the gulf for the rest of the summer.” “It is a long story” Dave answered. “Are you staying long?” Aunt P. asked. “Longer than you may think. I have been kicked off the boat. Something about challenging the authority of the Captain.” “I thought you were the Captain?” Jean asked. “Oh not the Captain of the Ship, the Dean of the school was concerned I was not being financially prudent.” Aunt P looked confused. “My findings indicated some environmental issues in the area of the South Bayou. I wanted to investigate a little more and was told not to. I know there was some pressure put on the Dean, but I have no idea why or who did it. I refused to have my research compromised without some idea why.” “Well” Aunt P. said. “We can give you some background on the Why.”

Aunt P. went through the entire story. From the town meeting, to the issues near the levee, from the camera found in the North Bayou, to the events at the Records office in New Orleans, to the reaction of Mayor Tulley at the suggestion of a change in the ownership structure on the trust, onward to the strange event that Wendy and Jean ran into near the Levee. “What were Wendy and Jean doing together near the Levee” Dave asked immediately. Jean thought of all the issues that Aunt P asked why did her Dad ask about them being together. Of course she knew but this was not the time or place to bring it up. “Why?” Aunt P said. “Jean found out a camera near the Levee and I refuse to let her go back up there without an experienced Boat person. And Wendy is anything if not that. And thank god I did, being attacked, if that is the right word, by a bunch of gators is something no one ever wants to be involved in.” “Of course. I am sorry.” Dave replied. “So what do we do next?”

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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“Well I am going out with Ted to practice some basketball. I did not tell you but I am in local BB tournament today during the Bayou Days. I know that you played with me out of kindness but I never knew I liked BB so much” “I think see likes Jim Carey more” Aunt P said. “What?” David’s voice rose. “Oh a local boy who is teaching her some shots.” Aunt P. responded. “A boy” her father looked at Jean. “Why you have grown up this summer.” “Yes, and I am better than he is” Jean replied. Dave looked again at his daughter. He was always a little afraid that his daughter was too cautious, too afraid of life. Maybe the result of her Mom’s death or Ted’s health but seeing her stand up to him maybe she had a little of Wendy in her. He knew he had to tell her but he would wait until after the Bayou days. She had enough pressure without him adding more.

Jean and Ted headed out the door. “Do we really have a basketball court” Ted asked as they walked toward the Barn. “You bet” Jean said. “This is where Dad played when he was a kid. I’ll teach you what I have learned.” “I wish you could teach height.” “If you could see Tea my friend you will see that height is not everything.”

As they got closer to the barn Jean could see something was wrong. She knew she had shut the door. She could hear someone in the barn. She whispered to Ted to go back and tell Dad and Aunt P. and that she was going to go see what was going on in the barn. As she looked around the barn door, she saw two men in the rafters going through the trunks. She leaned a little too hard on the door and it fell into the barn. The two men looked down immediately, and jumped out of the rafters on to the hay on the floor. As Jean got up off the ground, the two men rushed

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## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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toward to the door. One of the men grabbed Jean as he headed out the door, threw her to the ground and ran toward the truck parked in the back of the barn. At the same time, Jean's Dad was running toward the barn. Aunt P. was behind him with a 16 gauge. She stopped for a second and shot a round off into the air.

Jean's head hit the ground hard. By the time they had reached her. There was some blood on the ground. Her Dad picked her up immediately and brought her to the boat next to the dock. In twenty minutes they were in Teroit and they carried Jean to the car, and speed off toward the county hospital. Dave still knew the back roads and how to drive them. What should have been a half an hour drive he made in fifteen minutes? Five minutes later she was in the emergency room. As they waited outside, Aunt P. took Dave aside. "I know that there was never a good time to say this so don't get mad" "What are you talking about" Dave asked. "Well I am sure that Jean is going to be OK, but you have to call Wendy." "Why" Dave asked. "What has she to do with this?" All Aunt P. could say was "I know everything, always did, and if anything happens to Jean and she could have been here she has every right to hate you the rest of her life." "But Jean does not know." Dave replied. "That is between Jean and you. But Wendy should be here." Dave just nodded and headed out to call Wendy. Wendy was at the hospital within ten minutes. "Is she OK?" Wendy asked. Dave seemed surprised. Wendy was always so calm so self-assured, here she seemed so fragile, so afraid, so uncertain. He realized that he had separated them for too long. That it was not fair to Wendy, it was not fair to Jean. Just then the Doctor came out. "She is going to be OK. We had to sew up a little gash on the

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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right of her head but there is no evidence of a concussion or any permanent damage. But I am going to have to report this. How did this happen?"

Dave looked a little surprised. "Why do you have to report this? Anytime a young person comes in with this type of injury, authorities need to know. "She fell when we were playing basketball" Ted interjected. "I might have accidentally trip her." Aunt P. turned to Dave, "There is some real smarts in that boy." "Takes after his Mother." Dave replied. "But this is Jean's day. When can I go in and see her." "She is awake now." Dave walked into the Jean's room. "Doctor says you are going to live" "Thanks Dad. Jean replied. "So there is obviously a lot happening hear that I am not aware of." her father continued. "Yea I guess so and you were going to tell me when?" Jean asked. "I tried a couple of times, but there never seemed a right moment." Her Dad replied. "And when did you think the right moment would come along." The words just spitted out of Jean's mouth and then she started to cry. "'I'm sorry' her Dad said as he took her into his arms. "I guess you know" he said. "I guess so" Jean sobbed.

"It just never seems a right time and place and I guarantee this was not what I imagined as the right time and place." Jean choose her words carefully. "Oh I understand all of the reasons, but it is just that I do not understand how I should feel. I was only three when Mom died and I just remember her vaguely. I never felt I needed a mother, you have been the best Dad any girl would ever want. It is just that I like Wendy, we have been separated to long, it is not fair to her, to me and in fact Dad it is not fair to you. Ted needs a full time dad and I need a full time Mother. "Well you have grown up in two months. In fact she is outside. She is scared; scared

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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beyond anything I have ever seen in her.” “What is there to be scared about” Jean laughed.

“Wait until you are a parent. There are host of things to be scared of. I will leave for a second and let you two alone.”

Dave went outside. He bent over and whispered into Wendy’s ear held her hand and opened the door to Jean’s room. Wendy walked in. “I guess the cat is out of the bag” she said whipping the tears from her eyes. “Get attacked by gators and laid low by a basketball.” “Is that what they told you?” Jean said. “It was more than that, two guys tried to go through the barn looking for something. I caught them there and this is the result.” “Ok you are out of this as of this moment.” Wendy said to Jean. “typical Mother response. This is more than ever our problem.” Jean said. “Do you know what they were looking for” Wendy asked. “In fact I do,” Jean replied “well I think I do. Last week, Jim and I were checking out the barn after basketball practice. We saw this trunk opened it and found hosts of documents related to the early days of the Bayou as well as an old Bible. That is where we got the genealogy list.” “Well, so what.” “So who has the Bible now.” Wendy asked. “Well Jim does. He has been checking out the history of the Bayou, its geography at the local historical centers and records office. He is pretending it is part of his summer history project which is why he is spending the time at his uncles and aunts home. I think we may have shown the bible to someone and I suspect someone found out about what he was doing and came here to check out if this is where he found it.”

“We should check this out immediately.” Jean sat up higher. “Well let’s go.” “You are not going anywhere.” “Oh yes I am, Jim will not talk to anyone if I am not there and we were supposed to

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## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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show up at the Basketball camp as part of Bayou days. I am not missing that no matter what.”

“What of your head” I have been hit this a lot harder in the past and I suspect a lot harder in the future. I promise to take it easy.” Jean got up put here cloths on. “This is going to be a little difficult for Dad.” “That is not your problem”, Wendy replied “that is his and mine.” She and her Mother walked out the door hand in hand.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 14: Practice

They returned to Aunt P's house. No one said much in the car. They just looked at the trees and the Bayou as they drove. When they got to the house, Aunt P. and Wendy went to the kitchen, Dave, Jean and Ted went out the basketball court. "That did not go as planned did it?"

"Whatever does?" Wendy replied. "So where does it go from here" Aunt P asked. "Who knows, I am kind of playing it by ear. I was so sure that it was the right thing to do at the time. And I am sure today that I did the right thing, but right or wrong, I would simply die if I could not find a way to be part of her life if she would have me." Aunt P. stood up from the chair and approached Wendy, "I do not know if she wants you, but she does need you. Both you and she are linked by more than blood. You understand her, her moods, her fears, her hopes. You are linked by a heritage that has been carried in your genes for centuries. She simply needs you." "Well" Wendy replied. "for right now she just needs to be in control or as much in control as any fifteen year old girl can be."

"You just don't get it do you" Aunt P said bluntly. "Do you have any idea why I have kept close to you all these years? Now you know your Mother and I were sisters. I only know some of the stuff she could do. She could sense a change in the weather before the birds did, she could hear people's hearts beating from across a room, sense their thoughts. By God she could talk to animals and with a little help from the book (and I am not talking about the good book) she never aged a year until she left the Bayou. Do you know why she left the Bayou?" "That's the way it is, from Mother to Daughter. When your mother left, could you not tell how it affected her. But she knew she had too. It was your turn. And when you had that little girl and gave it up

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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for adoption. Your Mom thought it was all over. In some ways she felt relieved that maybe that young girl would not have to go through everything her mother, herself or you did. But guess what, nature has a weird sense of humor. You have to raise her and you have to get her ready for her responsibilities.” When all this is over, I want you to move into this house and I want to move into the city. And that is how it is.”

Aunt P and Wendy continued to set the table. “Wendy could you call in the rest of the family, I have some Jambalaya from earlier this week and some left over rice from the Dinner.” They were about to sit down when three heads poked in from the porch; Jim, Tomas and Tea. “We were here to practice with Jean, but from what Ted said we may have to wait a week. Just then the rest of the family came in. “Hi everyone” Jean called as she came into the room. I guess I will have to skip today, the doctor said I would have wait several days just to make sure. I will set the table for three more. “I understand that they were looking for something in the trunk in the barn.” Jim said. “Jean said that you and she had found some old documents and material on the genealogy of the Theroux and Lafarge family.” Dave asked. “Yes but more than that there were a number of older books about the geography and history of the area. It seems the Indians in the area were well known hunters and lived primarily in the north bayou. They were known for having a type of arrow tip in a drug which took down animals without killing them. The drug came from a toad in the area. The area around the Toads’ environment was regarded as sacred. From what I can understand they left the land around 1850. They seemed to switch land with a Hiram Lafitte who held most of the land near Dufarge.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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“Who knew that you were checking on this?” “No one, Jean made sure of that. I spoke briefly to my uncle who wanted to know about my interest in the history of the Bayou. I said Jean and I have read some old books we found in her barn. But why would that be important.” “Whoever came here was looking for something. What is your Uncles name?” “Joe Carey.” “Joe Carey of Carey Bio Technology” Wendy asked. “Yes” Jim said. “What is Carey Bio Tech?” Carey Bio Tech is one of the largest drug developers in the South. They have offices around the world but the major offices are in Houston Texas.” It must have been he who sent the guys over.

“Louisiana oil and gas and Drug companies. I don’t get it” Dave said. “I do” Wendy interjected. “Whatever they have found in the North Bayou is related to the backwater area of the Tip Toad. The local Indians have for years used tribal medicine to cure various diseases. It is strange that so little work has been done on it with Louisiana having the largest Indian population east of the Mississippi. The earliest Indian settlements in Terrebonne Parish were along Bayou Terrebonne and Little Caillou. By 1850, the settlements had spread to Pointe Aux Chenes and Bayou Lafarge. However, there were few written documents on the actual land ownership, that is why LOG still has claim on the oil and gas rights and above ground rights on land north of the Levee. The area in the North Bayou has long been in legal limbo with hosts of cross conflicts. The land south of the three forks has been adjudicated. The issue remains that Aunt P’s land is the core land holding in the issue. It is on the line between the two and was set in trust in order to provide a longer term solution to the arguments of the time. LOG may wish to simply expand the control of its land rights farther south. “You mean below the Levee.” “Yes. I have not seen the documents, but if there is a source of a new medicine in the land just south of the Levee

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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and LOG can lay claim to that land, it could be a goldmine for them. "No wonder my uncle was so concerned about the maps and documents I was looking at. The Bayou geography has changed over the years due both to weather and corporate activities. At the same time, I have seen maps which offer a clearer picture of the Indian settlements as well as the process by which whites procured that land." "Including my ancestors" Aunt P. said. "My father Alan was a hard man in a hard time. But arrangements were made."

"Do you have any records of those conversations?" "Well most of our family material of the day was transferred to the County library when the trust was set up in 1905, however, my mother kept her own notes." "And who was she" Dave asked. "Well Jane Theroux of course She was always quiet about them, but kept them in a safe deposit box. There were passed on to Your Aunt Jennifer and then to me after her death, but I just never had the interest to investigate them." "Where are they now?" "They are at the house in New Orleans just off of the Garden District." "Is that also part of the Trust?" "No. Jane came from her own money and bought it with her own money. She never supported what my father Alan was doing which is why I suspect that she felt so close to Gene Lafarge. She felt that her husband had wronged him somehow."

Just then, they heard a knock at the door. At the door, stood Sheriff Wilson and two men dressed in black suites. "Sorry to bother you Aunt P. but I have a document here for you from the country court house and the Town of Teriot Bay. "What is this?" Aunt P. asked. "Let me see" Wendy took the document from the Sheriff. "It is an eminent claim document on your land



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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for the benefit of the county and town.” “For what? This is my land” Aunt P. “It has been for generations.” “I am sorry” the Sheriff said. “I had no idea. But I am just doing my job.” “And it is your job to kick old ladies out of their house when they have done nothing wrong, have paid their taxes for years, and have supported the town and county in all of their efforts to help the people of this parish. This is what I get.” “Settle down Aunt P.” Dave came up from the table. “You will have a stroke.” “What does the document say comes next?” “Well eminent domain processes have to follow a very detailed process. “We have some advantage in that we have already proposed giving the land to the town as a non-profit.” “I doubt if that conversation will be remembered.” “It does not have to be. Wendy said. “I recorded the entire conversation on the iPhone. In addition, I emailed the town office thanking the mayor for meeting with us to discuss the non-profit idea.”

“This sounds much more complicated than it should be “Aunt P said matter-of-factly. “Doesn’t there have to be an economic reason for them to take my land.” “It has to be for public purposes.” “What public purpose could this land hold?” “It seems simple. LOG cannot get to the North Bayou through the lake area above the levee. If what is above here has anything near the value Jim’s Uncle’s firm think it has this land here is worth a goldmine.”

“This could be a good time to call my Dad” Jim said. “Isn’t your Dad’s last name Carey. “No that is my Mom’s second husband’s name and not even my real father. “My Dad’s name is Grantsman.” “His first name might not be William is it” David Asked. “Yes.” “So your Dad is

“William Grantsman of the Grantsman Foundation.” “OK” Jean asked. “Who is Grantsman and

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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what is the Grantsman Foundation.” “It is the South’s largest research foundation centering on environmental issues and rights.” If we are going into a fight with LOG and all its allies. We need as much help as we can get. “I can’t promise anything, but my Dad is always ready for a big fight especially if it is with my Mom’s new husband.” “Well according to this document, we have a week to offer a response letter. I know these people at LOG I am sure they are moving now because of the accident last night. Perhaps they think that they have scared us and we will cave in quickly. One thing I have learned this is not the time to go away quietly. This is the time for Shock and Awe.” I know you cannot promise anything, but when can we meet with your Dad. “He was supposed to stop this weekend” “Wendy turned to Jim. “Could we drive in now? The wheels of justice turn slowly but once turned have a hard time going back.”

Three hours later, Jim, Wendy, Dave, Aunt P. and Jean were at the offices of the Grantsman foundation. William Grantsman was at the head of the conference table with two young men dressed in suites on either side. Dave explained the entire scenario to William and his associates, including the Dean Barrett’s request for him to stop his analysis of the water and ecology of the Lafarge Bayou. “It is obvious something is in the works and has been in the works for a long time. This is the first shoot across the bow. But first this we have to do is get public opinion on our side. Any evidence on the two guys in your area?” He asked. “Well there is the evidence at the emergency room but as we said the accident was accidental.” Too bad it is always good to have a young lady on the TV. What of Aunt P. Is she healthy” Why does that have to do with it” Aunt P. asked “Look” Bill said. “This is War. This is not bean bag. They have first movers advantage but no one likes Big oil or Big Drug companies. At the same time

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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everyone likes jobs and "Clean jobs." It is not a slam dunk in basketball terms. At this point we just need to test what their defense is. Zone or man to man. The meeting on Saturday is just that. I do not know how long it will take for them to find out you have been to this office. If they are who I think they are, the phones are already ringing off the hook now." Grantsman concluded. "Do you mean they have been spying on us?" Wendy asked. "Yes. First I have a hard time believing they were in the barn looking for documents. I will send over my men to check the property for electronic listening and cameras. In the future no more discussions in your home about this. All discussions are in this office. This room has been structured to prevent any hacking or eavesdropping. Dave could you meet with our research team on your research results. We may have to ask the University for all of its data. By the way how secure is your job." Grantsman asked. "Don't worry that went two days ago." Dave responded. Grantsman continued, "Well talk to your union and teacher representative. We don't want to this be about you. This is about academic truth and freedom."

"What about us" Jean pointed to Jim and her. "Well just pretend that you are two friends who are playing basketball for the Bayou Fair. Just two kids having a great summer. Keep your ears open." "Well I have a lot more than that" Jean raised her voice and was about to explain how she talks to animals and then saw the look on Wendy's face "More than what" Mr. Grantsman said. "Well there is the camera." "What camera" "Oh", Wendy "I forgot. There are a series of cameras around a certain swamp area in the North Bayou. We are not sure how they got their but there has been boat activity in the area. We took one of the cameras and then replaced it, but we had one of our friends rig it so we can download whatever they upload. I checked it out

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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it legal.” “Do they know that we are downloading their upload?” Grantsman asked. “I don’t think they do. We only replaced it last week” and started accessing the camera last night.”

Wendy responded. “We’ll let us check this out with our lawyers to insure we are on good legal footing and have your tech folks talk to our tech team so we can insure that all is going. We want to control what we can at least control.” Grantsman said as he left the room.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 15: The Game

Three hours later they were back at the house and Jim, Tomas and Tea and Jean went out to the basketball court next to the shed. As they started shooting hoops, Jean spoke up “I understand that the adults have taken over, but we still can help.” “How can we help and remember they have told us to stay out of this” Tomas interjected. “Well no one ever suspects kids. We can check out who is what.” Jean continued. “What do you mean who is what” Jim asked. Jean motioned her friends to come with her. “Well come over here to the barn.” They walked in and went to a back room. On the wall where four large white boards. “I found these in the shed” Jean continued. “I have listed on each what information we now have.” On each white board was a word. “Geography, Genealogy, Environmental issues and Other. On each white board was a list of names, maps, and or concerns who was who and how they were connected. On one board they had the day that Jim talk to Jean at the restaurant. The put drawing of the table and the five people at the table. The Mayor, Beth Tulley, Jack Hutter (the chief executive office of the County), and two men with LOG on the Jackets.

“I remember that the men from LOG paid for the meal and they used a credit card, “ Jean explained. “Can you get a copy of the receipt?” “Maybe” Jim said. “They put a tip on it and I can say I need a copy for tax purposes. On the other white board where the executive offices of the various firms (LOG, Butler technology, County Governors, Advisors to the School of Science at the University). The next event was Jean’s finding cameras in the North Bayou. “We have evidence of the kind of camera being used to gather information” Jean pointed out. “Given the number of cameras in the area, it is likely that they were bought at a single source. Tea it is

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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your responsibility to call the various camera and technology to check out if any individual has reported large scale purchases. The next event was Jim's being questioned at the library on his desire for information. Other individuals who have searched this information must have left names and contact. So Tomas that is your job. I am going to look up more on the form of invasive fish and work done on other animals in the Bayou. Now let's practice."

The next day, Jean sat on the dock. As she sat on the dock, Stick suddenly appeared. "Are you OK, we heard that you had been hurt." Jean shook her head. "Just a bump on the head but we have more problems that than. The Town and the county are working with one of the local gas and oil companies to take over Aunt P. land." "Do you know why?" Stick asked. "Well I have a theory but I need ZF and everyone help in testing it." Jean responded. "Well ZF is up at the spot in the North Bayou that was attached by Zen Frog and his cohorts." Stick explained. "He is trying to find out why the North tribe of Frogs and gators seem so little concerned over some of the ecological events taking place in the south." "I have one idea." Jean explained. "They simply are not as affected by the events in the south. It is my belief that the frogs or the lily pads they live off of excrete some type of oil or scent that prevents various invasive new fish and animals. Animals that have lived in the Bayou over the years have come to live with the toxin. I also think this was the toxin used by the local Indians on their arrows when they hunted for animals. A concentrated mix would certainly put animals to sleep and eventually would weaken over time so that the individual eating it would have little or no affect."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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"So what should we do next?" Stick asked. "The easiest way is to ask ZF or OT, he knows the Bayou better than anyone." Jean said. Stick flapped his wings "Wait here I'll be back soon or send someone with information when and where ZF can meet you." Jean sat and waited. About an hour later Jean heard the sound of the Bayou increase. Birds, frogs and every other animal started to call each other. She saw a quick shadow trace the water in front of the Boathouse. OT rose out of the water. "My cousins in the north asked if I could come down and find ways I can help you." "I just wanted to thank you for your help." OT said. "The Bayou has been our home for centuries, but the recent changes have almost destroyed what we can eat and where we can live. ZF has only lived in a relatively small part of the Bayou. I have covered the whole Bayou to determine where are the invasive plants and species and they dominate just those areas where some of the traditional plants and animals have been removed. Let's lay out a grid of the Bayou and do an analysis."

"Do you know how to go about this?" Jean asked. OT answered, "Well I have been in the Bayou for over 200 years and there have seen plenty of previous studies. Oh don't look that surprised we live a long time. But we need to gather all of the information outside of the Bayou also. I understand that much of the original documentation must be gathered. I knew your grandmother very well and when she gave that material to your Aunt Philomena to save, it must have had real importance." "Well. We need to get it" Jean said" and What other material do we need?" "There are the Indian documents at the Library." OT said. "What is there" Jean asked. "One never knows until one tries. This is something you have to do" OT said as he turned to Jean. "You have enough Indian blood that you have access to that section of the library. We need to find out what they

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## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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have on the original agreement.” “I’m Indian.” Jean yelled out. “What no one has told you” OT exclaimed. “Well I knew Aunt Jennifer Theroux was my great grandmother, but I had no idea who my grandfather was.” OT said ‘Humans, that’s the problem. Ok history lesson. Your great grandmother was Aunt Jennifer. She was married to the Jean LaFarge who was the son of Chief LaCroix of the Lafrage tribe when she had Diana, Wendy’s mother. Your grandmother, Wendy’s mom’ was more than one/half Indian. Wendy is at least ¼ Indian and you my young lady have the necessary legal level of Indian in you.”

“Doesn’t anyone tell the truth in this family” Jean said as she sat down. “Hey think of how special it makes you” OT said. “and even more important think of all the College Scholarships.” Jean looked up and gave a look only an Indian could give. “I guess it time to get my land back” and she headed back up the hill toward the house. As she entered the house, Aunt P was standing next to the kitchen. Jean walked over looked her right in the face and said “How.” Aunt P looked back. “it would be a little more authentic if you said it in the local dialect.” “Don’t I need some truth here?” Jean asked. “ “So you have some Indian blood in you.” Aunt P. Responded. “Here in the Bayou who doesn’t. Hey young lady ever since you have been down here it is has been a fight between who you are and who you think you are. Listen to an old lady. Go with who you are that way you do not have to get up each day wondering who you think you really are. As a final point on that subject to take a look at Aunt Jennifer’s picture on the mantel turn it over. Aunt Jenny was your great Grandmother and Wendy’s grandmother was my sister. Jean turned the photo over. 1925 it read. OK Aunt Jennifer was almost 50 when that picture was taken. “She looks 25” Jean said. “Yes” Aunt P pointed out. “this whole thing about the Bayou, about Your Mom, about



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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me and you is all mixed up In what is happening now. “Why hasn’t my Mom explained all of this to me?” Jean said. Aunt P explained, “There is a little bit of Bayou in all of us, a bit of Indian, a bit of Witchery and a bit of a secret. None of it is something to be scared of. But you are fifteen, you are becoming a woman soon and it is time to start learning to act like one.”

As Aunt P finished they turned to see Wendy in the corner. “So now you know. I had hoped to let you be a kid a bit longer before laying all of this on you” Wendy said. Jean sat down at the kitchen table. “I guess I can’t put this in my summer report can I.” “No” both Aunt P and Wendy said at the same time. AP and Wendy sent over got some coffee and Beignet brought them over to the table and the three just sat and looked out the window. It was a long time before anyone of them got up.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 16: The Meeting

The meeting took place at the mayor's office. Mayor Tulley started the conversation. "Thank you for coming in and discussing the document you received last week." "Stop with the niceness. I still do not understand why you feel it necessary to take over the land when you already have it in trust." Aunt P. asked. "Well the trust limits some of the benefits that it could provide to the town and the Country than if it was falling under town and county ownership" Wendy spoke up. "From our analysis, does not Forced Eminent Domain" have to be for a specific economic benefit?" "Well I will let our attorney speak to that" the Mayor continued. "One of the attorneys stood up. "Well one of the concerns expressed in the document you are going to receive is that according to our analysis if something were to happen to Aunt P. There is no clear progenitor, the goal of this action is to insure town control"

"First, the current trust provides a clause for Trust transfer if there is no progenitor." "Second, we offered a solution in the creation of a nonprofit to provide continued joint control of the land. This offer was turned down by the Mayor." Wendy said. "I do not remember that offer", Mayor Tulley said. "Well in case you forgot, we can ask for all emails which include those offering such an option." The attorney seems concern. "We don't have to go there. The purpose of this eminent domain to open up control not to limit control over the land going forward."

"Look" the third Attorney said. "I have all the respect in the world for your legal training, Ms. Lafarge, but we have years of work in this area. Believe me if we tell you we have the law on our side." "Well I appreciate your concern" Wendy said. "But this is I presume the first of many

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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meetings on this issue and it is your goal to come up with a commonsense solution. Just to get this off the ground, what is your proposal” “Well” the lead attorney said. “we have looked at the past tax and property value and we believe a payout of \$200,000 for the land.” “\$200,000 for access to the entire North Bayou?” Dave yelled “Are you crazy.” The attorney replied. “Again this is not for the land above your Aunt’s land. That is currently county land and is held as open land for water right purposes.” “What if there is value in the land above Ms. Theroux’s.” Dave asked. “We have no evidence of any value of any land above Ms. Theroux land.” The attorney continued. “Let us be very clear.” Wendy asked. “You want to put Eminent Domain for economic purposes that have no stated economic purpose other than the possibility of some future economic purpose that is yet to be determined and for which you have no idea as to what that economic purpose that would be but that you are concerned that the current trust contract may prevent that economic purpose if and when that economic purpose may become evident under your current understanding that the current co-trustee may die and the final determination of the co-trust and who you would worked with is unclear.” “That is not what I said.” The attorney answered. “Then what did you say.” Wendy continued. “I am only saying that we are putting an Eminent Domain claim on that land for its potential use.” The attorney responded. “If you can do this for this land, do you believe that you can do it for any land that has some unintended purpose in the future. I do not think that is a proposal you want to take too far up the court system” Wendy said.

“Look” the senior attorney cut in. “Obviously we have gotten off on the wrong foot here. It is obvious you have looked into your rights in this case and we do not want to remove those rights

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## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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to your client. But I want to tell your client that she may wish to secure a better representation that would provide her a better understanding of the current law.” Wendy was taken back. “I would like to tell the Mayor, that I intend to carry this out as long as I feel is necessary. From here I see five lawyers which must cost at least \$5000 a day or close to \$25,000 a day. Any mediocre lawyer can run the numbers and see the town and county’s cost is well over \$2,000,000 in fee for a \$200,000 property that may or may not have some future value. This is a case I would love to make public to the people.” “Hold it, Eminent Value Analysis discussion is privileged until they go to court. None of this can be made public.” The attorney said as he rose from his chair. “Look out who you are threatening” Aunt P. finally spoke. “I am an 85 year old woman. Sometimes I don’t think or remember that well. I may simply forget that everything that goes on in here is private.”

Mayor Tulley finally spoke up. “Hold it” this was supposed to be simple. “All I want what is best for the town.” “Guess what Mayor, you started this” Aunt P spoke up. “Let’s take a break and come back in fifteen minutes” the Mayor put his gavel down. The head lawyer took the Mayor aside. “You told us this was a slam dunk. That they would lay down on this. This Wendy woman is much more knowledgeable about the law than you led us to believe. I still think that you will win, we can beat them with our size and requests if nothing else. We can simply outspend them. But there is no way you are going to get this done quietly.” “But this is what you said you would do? I am not sure I want to go ahead with this.” Mayor Tulley said. “Well you make that decision. In for a penny in for a pound” The lawyer said. “What if she asks for all of my email? Well hopefully you have said very little there but she cannot unless she can show cause. Is there anything she

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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may have evidence on?" "Not that I can think of." "If she does your dead and so are your associates. Moreover, I presume you have told us everything."

As they returned to the room they sat down to explain the result of the conversation. "We have had the chance to talk to our client and he understands your concern over potential future value of assets above your land. What is your counter offer" "Well we would want to have our experts do an analysis of the North Bayou for potential value before coming back with a price." "No" Mayor Tulley stood up. "That is county land, there is no way anyone can go there." "But there is no way we can value our property without having our people do an entire analysis" Wendy replied. "What do you mean? Your people?" the lawyer asked. "Aren't you representing Ms. Theroux?" Wendy knew that they would find out soon. "'Where did you even get that idea? No, I am representing my Indian Tribe's interests? According to the document we received this was just a meeting for Mayor Tulley to present the details of the eminent domain. Ms. Theroux is here without representation. We have signed nothing and all aspects of this meeting while not part of the public record are open for us to discuss; publicly. If you want to have a meeting between legal representatives for Ms. Theroux and my associates, please call our attorneys at Wilks, Wilks and Turner" The chief lawyer sat back. "Good move Ms. Lafarge, but this was a meeting only between interested parties and from what I have in front of me there is none.

Oh did I forget to tell you I am the interested trustee in the Trust document." Wendy said. "But Aunt P. has no family with continuous residence in the Bayou" the lawyer exclaimed. "What do

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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you think I am?" Wendy repeated. The attorney turned toward the Mayor. "We have a lot to talk about. Obviously, we will need to have future discussions. But you have our current proposal, and I suspect we will see yours." "I do not know. Talk to our lawyers, by the way here is their card they are looking forward to your call." As Wendy left the room, the Chief lawyer turned to the Mayor "let's get everyone on the phone." Wilks and Wilks are the best in the business. I am sure that they are not doing this for free, but if they are we cannot out lawyer them and if they aren't there is some real bucks behind them. Personally, If I were you, I would take their offer of a non-profit taking over the land, get some freedom as to what you may want to use the land for and that all future profits from the development would go to the non-profit and the town." "If you want to take this to court. This is going to cost you a lot in our time and I cannot guarantee a win."

Five minutes later they were on the phone. "How could all of this happen" Jim Wilson said from his office in Dallas. "We have spent a small fortune setting up the FDA proposal on what we have looked into and LOG has purchased land closer to New Orleans to process the potential gas revenues in the area above her land." The representative of LOG raised his voice. " We have contracts on that land for just the next six months. We move now or not at all." The lawyer for the Town stood up and motioned to his lawyers. "Well whatever you do you are going to do it with someone else. It is obvious we were unaware of all of your contacts. If we are going forward we need to know everything. We have not met legally so our statements are not a matter of record but from this point going forward we are under legal rules This is going to be part of this war and I guarantee war it will be."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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The lawyers walk out of the room. "What do we do next," Aunt P Asked. Wendy took her by the hand, " Well the sooner or later we knew this might happen. Eminent domain means what it says. Well there is no reason for them to know what we know and there is no reason they will ever find out what it is. I say we push forward with undefined benefits and hope they do not figure out what we know."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 17: Basketball

“So what happened” Jean asked Wendy. “Well in truth, we leave it up to the lawyers. We try to provide them with all the information they required but we have to go on and live our life”

Wendy responded. “This being an adult is not easy is it” Jean responded. “It is not easy being a young adult I suspect” but enjoy your time now. So what is on your schedule” Wendy asked.

“Well this is the first summer I can spend it with my Dad and Ted and that will be fun and I have the basketball day.” “So that is why you and your friends are meeting almost every day.”

“Remember it is not the winning it is how you feel about the game.” “Ok, I understand but why play if you don’t want to win.” Jean said. Wendy looked at her daughter. How much they were alike.

The four of them met at the barn and looked at the boards. Well we see the major players. A drug company from Texas, an oil and gas company known for its anti-environment focus, a set of government policy makers with their own self-interests, a state university set on its own monetary concerns. “What do we have on our side?” “We have what is fair and just” Tom raised. “Ok that left the building months ago.” “We have the trust document” Tea asked. “That trust document is part of the problem. It was written in the early 1900’s and is open to debate as to its meaning and its uses.” “We have public opinion.” Jim said emphatically. Jean added “Well currently that seems divided. For many it looks as if we are trying to protect our own at the cost of jobs for the area.” “So what do we have on our side?” Jim asked. “From my view,” Jean said “they have to take it from us. They have to show that what they are doing has no



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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negative impacts on the land and any negative impacts or offset by the benefits so we need a list of pro and con's and we have to find the cons. "

"Maybe because I heard my uncle talking on the phone, but we may need to find a deal which works with them." Jim suggested. "What?" Jean said. "If you think I will give in you are crazy." "Sometimes you can win by giving in just a little." Jim responded. "These folks want something, they just don't want to pay full price." "We want something, too" Tomas added, "we want to have the Bayou reborn to its previous health." "Hold it" Jean stepped in "We need resources for this. Once they realize they have no choice, we can start talking about what we want."

"Do you realize that one of the reasons we are here is to practice for next week's Basketball game. We haven't practiced in over a week" Tea said. "We are still just kids." "Tea is right" Tom said. "But think of it, if we do win, there is an award ceremony afterwards. What better opportunity to let the community know what is going on? I realize that we are not supposed to let people know, but my friends need to know what is happening to our lives and it is our lives we are speaking of." "You are right" Jean stood up, "this is not just about adults. It is about all of us. Let go practice."

They had never played better and when everyone had gone home, Jean went down to the dock. She missed her talks with ZF but assumed that he was busy. "Just then she heard his voice." "Ready for the big game?" ZF said. "I was afraid something had happened to you. I saw Stick and gave him an update but I never heard back." "Oh, there you go worrying again."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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“But” Jean bent down toward ZF so he could hear “sometimes you have something to worry about. Perhaps I thought that things would just work out. After the fight we had I also know that things don’t just happen, sometimes you have to help make them happen. So after Stick, saw me, I had our South Bayou animal family do a survey of the Bayou, and what you said was right. Much of the Bayou has been taken over by new invasive fish and fauna. Yet the main spots where no change has taken place is where the Tip Toads live and flows from there.” Jean went into the boat house and came back with a detailed map of the Bayou. “Let’s get to work.” For the rest of the afternoon ZF and Jean went over the map, detailing the current fish, reptiles, and animals throughout the South Bayou. “Well this may not convince a jury but it sure gives us a map to do our work.” Jean continued. “What of the North Bayou?” ZF responded, “we in truth until last week we had little contact with our relatives in that area, but after your actions, they have a lot more faith in us. The problem is less intense in the North Bayou, first because there is simply less open water and more swamp in that area. What we have seen is more human activity especially around those areas. We have found more cameras than just the one you located, but they seem related to tracking Tip toads. What can I do next?”

“For now just wait, I am going to look at what we have from our camera.” Jean headed back to barn and pulled out the photos taken from the camera. And put them up on one of the boards.” As she sat there looking at the photo, Jim looked in. “Sorry” He said, “I forgot some of the material I took from the library.” “What is that” Oh they are photos of some of the area in the North Bayou” Jim looked closely at the Photo’s. “Not much that I can see.”

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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"See What" Aunt P said as he walked into the Barn. Good day Aunt P. "I am glad you are here. "I know you don't want our help, but Jean has done a lot of work on the history of the Bayou. She has concentrated on the animal part and I looked into the people part. When Jean showed me the Bible the Lafarge name was off to the side but connected to the Theroux family. But there was additional information on the Lafarge family. "I went to the Indian affairs section and the periods of the 1800's, it looks like there was a transfer of property between the local Indian tribe and the Lafitte's where the tribe claimed ownership of the Lafarge land for giving up land above the three forks. It also was signed by all the Indian of the council as well as some local landowners. Here are their names "Lafarge, Lafitte,...." But when the trust was set up, the trust was set up with the Indians as co-signers but for some reason they were passed over when it came to management of the land. As important, I was able to trace some of these families who had direct ownership claims , some of them remain in the area to this day Including Wendy Lafarge. In short, there may remain a Lafarge claim on the north area."

Aunt P sat down. "I always thought there was more to this than just the Theroux trading post and the town council. Well it looks like you kids have done more in two weeks than our team has done with all the resources at its availability. Let me call everyone and we can meet here tomorrow after lunch. We have to act quickly. We have a meeting in town hall after the basketball game tomorrow. You two have done your job, now your focus should be on the games tomorrow." Jean turned to Jim. "With all that we have been doing, I haven't been practicing enough." "Don't worry. I have seen most of the teams in the city practicing at night.

As you would expect, the boys are generally the focus the game and they generally play close to

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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the hoop. More importantly they have played against each other, No one has seen us play or at least they have not seen you play. So from what I hear, they know Tom can play defense but can't shoot, Tea can shoot but not play defense, and they think you are just my friend and that is why you are on the team. I suspect they think they will put their best player on me and win the game. They have no idea how you can shoot or really how quick Tea is. If I can take their biggest players away from the basket, that should let you and Tea run your give and go or let you shoot from the outside. If they start to collapse on you, I would remain open in the corner or drive to the basket for a pass."

Wendy spoke up. "I may have found it. I had the picture blow up and in the backdrop look what you see. It's two boats. Yes and look closer, on the side of the boat is a LOA insignia and license number." Ok they will have a hard time proving if this is in our Bayou, most sways look alike" Dave said. "I agree but look to the right of the boat. I blew it up even larger, It's a cement dam, or levee with a section number on it. And as important the camera provides a date and time of the shot." They will argue that all this is secondary, but the volume of material may make them rethink what they can do."

It was ten o'clock when they showed up and the Town's park. They had set up some bleachers for friends and spectators. On a board to the left was a list of the teams. The age ten and under teams had played earlier and the winners had already been announced. The winning team had Tea's younger sister on it and she carried her statue with her around the park. "Well let's see if we can keep it in the family" Tom said to Tea. "The first team to 21 wins." There were eight

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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teams listed. "The best team is from St. Bonaventure." Jim pointed out. Jean took a look at them they had the same uniforms. Each of the boys were at least as tall as Jim, almost six feet tall. And the two girls were small but quick. The other teams were mixed. Drawings took place, there were two divisions and Jean's team and the team from Saint Bonaventure were selected in different sections. The first came between Jean's team the "Zen Frogs" and their first opponents started out badly for the ZF's but with the score 14 to 8, but Tea shot started to fall in and with Jim and Tom guarding the basket and Jean on the best of the girls, the game soon turned around, they won 22 to 18." "That was close" Tom said. "But we won and we did not play our best and I doubt the other teams fear us yet." The other teams played, St B won easily 22 to 6 and ZF's next opponent won 22 to ten. They had two very good players, a tall boy and his sister. It was obvious they had played a lot. "As they walked out onto the court for the next game, Jim turned to Tom, you guard the big guy and Jean you face his sister. I don't think she has ever had one as tall as she is guarding her and with Tom on her Brother, I should be free to play a roving defense and shooting role." Jim was right, the girl could not drive around Jean or shoot over her and more importantly, she was nowhere as quick as Jean. The Saint B players started to look at the game as it continued. They had seen Jim play, Tom and Tea too but this girl was new and good. ZF won, 22 to 10. St. B's won their game 22 to 6 again but they knew the last game would not be easy.

The game started out even. But with the smaller girl on Jean, Jean was open for her shot and after the first fifteen minute break the score was 12 to 8 in favor of the ZF. "The start of the second half, Saint B started something different; they put their two best men on Jean and on

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Jim. Jim soon hit the ground and got up with a limp. Tea turned to Jean; well it's up to you. 'I'm scared I will let you down.' Jean replied. "This is simple" Jim said. "Remember all our One on One games. This is just like it. We are going to go to one side of the court and let you go one and one on him. "You beat me you can beat him. Just show no mercy." The teams traded baskets and the score was soon 14 each. The game started attracting other players, they had never seen a one on one between a 15 year old boy and girl. Saint B hit a long jumper; Jean faked a drop back and drove to the basket for two. They traded long baskets and soon the score as 20 each. With the Ball in Saint B hands, they passed the ball to the Jean's opponent who turned his back to her and started to work in toward the basket. Unexpectedly, Tea came from out of nowhere and stole the ball from the Saint B player, Jean took off down the court with the young man right behind her, Tea threw a perfect pass and caught Jean in stride. The young man went up to block Jean's layup, but instead of going for an easy layup, She drove under the basket for a reverse layup. The game was over, ZF won.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 18: The Exploration

“I am really proud of you” Ted said to Jean. “Do you think I will ever be any good at sports?”

“We” Jean said “Dad said you were really good on the boat and that was some pretty quick thinking at the hospital.” “It just seemed like the thing to do.” Ted replied. “So what are your plans for the rest of the summer?” Jean asked Ted. “Well I guess we are not going back out on the boat. Do you think I could help Jim?” Ted asked. “Help Jim on what?” Jean asked. Ted continued, “Well he said you and he were looking into the geography and history of the Bayou. When I was on the boat I got interested in a pirate who lived in the Bayou” “What was his name” Jean asked. “Jean Lafitte. He ran a large trading post just south of here. He supposedly helps General Andrew Jackson beat the English back in the war of 1814. He was given a large piece of land for his services. I have a picture of where it was. He supposedly left the area and moved to Galveston Texas to run his operations. He was supposedly killed in a battle near Cuba but his body was never found. Dad gave me a book by Jack Alber who maintains that Jean Lafitte returned to New Orleans and switched his name. Here is the book.” Jean opened the book. In the back of the book was a map similar to the one in the small book in the trunk.

Jane turned to Jim. “Look Jim” this map looks similar to the one in the book in the trunk. “I presume the JL that could mean Jean Lafitte. “This is dated 1850. How could that be Jean Lafitte?” “Who knows maybe he did not die and returned here for the rest of his life as the book said?” Jim opened the book. “The book is a kind of diary. It says that he needed to move further north in order to get away from the authorities in New Orleans. In 1850, he sold his land south of here to the Indians then under Chief Lacroix. He had known him since they were young

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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at the battle in 1814. He took his winnings and buried them in the land north of here and took his family and set up a trading center with his son Hiram Lafitte.” “Hiram” Jean said. “Hiram Lafitte was Aunt Jennifer’s Grandfather. If that is true then the land north of here may still be in the control of the LaFarge and Theroux.” “Do you think the letter she kept with is the title to the land?” Jim asks. “It would make sense.” Jean continued “So the argument in 1900 was more about giving up control of a small part of the land to protect the other area from encroachment. I guess Alan Theroux was just trying to protect his family and its rights.”

“Well if all of this is true, Then the city has no rights at all to the area north. What other evidence do we have?” Jim responded. “Well someone thought there is something of value up there.” Tomas jumped in “ Why else drain the swamp when they were putting in the levee. It seems they had men digging here and there. Supposedly it was about the levee but I think they were simply looking for the money. If they did not find it must still be out there. But where?”

“Well I think the camera might help.” Jean added “Remember the photo showed ZF standing on some type of trunk in front of a tree with some names carved into it. It is the area where the animals go when we are in church on Sunday. He says the spot is special and no humans had ever come to the area in recent memory.”



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 19. Sidebar

The lawyer with Wilks and Wilks stated the issue clearly, “Here is the problem you have won but you have lost.” The more the value of the land above Aunt P., the more their claim of eminent domain has value.” “But” Dave argued “the goal is to preserve the land not simply turn it over into a commercial venture.” “Sorry unless you can find some reason that would prevent development here, development will take place” the lawyer continued. “What would restrict development” Wendy asked. “Development can be stopped only by state or federal law and that is usually based on environmental issues.” Dave questioned the lawyer “ What kind of issues.” The lawyer responded “Endangered species, historical land rights, environmental concerns. All of these might trump the economic concerns but in today’s economic climate even that is questionable” the lawyer concluded.

Jean raised her hand in the back. “What of Indian rights and water quality concerns.” “There is no evidence of any such Indian Ownership or issues of water concern.” The lawyer pointed out “But if there was evidence would we have to go onward for trial.” “Why did you ask about Indian rights” Wendy asked Jean. “Well while you have been busy keeping the Mayor busy, Jim has been spending the last two weeks looking into the past history of the Bayou. Your are right that in 1850 the Indians agreed to give up their land north of Aunt P’s for certain rights in the South Bayou near their camp south of Teriot in Homah. After the Civil war, there was a movement throughout the U.S. to move Indians into a few specialized reservations. The land was transferred to Jean Lafitte. In short, Hiram was the owner of the land and passed its ownership to his son Alan. “If his father name and his name was Lafitte why was his son named

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Alan Theroux.” Wendy asked. “Well” Jim explained “in the Bayou it was common for the woman’s name to be passed through the lineage. This is especially true when one’s name like Lafitte may have been regarded as a problem in future actions with the country or the country. From Alan, it was passed to his first born, Jennifer. From there it passed to Diana, down to Wendy and you. After the 1900 trust, the next fifty years the North Bayou was increasingly under control of the county administrators. The South Bayou increasingly was under control of the local interests. From what we know those records were kept by Jennifer and were passed onto the county historical society on her death. What is the interesting is that the county historical center put those records in it’s Indian artifact area. I and Jean are going over there tomorrow.”

“Well I will take the opportunity to go down to the house in New Orleans’s and check up on those old documents.” Wendy suggested. “I will take Aunt Philomena with me. Maybe she may remember something that could be of value. As they approached the old house, Aunt P turned to Wendy.” I have not been in the house for almost forty years. Your mother was closer to Jennifer than I was and it bothered me. I know she gave your mother some special documents and I guess I did not know why I did not have them. After your mother died, I just rented the house and never thought about it until now.”

When they entered the house, they were amazed. “Look like someone else got here before us.” Wendy yelled. “But I know my mother” She went immediately into the basement, she went over to the old furnace, walked to the back, opened the coal chute and pulled out a packet of

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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papers. "Well here they are. Let's go upstairs and take a look" They laid the papers out on the kitchen table and started up a pot of coffee. "The document refers to a sidebar on a piece of land in the North Bayou that the Indians regarded as sacred. It is where the ancient burial grounds are." Wendy raised her voice "But even if we found this land we need more documentation of the agreement."

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 20: Outside the lines

“We understand your environmental and economic concerns as to the Bayou but in today’s world, we need what is beneath these lands”, the head of LOG said to Dave. “This would make more sense coming out of a firm which does not directly benefit from the destruction of these lands. There must be a way to share the wealth of these lands without destroying them” Dave replied. “If you try to make this a zero sum game in which only you win and everyone else loses, all of my associates will fight and we will win” Jim Wilson repeated. “Don’t be so sure” Dave replied. “We have created a non-profit that will determine the distribution of economic gains to the citizens of the Bayou and the Indian nation within it.” “Indians in the Bayou are you crazy? There have been no Indians in the Bayou for almost 100 years.” “Don’t be so sure. Most of the Indians were forcefully removed but not all left. If it is found that they have some residual rights to the area, it could be a game changer.” “I will not hold by breadth” Dave replied.

Jim Wilson continued. “It is obvious that that we have interests in this issue and despite your efforts we have the votes in Louisiana and in the area for our efforts.” “You may think so” Dave said. “But did you ever think that we can go to a higher authority. You think that we cannot play as hard as you. Our non-profit has already signed agreements with various drug companies as well as oil and gas companies to work with out to find and explore these resources in rational basis. We have our legal team ready to make contract and impact assessments.” “Who do you think you are?” Jim Wilson said. “We have been in Louisiana for 40 years, we have done deals up and down the coast. We have fiends at every level of government and regulatory level. You will lose.” “If you feel that you may wish to contact your lobbyist in Washington. The current

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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administration needs to find a cause to show its support for environmentalists. This may just be that cause” David finished and left the room.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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### Chapter 21: The Surprise

"I would like to be let in to see the Indian artifact section" Jean asked the librarian in charge of the section. "I would however you have to fill out this form before we can let you into the room." She handed a four page form to Jean. "Take a look at this, Jim. You would think I was trying to break into the place. In addition to the general material as to name, address and phone they want a two page summary of why and what we want to review. Even more importantly, in order to see the direct Indian documents you have to be a member of one of the local tribes." Jim started to look at the document. "What are the local tribes and how does one go about showing that one is a member of that tribe." "Well according to this document, you have to be at least 1/8<sup>th</sup> Indian" Jean answered. "From what Wendy told me, her mother was ½ DuFarge Indian and ½Cajun. So Wendy is at least ¼ Indian and I am at least 1/8." "How do we go proving it?" Jim asked. "Well let me fill this out and see what happens."

Jean returned the form to the women at the desk. "I did not know that Wendy Dufarge had a daughter." "Yes, and I am her." I have known Wendy since she was a kid. My grandmother and her Grandmother were close friends. You certainly look like her. Do you mind if we give her a call." "Not at all" Jean said. "But I would like a chance to review some of the Documents of Jennifer Theroux." "That is surprising" the Librarian said. "Why?" "Last week two men came in hear asking for access to the documents. I said no. They said they would return with a court order. I said fine. Bring me the document and I can let you in. But they have not returned.

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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Well here are the keys to the room. Let me know if I can be of any help.

“Wendy has said that the documents have to provide evidence of ownership. According to OT, My Great Grandfather, Alan represented the Cajuns in the discussions. The government official had taken very different positions as to the Indian rights. The Indians had historically not laid claim to the land they lived on since they viewed the entire Bayou as part of an open living standard. But they did have a piece of paper that had some value. They had helped President Jackson in the war against the Spanish and for that they were given a paper which held right to the area under consideration. The Tribe used that document land as a basis for the most sacred part of their holdings. They would never give up ownership of that value. The American representative said that they had no legal standing but the Indian tribe pointed out that Alan’s daughter did by marriage and had real control of the land. She was a member of the tribe according to tribal history (She had married an Indian) and according to the state she and her husband were American citizens. They could sign and own in behalf of the Indians. That was acceptable to all and the signatures were made.” “If they were where are their copies?” Jean said. “Well I presume Aunt Jennifer had a copy and the government, but in addition the three put the original in a lead box and put in into the trunk of the main Banyan tree on the sacred island.” “So that is what they meant by Lafette’s treasure, ownership of the land” Jim said.

“Where is it?” said Jean. “Well the meeting was almost one hundred and twenty years ago.”

The Bayou has changed many ways since then. There have been numerous hurricanes which have changed the direction that many creeks have taken. In various areas of the Bayou the

## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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water level has risen and in others it has fallen. In truth we can only assume that it must have been on relatively high ground since the various tribes would want to make sure that the sacred ground would not be impacted by changes in the creeks. It also makes sense that it could be relatively easy for the various tribes to get to and I suspect that it would be in the heart of the Bayou. When I was with Wendy and had the interaction with Khan I thought I saw such a place.” “Well it would make sense, that is where the Bayou animals meet on weekends for their spiritual gathering Remember it was the size of the Banyan trees that gave the area a reputation for sacredness. The Trees created a kind of cathedral over the land. I even have a picture of the area.” “What do you mean?” “Well I have pictures from the camera that I took down from the tree two weeks ago.” Jean pulled the iPhone out of her pocket. She opened up the picture file and showed it to Wendy.” “What is that in the center?” Oh that is ZF standing on a log. “Blow it up.” Jean increased the resolution. It looked less and less like a log and more like some kind of trunk. As they looked one could just see some special markings on the side, they were Indian markings.

“We need to get there quick” The various parties are meeting later today and we need to find something which helps us protect the area.” They headed down to the dock. When they pulled out the boat, they looked up and saw ZF, Tic Tock and OT heading toward the boathouse. “We have just had a meeting of the Bayou creatures. We know that if we do not act, it is possible that all that we hold sacred here will disappear. At the same time, we know that the sacred island of the Indians may hold some special secret. If we help you go there that secret is lost and we may need to find another sacred home. When you let me on the island you spoke to



## Thomas Schneeweis: Books

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your friends from a trunk in the middle of the opening. It was in the center of a great Banyan tree that fell in one of the great storms. The tree has gone back to dust but the trunk remains at the core of the sacred ground.” About 30 minutes later they arrived on the island. Many of the old trees still existed. It almost looked like a cathedral. In the center of the open land was a small rise with what looked like the bottom trunk of a large Banyan tree, However, on closer look one could see an old trunk with Indian signs in the center of the hollowed out trunk. Wendy opened the trunk. In the bottom of the trunk was a folder wrapped in birch bark. As she opened it, she could see the signatures of her Grandmother.

Wendy and Jean came through the door in the county court building. “Quite the judge called out and who do you think you are. I am Wendy Lafarge and this is my daughter Jean Theroux. I am the co-trustee of Philomena trust but that is not why I am here. I am sure that you have heard of a document which supposedly insured certain parts of the Bayou would remain in Indian hands. “Yes, but no such document has ever been found.” “That I true until now” I have a copy of the original document. I have had the document certificate at the county clerk and the signatures have been identified as consistent with the signatures of the signees on other documents of the time. We have also sent portions of the document for dating.”

Wendy continued, “but I also have evidence of direct ownership of the land north of three forks. I have the signed copy of the land transfer in the 1850’s as well as the family births and marriage from the Church offices in New Orleans. In short I can prove direct ownership of the land under dispute.

### Chapter 21: The Party

Jean sat on the dock with ZF and OT. “I am sorry we could not make it just like it was” Look, you helped save a whole part of our family” you have stopped some of my grandchildren from facing years of risk. We animals have found ways to live together over the years and I suspect each of us will find a way to make this work. At least, we know that we want to find ways to make this to work, there are enough risks in this world going forward than worrying about what can creep up on you form the back. I will have to get use to cameras throughout the Bayou, and some of our privacy is gone. “We are going to have to be careful when and where we meet, can’t let too many people know. But it’s a big Bayou I am sure we can find a spot.”

Right know it is time for a party.



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### The Conflicts of Life



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### Patsy's Family



**Aunt Philomena's Party for Grandmaster Zen's Retirement**



**Frogs at Party**

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President at Party