

Boudreaux's Barrel

By: Warren Swenson

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I'd like to tell you a story
About my little friend Boudreaux,
The brightest Cajun crawfish
That almost everybody knows
And how it was and where it was
His story all began
At his home in south Louisiana
On a very small island.
But not just any island.
It was a very special one.
For where he grew up would determine
Who Boudreaux would become.

The island was named after
Judge Daniel Avery
Who had built a plantation there
To raise his family.
His eldest daughter, Mary
Was barely twenty-one when she
Married a gentleman from Maryland
Named Edmund McIlhenny

He was a successful banker
But due to the Civil War
They all had to flee to Texas.
Though their future was unsure
They knew one day they would return
To their island home.
But what new crop they would grow there
To them was not yet known

Edmund received some pepper seeds
From Tobasco, Mexico
That he planted in their garden
And those seeds began to grow.
They would grow much more than peppers
They would grow a company
That would produce tobasco sauce
And, as they say, the rest was history.

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Now the people on Avery Island
Had no way of knowing
That in those pepper fields
A Christmas legend would be growing
Little Boudreaux grew up by a pond
Right on that very Island
And that's where little Boudreaux's
Christmas journey all began,

While wandering one day he found
A "le petite baton rouge"
Which is a very small red stick
That the pepper pickers used.
By comparing every pepper
To that little bright red stick
They were able to determine
The ones ripe enough to pick.

That's when Boudreaux got the bright idea
That he could be much redder
Then le petite baton rouge
If he just ate tobasco peppers.
He thought that sounds much better
Then eating worms and weeds and snails
And what would be more snappy
Then having a bright red tail.

So Boudreaux changed his diet
To include tobasco peppers.
But he was very disappointed
When he didn't get much redder.
While walking home one day
Along the old Pepper Field Road
He ran into his lifelong friend
Horatio the toad.

"Good after noon Master Boudreaux,
Hope you're feeling well today,"
Horatio addressed him
In his usual proper way.
To which Boudreaux, in like manner
Replied, as good friends do,
"I feel fine. Thank you for asking,
So, tell me how are you?"

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"I'm fine Boudreaux," said Horatio,
But said it in a way
That if a toad had eyebrows
Both of his would have been raised.
As he continued, "Now Boudreaux
We've been friends our whole lives long
So, if you don't mind my saying,
I can tell that something is wrong."

Boudreaux just sighed, lowered his eyes
Then said, "you're right Horatio.
And as my life-long friend
I feel you have the right to know
That I've been in the pepper fields
Eating tobasco peppers
Thinking if I ate enough
That I would turn much redder."

"Oh my, Boudreaux," said Horatio,
"It seems very clear to me
That you're as red
As any Cajun crawfish needs to be.
So, be careful what you wish for
Because you just may get it.
I fear if you were much redder
You might have reason to regret it."

"I know you're right," said Boudreaux,
"But I still need to try
I feel it's something I must do
Though I cannot tell you why."
"Well, I guess if you're determined,"
Said Horatio thoughtfully,
"Then tomorrow we should go together
To the Tobasco factory."

But because the journey is quite long
We'll start early to ensure
That we will get there soon enough
To make their final tour.
Maybe you'll find some answers there
Though I really cannot say
So, shall I see you in the morning."
"You shall," said Boudreaux, as they parted ways.

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The next morning they left early
Down the old Pepper Field Road
They were traveling together
A crawfish and a toad

Now that's about as strange a pair
As any you will see.
But they were friends and so to them
No difference did they see.
Although the journey was quite long
They did arrive in time
To make the final tour
Though they were the last in line.

Taking the tour they both learned more
Then they had ever known
About the history of Tobasco
And the island they called home.
"You know Boudreaux," said Horatio,
"There is so much history
To Avery Island, our home,
It just amazes me."

But Boudreaux never heard a word
So deep in thought was he
When finally, he said," Horatio,
I have to get into that factory."
Horatio just sat there shocked
In disbelief he stared
At his friend Boudreaux, then finally said,
"I don't think that's a good idea."

Yes, I know," replied Boudreaux,
"But still, I have to try.
It's something that I have to do
Though I cannot tell you why."
"Now Boudreaux," said Horatio,
"You've said this all before
About having to become bright red
That is why we took this tour."

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"I know, I know," replied Boudreaux,
"But I must do this on my own.
So, please, I know it's getting late
And you must get back home.
But at least tonight the moon is bright
And it will light the way you go.
Now I promise you I'll be back home
Not later than tomorrow."

Though Horatio agreed to go
He did so reluctantly
Not wanting to leave Boudreaux alone
In the Tobasco factory.
But Boudreaux had insisted
He must do this on his own
So, Horatio agreed to leave
And headed on his way back home.

Now, somehow Boudreaux found his way
Past the security
Through the electronic doors without a code
Into the factory
He started where they bottled sauce
And he was not surprised
To find everything was pristine clean
And totally sanitized.

He was careful not to touch a thing
While he was wandering about
And eventually he made his way
Into the huge storehouse.
Where so many barrels were stacked so high
They surrounded him like mountains
According to the tour guide
There were over fifty-seven thousand

All the empty barrels were placed in rows
That seemed to have no end.
Soon to be filled and sealed then stacked up
With the rest of the mountains.
Now Boudreaux had a real problem
Called curiosity.
He wanted to know everything
And everything he wanted to see.

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So, he got between two empty barrels
To shimmy up and did not stop
Until he managed to shimmy himself
All the way up to the top
He peaked over the side and saw
It looked deeper than a well.
And that's when Boudreaux slipped
And into the barrel fell.

Now Boudreaux wasn't too worried
Because he had no doubt
In the morning the workers would find him
And they would let him out.
He also knew that the company
Had a well-known history
When it came to plants and creatures
To be exceptionally friendly.

But what Boudreaux did not know
Is the next day there would be
A film crew there to shoot
A documentary.
So the workers were distracted
And that's the reason I hear tell
That they never saw Boudreaux
In the barrel where he fell.

So the barrel was filled and sealed
With Boudreaux still in there.
And that's where Boudreaux had to live
For about the next three years.
But he needn't worry about what to eat
For there would obviously be
Enough tobasco mash in the barrel
To insure he wouldn't go hungry.

Though the barrel was very dark inside
Brighter it would become
But Boudreaux could never figure out
Where the light was coming from.
By eating all that tobasco mash
What Boudreaux didn't know
Is he was turning so bright red
That he started to glow.

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Then came the day the barrel moved
And a voice said, "Something isn't right
This barrel must be empty
Because this barrel is much to light."
Then there was the tapping on the lid
And when it finally did open
It was full of light, not much to light.
When they leaned over to look in

The workers stared in disbelief
Some stood totally aghast
For in that barrel there was not so much
As a drop of tobasco mash
But the barrel wasn't empty
For inside it, as you already know
Was the brightest red crawfish they'd ever seen
And his name was Boudreaux.

Boudreaux was really quite surprised
When, before they let him go
Everyone there insisted on taking
Their picture with Boudreaux.
Then, when they were finally finished
He headed straight for Pepper Field Road
In hopes of finding his best friend
Horatio the toad.

When he turned around the final bend
He heard somebody shout,
Boudreaux! Boudreaux! Is that you Boudreaux?
And there wasn't any doubt
It was none other than Horatio
Boudreaux's life-long friend
Who had, for the last three years,
Been waiting there for him.

They laughed and cried, and laughed and cried
Then laughed and cried some more
And never had they ever laughed and cried
So much before.
Then Boudreaux shared this whole story
With his life-long friend
But neither of them could have known
This was just the beginning.

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Today, I hear, Boudreaux appears
On his own line of apparel
And at Tobasco's country store, by his mural
Stands the famous "**Boudreaux Barrel**".

I've also heard the welcome sign
Was changed to read like this.

 Welcome to Avery Island
 Home of Tobasco Sauce
 And
Boudreaux the Bright Red Crawfish