



*Robert, Sarah, Arthur and Timothy*

The principal place for hanging around in Baldur is the hotel. There are also a beer parlour, two gas stations, two groceries (one of which sells clothes), a high school with playing fields, a winter skating rink and a bank. There is a hospital with sixteen beds and a staff consisting of Dr. Hanks, a blood technician and some nurses. There are five churches—Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, United and Lutheran. Many people of Belgian ancestry attend the first, and many whose parents and grandparents came from Iceland fill the last. There was once a barber shop.

There is no movie house in Baldur, but there is one in Somerset, thirty miles away. There is also one in Glenboro; but the young Hanks do not think much of its films, and Sarah says, "The popcorn tastes like soap."

In summer the days are long; the sun does not set until ten or eleven at night. The sky is enormous and distances are deceptive. It gets very hot but the heat is dry. Rock Lake, a favourite fishing spot, is nearby, left behind eons ago when the Pembina River changed its course. Robert was a devoted fisherman until he lost his rod and twenty dollars' worth of tackle on a school outing. He was so mad that he hasn't fished since.

Baldur has a hardball baseball team called the Jets, and according to Timothy there is "a fourteen-and-under girls' softball team which is hopeless." Baseball is not particularly popular in Baldur; Belgian bowling—an outdoor game played with flattened balls and pegs—is.

In the autumn the interest of the young turns to Halloween. Last Halloween, when one man failed to provide candy for trick-or-treaters, the younger kids put snow all over his sidewalks. The high school kids put farm machinery in the middle of the road and pipes on the bridge across the creek. "Everybody does things like that when they're in high school," Timothy says.

Ice for hockey comes in November and sometimes lasts until March. All the Hanks boys play

on organized teams. At season's end each group has a banquet. Winter has other advantages. It gets very cold—sometimes down to 40°F below (-40°C), with winds which give a chill factor of -95° (-84.8°C)—but it is a healthy time of the year. No one gets colds or viral infections.

The Hanks like to visit Winnipeg, which has a population of over 600,000, but they wouldn't like to live there. They would not like to live in a place smaller than Baldur either—Beanway, for example. Beanway was a railroad town until Canadian National switched to diesels. It now has a winter population of one, a Mr. Todd, and a summer population of two when a lady who vacations there arrives in June.



*Steve Laurie, twelve, lives in an apartment in Ste. Foy, part of greater Quebec City. He has one brother, two sisters and a cat named Tigress. He speaks French and English and can, therefore, enjoy the cinema in both. He intends to be either a hockey or baseball player when he grows up. That may be difficult; Phil Esposito recalls "falling like a tree" so often at the age of fourteen that "the trainer sewed sponges into my pants to protect my hips."*