



**Tall ship on the River Liffey
next to the Dublin Custom House.**

ANNALS begin in Dublin.

Sketch by Virginia Gorsche, BVM

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Chapter 32

The Past at Last— Written History Begins

Mother Gertrude's gift for stretching another's talent involved the ANNALS written by Council secretary, Pulcheria McGuire.

Mt. Carmel completed and everything moved in from the old motherhouse on the prairie clearly presented a separation from the Philadelphia beginnings.

Many realized that after 50

years, few knew or recalled those beginnings. Nothing about the early past had been written since the 1848 motherhouse fire and almost nothing was left in writing since Eliza Kelley's account of it burned to ashes in the fire at the first motherhouse in 1848.

Beginnings, it turns out, presented themselves as not always pleasant. No one should have been astonished at that. Good people often suffered rejection and persecution especially while founding a congregation of Catholic Sisters. Mary Clarke and Margaret Mann had all the prerequisites: they, called by God, shared their vision with others who joined them; their unique calling led them to leave everything for America to answer that call. They and their young women of good intent suffered. Not all who asked to hear about the early history were ready for an account dipped in the bitter sauce of rejection. Nor was such an account available. Everyone had heard stories from older Sisters on evenings in front of the fireplace. Which (if any?) were true?

Gertrude, who lived in Philadelphia in the 1830s and in Dubuque in the 1840s knew most of what could be discovered in the past. Even she noted the lack of a history showing the growth of the congregation. One of the Council (Michael Nihill) had written a brief account for the Catholic Almanac, but more than a few now desired to know places, events and

people. The family called “the community” wanted to experience its roots in more detail. In response to this desire, after Mary Clarke’s death, Loyola Rutherford sent around questions for everyone to fill in on the history. On April 27, 1893, Gertrude wrote Loyola pushing this project.

Gertrude to Loyola Rutherford:

“. . . Won't you keep a copy of everything that comes under your observation that may be useful in later years should they put it in book form. How lovely that S.M.Eliza (Kelly) or Joseph (O'Reilly) could give you items none of us knew as well as they did.”

Unfortunately, Loyola's original notes are misplaced, perhaps the fault of early filing systems.¹ The written account of beginnings in Dublin and Philadelphia kept by Eliza Kelly burned in the 1848 motherhouse fire. Though Mother Clarke saved her account book, no one retrieved Eliza’s manuscript of successes, trials, frustrations and challenges. Crescentia says that to a Sister who asked Mother Clarke to give Sister Mary Joseph O’Reilly an obedience to write an account of the early days, Mother answered, “God knows it all and that will be enough.” Mary Clarke instead forbade her to even try rewriting because she said, “No one hearing the occurrences of those days would believe it.” Pulcheria used Loyola’s notes to write her ANNALS, and claimed she took down the memories of everyone alive during those first years of the community. She even began the ANNALS with a long list of 46 Sisters as her sources, (reprinted in the Appendix for Chapter 32).

BVM Louise Clarke (#856), one of her caregivers during a long illness in 1907, wrote that Mother Gertrude herself was responsible for references to the hardships of the early days being lost or crossed out.² However, in her 1893 letter to Loyola, Gertrude blamed the community for neglecting its history so long. Perhaps Gertrude’s idea of “history” differed from the present definition of reporting both the positive and negative. Or had she lived through such hard times that she thought them not worth dwelling on? In any case this may explain why the ANNALS tell of successes rather than failures.

Pulcheria began her long and newsy ANNALS as the result of a direct order from Gertrude at the turn of the 20th century. This first compilation of fact, legend and myth from the BVM past relied on the memories of older Sisters. Many details and stories supplied by Gertrude herself probably are

the result of Pulcheria's mining of Gertrude's memory during their train trips. Then, too, Pulcheria had the notes made by Mary Michael Nihill when Michael began but did not complete a similar account in the mid-1890s before the end of Gertrude's second three years as Mother.

By 1904, Pulcheria had finished, typed, hectographed and sent out the ANNALS to the community-at-large for reading in common. Mindful of Mother Clarke's often-expressed desire to "remain hidden," the account plays up Father Donaghoe rather than Mary Clarke. A quick read of Pulcheria leaves no doubt that Gertrude's memories presented the priest, Terence Donaghoe, as the more important of the two.

However, it's not the business of this book to fill in the first years of BVM history. There are four books that do this after the ANNALS: those authored by Lambertina Doran, Jane Coogan, Jane McDonnell and Ann Harrington. [The entire IN THE EARLY DAYS can be found online put there by The New York Public Library.]

Anyone who reads Lambertina has also read Pulcheria McGuire, since Lambertina closely follows Pulcheria's ANNALS for much of IN THE EARLY DAYS. Ann Harrington's rewrite of the beginnings is informative and shorter than Jane Coogan's two-volume PRICE OF OUR HERITAGE. Some of Coogan's is based on the notes and unpublished manuscript of "Gertrude and Cecilia", this present book. (See Coogan's Author's Note last two paragraphs, end of Introduction). So there is overlap throughout.

Though Louise Clarke's papers in her file blamed Gertrude for "destroying" history, she also praised her as a "gifted business woman and enlightened religious."³ The balance in the treasury at the end of Gertrude's third term as Mother bears out the first part of Louise's assessment. The congregation had on deposit \$13,944.41 in 1903, the end of Gertrude's third 3-year term.

But the surplus was pared down in a short time! Gertrude must have paid off some large loans. Three years later, she passed on to Cecilia a balance of only \$1,462.60 – barely enough for the petty cash drawer. Readers of this book used to thinking in hundred thousands or more (without cents) in General Treasury Reports will find it hard to believe that this small sum marks a fiscal plus for Gertrude, who borrowed heavily to build the new motherhouse and the Boulder boarding school, yet managed to avoid a deficit budget.

In addition to commissioning a community history and finishing in the economic black, Gertrude continued Cecilia's custom of inviting outside speakers to the motherhouse. Since the second appearance of Monsignor Thomas J. Conaty from Catholic U. in 1900, there had been a short course in Palmer Method (a way of writing script) given by Mr. Palmer himself of Cedar Rapids (IA) and an illustration of the Prang method of color drawing in Dubuque and at St. Mary High School, Chicago. BVMs in the Dubuque area as well as novices were welcome at both of these.

Novices benefited on other occasions as well. Sporadic attempts to incorporate the more talented/educated young Sisters into the program at The Mount continued. In 1905, a number of novices accompanied four Sisters to new college for courses in elocution, art, and music. The Sangerfest, a group of 150 singers, serenaded the Sisters at Mt. Carmel in July. According to RE, Mother Gertrude gave them money for lemonade.⁴

Even the August retreat master proved a source of knowledge. Father Stritch, SJ, from Creighton University (Omaha), stayed over almost a week, invited (“as long as you’ve come all this way”) to lecture on Medieval Romance heroes, Dante, and Cardinal Newman. To cap his final talk on Newman, Father Stritch walked with all the novices down to the cemetery to read “The Dream of Gerontius” to them by moonlight. Some of the older Sisters went along as scholars as well as chaperones.

Pulcheria McGuire, distrusting the unusual, pronounced the entire performance “bizarre” in RE.⁵ Father Stritch's repeat week of Council Bluffs lectures was arranged by Cecilia or Antonia, alert to seize every educational opportunity for the novices.⁶ Gertrude encouraged Gonzaga McLoskey, Adele Kennealy and Vincent Connell to study Gregorian chant in Chicago and Milwaukee. Now in her 70s, Gonzaga acted as “prudent companion” to the two younger music teachers.⁷

At Archbishop John Keane's suggestion, Dr. Thomas E. Shields, a friend of his at Catholic U., lectured on education to the novices, illustrating methods of teaching by showing how Christ employed them. Novices in 1905 still went out on the missions, but plans toward their education, in addition to learning on the job, seemed closer. Yet Gertrude found keeping them for a year's novitiate no more possible than before.

Mother Gertrude failed that year to close small parish high schools, but her attempt warned pastors of new directions in future BVM schools.

Her suggestion that older boys needed men to teach them and that pastors should replace the parish high with central high schools met a counter argument—lack of money and buildings to accomplish such a goal.

Pastors looked with a wary eye on any school not directly under their control. Small parishes pointed out the absence of any school near enough for a merger. A half-century later, diocesan educators in Iowa picked up the idea of central high schools located in central towns and ran with it.

Leaving some concerns still open, Gertrude closed out her last term. She would continue for a few more years to influence decisions of policy, but her time as guiding force was over when she ended her term in 1906. Instead, the name of Isabella Kane attracted some support as a nominee for Mother indicating the drift of a section of the community about future nominees.

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Notes for Chapter 32

1. When Lambertina Doran died in 1946, a Sister assigned to help her in the secretary's office suffered a mental break. After Lambertina's funeral this Sister was found sitting on the floor of Lambertina's office on the 2nd floor of the north turret of the motherhouse. Scattered around her lay scrunched up and torn papers from the Archives. Sisters gathered these up haphazardly in underwear boxes to wait for the new secretary, St. Virginia Berry. Almost 20 years later, St. Virginia described this trashing of the secretary's office to the author in an interview at Xavier High School, St. Louis. (Summer, 1962)

2. The typescript of Louise Clarke's (#856) notes is in her file.

3. Ibid.

4. Source: enrichment open to novices is Pulcheria McGuire, August 1905 RE.

5. Despite Pulcheria's reaction, the Creighton Jesuit chose the cemetery setting at the Mt. Carmel motherhouse to increase the effect of the reading.

6. Pulcheria McGuire, August 1905 RE

7. Gonzaga McCloskey, in charge of music at ICA, pushed this early move for BVM musicians to reintroduce Gregorian chant in the liturgy.

Appendix to Chapter 32



**Faculty at St. Agatha Academy, Iowa City (IA) in 1865; (those marked with * are cited by Pulcheria as her sources). Bottom row: Sr. M. Sebastian* and Bridget. Middle row: Sr. Fidelis*, Joseph* and Benedict. Top row: Srs. M. Seraphina*, Germanus, Vincent, Ann*, Christina, and Barbara*. Photo taken by Fr. Emmonds, pastor at Iowa City in 1865.
BVM Archives.**

Pulcheria McGuire cited 46 Sisters and one priest (TJD) as sources for her work; THE ANNALS OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. She was the first BVM to organize and publish a collection of memories of the early traditions and stories passed on as the history of the BVM Congregation. Lambertina Doran copied much of Pulcheria's work verbatim for IN THE EARLY DAYS, her reworking of the ANNALS. "Gertrude and Cecilia" owes much to Pulcheria's graphic descriptions.

Research of Sisters on Pulcheria's list of sources in ANNALS in the community database reveals that she listed them in the order of their community numbers (order of entrance). According to the dates of their deaths, most of these Sisters were living at Mt. Carmel during Pulcheria's research and were available to tell stories and memories of their younger days in the community. The ANNALS OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY can be called a memoir by congregation members.

The assignments of these Sisters vary from being Mother to being a Sister who cared for the chickens on the farm. Listed below are Pulcheria's sources: Fr. Terence J. Donaghoe and the 46 Sisters with their given and family names, dates of entrance, the places from which they entered, some information on their lives as BVMs and the dates of their death.

1. **Mary Francis Clarke #1:** Mary entered from Dublin, Ireland 11/1/33 at age 30; founder, Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Dublin; first Mother General; died 12/4/87.

2. **Terence James Donaghoe:** born 2/20/1795 in Aughnacloy, Ireland. Ordained a priest 5/24/1823; cofounder, Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Philadelphia, 11/1/33; priest, missionary, vicar general of the diocese of Dubuque; friend of Bishop John Hughes of New York; died 1/5/69.

3. **Margaret Mann #2:** Margaret entered from Dublin, Ireland 11/1/33 at age 25; co-founder, BVM Congregation with Mary Francis Clarke in Dublin; in first group to go to Dubuque from Philadelphia; opened ICA, Davenport, 1859; first novice mistress in Philadelphia 1833-1843; Dubuque 1843-1859; assistant to Mother Clarke from 1869 until her own death in 1873; helped write the first Rule; died 12/25/73.

4. **Rose O'Toole #3:** Rose entered from Dublin, Ireland 11/1/33 at age 24; stayed in Ireland for one year to take care of family business; came to Dubuque from Philadelphia with the second group; celebrated her Golden Jubilee (and the Golden Jubilee of the Congregation) with Mother Clarke in 1883; died 3/10/90.

5. **Eliza Kelly #4:** Elizabeth entered from Dublin, Ireland 11/1/33 at age 25; her father paid the ocean passage the first four members; she dropped their money into the ocean; first annalist of the Congregation though her records were lost in the 1848 motherhouse fire; died 4/21/81.

6. **Catherine Byrne #5:** Catherine entered from Dublin, Ireland 11/1/33 at age 24; joined the Dublin group at the last minute, the day before they left Dublin; known as a gifted nurse; came to Philadelphia with the second group; with Bishop Loras when he died; died 10/8/66.

7. **Clare Lawlor #7:** Maria entered in Philadelphia from King's County, Ireland 6/16/35 at age 21; one of first to enter in Philadelphia; in second group to go to Dubuque; died 5/3/1901.

8. **Bernard Murray #10:** Catherine entered in Philadelphia from Dublin, Ireland 8/14/39 at age 25; second group for Dubuque; convent cook; community shoemaker; opened McGregor (IA) in 1868; missioned at St. Mary, Iowa City; died 2/21/1900.

9. **Joseph O'Reilly #11:** Eliza entered from Cavan County, Ireland 3/19/40 at age 24; had three BVM sisters, Francis, Xavier and Veronica; first group to go to Philadelphia; gifted in English; made up a rhyming catechism; died 5/7/87.

10. **Gertrude Regan #15:** Eliza entered in Philadelphia from Philadelphia 9/24/41 at age 15; the second to enter from Philadelphia; opened Potosi (WI) mission at age 19; directress of St. Joseph Academy on the prairie; assistant to Mother Clarke; third novice mistress; second Mother; one of the subjects of this book; died 6/2/1919.

11. **Gonzaga McLoskey #49:** supplied many stories for the ANNALS; entered in Dubuque from Derry County, Ireland 9/8/52 at age 18; superior at St. Raphael's, Dubuque; built music conservatory at ICA, Davenport with inheritance and established it as a music center in Iowa; second novice mistress; died 1/20/1915.

12. **Agnes Burke #22:** Lettie was born in Galway, Ireland; entered from Garryowen (IA) 12/4/44 at age 21; with Agatha Hurley, first to enter from Midwest; with Bishop Loras when he died; aunt of Mother Cecilia; died 4/24/1904.

13. **Agatha Hurley #23:** Ellen was born in Cork, Ireland and entered from Dubuque 12/10/44 at age 21; taught at Davenport and Iowa City; principal in Muscatine (IA); began the BVM schools at Holy Family, Chicago; helped with the first Rule; nominated for Mother General; built Holy Rosary, Milwaukee; died 5/5/1902.

14. **Xavier O'Reilly #24:** Jane was born in Cavan County, Ireland; entered from Dubuque 12/10/44 at age 16; in Philadelphia when the Know Nothings burned St. Michael's convent and came to Dubuque with Lucy Baker and Elizabeth Sullivan; had three sisters in the community: Francis, Veronica and Joseph; gifted in English and Latin; secretary to Mary Francis Clarke and Margaret Mann; died 3/10/90.

15. **Gabriel Isenger #26:** Barbara entered from Burlington (IA) 9/1/45 at age 21; helped set up St. Joseph's motherhouse on the prairie; taught German at ICA, Davenport, under Margaret Mann; was in charge of the house, meals, and clothes for the workmen on the prairie farm; died 1/25/1908.

16. **Raphael Barry #27:** Joanna entered from Davenport (IA) 9/3/45 at age 18; opened Our Lady of the Sacred Heart (called The Hill by Fr. Donaghoe) under Catherine Byrne; with Gabriel, was in charge of the house, meals, and clothes for the workmen on the prairie farm; Fr. Donaghoe often referred to Gabriel (above) and Raphael as the two archangels; died 4/22/01.

17. **Mathias Connelly #29:** Mary entered from Dubuque (IA) 3/25/46 at age 24; as a postulant helped set up the first prairie motherhouse; closed the door on John Kelly at Lucy Baker's wake at the prairie motherhouse; John got mad and came back some days later and started a fire on the chapel altar which destroyed the motherhouse and boarding school; witness to the preservation of Mother Clarke's caps from a fire which occurred in the prairie laundry and burned all the other fine wash; died 4/25/03.

18. **Michael Nihill #32:** Mary, born in Cavan County, Ireland, entered from Dubuque on 6/29/48 at age 17; novice mistress for three years, 1878-81; organized the curriculum and was superior at St. Joseph's Academy, Des Moines; opened Fort Dodge (IA) as superior; started St. Ambrose in Des Moines; provided Lambertina Doran stories for her book *IN THE EARLY DAYS*; died 9/21/12.

19. **Lucy McDonnell #35:** Ann entered from Kilkenny, Ireland 6/1/50 at age 36; went with Anastasia Mulgrew to open OLA in Clinton (IA) in 1872; died 1/24/09.

20. **Paul Scanlan #36:** Mary entered from Waterford, Ireland 9/3/50 at age 36; known as the "meatman", butchering at the prairie motherhouse; famous for her garden; last to leave the prairie for the new motherhouse at Mt. Carmel; died 8/10/1911.

21. **Terentia Farrelly #37:** Catherine entered from County Clare, Ireland, 5/8/51 at age 21; known on the prairie as "the utility man of the house;" her brother was Cardinal Farrelly of New York; died 2/11/1906.

22. **Augustine Byrne #39:** Mary entered from Kilkenny County, Ireland 6/16/51 at age 29; ran the chicken house on the prairie farm; novices loved working for her because she would excuse them from night prayers; died 9/25/1904.

23. **Clement Harron #40:** Ann entered from Dubuque 6/27/51 at age 15; in first group to go to Davenport in 1859; taught boys in OLA's (Clinton, IA) elementary; 1860, went to St. Margaret, Davenport –was superior there for many years; died 4/14/1919.

24. **Baptist Seely #53:** Ann entered from Elk Grove (WI) 3/1/53 at age 24; had an understanding relationship with Mother Clarke; Mother Gertrude's assistant in 1870; opened St. Ambrose, Davenport; in Des Moines at Father Brazill's parish; superior of both the old and new motherhouses; (see Coogan2 132-139); died 6/19/97.

25. **Of the Cross Fitzgerald #56:** Mary entered from Garryowen 7/2/53 at age 18; sister of our Br. Michael Fitzgerald; her mother Mrs. Dunn became Sr. Helen and

her sister Ellen became Sr. Mary Ambrose; went to St. Joseph Academy, Des Moines and had 70 little girls in her class according to Sr. M. Baptist; died 3/11/1914.

26. Ambrose Fitzgerald #62: Ellen entered from Garryowen on 12/23/53 at age 26; sister of Sr. Mary of the Cross and Br. Michael Fitzgerald; daughter of Sr. Mary Helen Fitzgerald Dunn; died 8/20/1907.

27. Ursula Kenneally #67: Elizabeth entered from Dubuque 5/24/54 at age 22; her father was very kind to the Sisters on the prairie and gave them a cow and a calf; opened St. Ambrose, Des Moines with Michael Nihill; died 12/20/04.

28. Anastasia Mulgrew #68: Ellen entered from Garryowen 8/15/54 at age 18; first superior of OLA, Clinton (IA) when it had K-12; Mother Clarke appreciated her work as superior; encouraged Gertrude to agree with Bishop Hennessy and buy a farm where Clarke University, Dubuque is now; died 12/8/1910.

29. Ann Kelleher #71: Julia entered from County Cork, Ireland 9/13/54 at age 24; taught in Iowa City (IA); (see picture); died 4/10/1911.

30. Camillus Martin #74: Ellen entered from Galena (IL) 2/2/55 at age 18; recruited in Dubuque for boys' school; died 3/3/11.

31. Stella Reid #76: Catherine entered from Elkader (IA) 5/30/55 at age 19; went to ICA, Davenport to teach elementary with Clement under Margaret Mann; died 11/25/1914.

32. Alexis Butterworth #80: Catherine entered from Dubuque 4/29/55 at age 15; she was a student at the academy on the prairie when it burned and her father donated all the lumber for the new buildings—floating the lumber down the Mississippi to Dubuque; all the farmers loaded the wood on their wagons in Dubuque and brought it out to the new motherhouse; inherited her father's farm; taught at Waterloo (IA); both parents are buried in Mt. Carmel cemetery, Dubuque; died 5/14/1906.

33. Sebastian Courtney #82: Margaret entered from Garryowen 10/7/55 at age 20; was baptized by Bishop Loras the day after he arrived in Dubuque; in August, 1876 opened and became the first superior St. Bridget's, Chicago; in 1881 opened pioneer town Sioux City (IA) mission where she became ill; 1891 elected member of Gertrude's Council; re-elected to Cecilia's Council in 1894; opened Xavier Elementary School in 1904; died 7/9/1906.

34. Seraphina Short #83: Margaret entered from Dubuque 10/7/55 at age 15; opened St. Agatha Seminary, Iowa City; opened Annunciation, Chicago in 1871; opened St. Cecilia Academy, Holden (MO) in 1884; was first superior of Gesu Elementary School, Milwaukee (WI) in 1892; served as directress of schools; elected to Mother Cecilia's Council, 1906-1909; last of first 100 members to die; died 9/4/1925.

35. Isadore (Cathy) McCarthy #84: Cathy entered from County Cork, Ireland 4/29/55 at age 24; part of the first group to go to Iowa City (see picture); opened

ICA, Davenport with Margaret Mann as her superior; known as an able seamstress and housekeeper; died 2/1/1905.

36. **Cecilia Dougherty** #86: Mary entered from Garryowen on 2/2/56 at age 18; third Mother General; one of the subjects of this book; died 9/7/1919.

37. **Barbara Ess** #88: Mary, born in Bamberg, Bavaria, Germany, entered 2/27/56 at age 20; taught at Iowa City (IA) (see picture) and Muscatine (IA); died 5/1/1915.

38. **Felicitas Carr** #91: Bridget entered from Dubuque 9/24/56 at age 18; superior in Muscatine in Father Laurent's parish school; admired by the non-Catholics; involved as a courier in the Rule; died 2/13/1911.

39. **Petronella Phelan** #92: Elizabeth entered from Abbey Felix, Ireland 10/28/56 at age 22; died 7/2/1911.

40. **Callista O'Regan** #97: Margaret entered from Dubuque 3/25/57 at age 17; opened Burlington with Joseph O'Reilly; an Irish band escorted them to and from the church; died 5/9/1907.

41. **Placidus Doyle** #99: Mary entered from Dubuque 5/10/57 at age 19; started St. Matthias School, Muscatine (IA) with Callista, Barbara, Felicitas and Jerome with Angela Quigley as superior; died 7/2/1911.

42. **Fidelis McLaughlin** #104: Catherine entered from Carlow, Ireland 2/2/58 at age 27; taught in Iowa City (see picture); 1872, went to Our Lady of Victory Academy, Waterloo (IA); 1878 became superior in Garryowen; Sisters kept house for the pastor until he got a housekeeper in 1883; died 12/12/1912.

43. **De Chantel O'Regan** #108: Mary E. entered from Dubuque 7/16/60 at age 18; taught at St. Margaret School, Davenport (IA); died 1/23/1922.

44. **Veronica Dunphy** #110: Margaret entered from Burlington (IA) on 3/?/62 at age 19; in August, 1867 came to Chicago and started St. Stanislaus at the same time as St. Aloysius School opened; when St. Stanislaus was incorporated into Sacred Heart, Veronica continued to be the Sister in charge; died 1/15/1917.

45. **Loyola Rutherford** #151: Alice taught in public school years before entering from Muscatine (IA) 10/22/67 at age 26; went to Cascade (IA) in 1869 and taught in the church basement for six months; passionate about higher education; elected to General Council from 1881-1884, 1888 to 1903 and 1906-1915; died 12/18/1915.

46. **Maurice Duffy** #128: Kate entered from Dubuque (IA) 8/15/65 at age 18; opened St. Brigid's, San Francisco as first superior; taught at St. Joseph's Boarding Academy, Dubuque, and picked the site for the first building. The Council chose Maurice *for* Agatha's seat; d. 6/17/1908.

Chapter 32

This research on Pulcheria McGuire's sources is the work of BVM Monica Seelman during 2010 while editing this book and inserting most of the pictures. I can never thank her and BVM Helen Gourlay enough for the gift of their talent, expertise and time nor for the fun doing the final draft.

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