

Wyoming Territory

This is a novel of fiction and even though historical facts are found throughout, it in no way depicts the life of anyone, living or dead.

I have added a few words from the Lakota Sioux dialect to twist the tongue and cause the reader some angst. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Prologue

The Wyoming Territory is rich in history. Famous frontiersmen such as Jim Bridger, John Colter, Kit Carson, Jedediah Smith and General John Fremont spent time exploring the land and hunting for beaver pelts. While exploring the Rocky Mountains, John Colter discovered an area of steaming geysers and magnificent waterfalls that he called "Colter's Hell." In 1872, that area was set aside as the world's first National Park, known as Yellowstone. William Cody gained a name for himself hunting the large herds of buffalo that roamed the great plains of Wyoming. The city, Cody Wyoming, near Yellowstone National Park is named after its famous resident.

Forty miles east of Lovell, Wyoming, at the crest of Medicine Mountain, is located the Medicine Wheel, an ancient shrine with twenty eight spokes and a circumference of two hundred and forty five feet, built by some forgotten tribe. A Crow chief reportedly said, "It was built before the light came by people who had no iron. This prehistoric relic remains as one of Wyoming's unsolved mysteries.

There is evidence in Wyoming of prehistoric occupation dating back more than twelve thousand years. These historic tribes were nomadic and known as the Plains Indians. They were the Arapaho, Arikara, Bannock, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, Crow, Gros Ventre, Kiowa, Nez Perce, Sheep Eater, Sioux, Shosone, and Ute Tribes. The Cheyenne and the Sioux were the last of these to be controlled and placed on reservations.

Wyoming was the scene of the last of the great Indian battles. Fort Phil Kearny, in northern Wyoming, had the bloodiest history of any fort in the West as thousands of well organized Indians fought fierce battles with the United States Cavalry. These Indians were led by famous chiefs such as Crazy Horse and Red Cloud.

Fort Laramie in southeastern Wyoming became a haven for the emigrants and people seeking gold as well as a critical station for the Pony Express and the Overland stagecoaches, thus becoming a vital post for the military in its wars with the Plains Indians. It witnessed the growth of the open range cattle industry and the coming of homesteaders, or "sod busters" and the building of towns.

In 1869, Wyoming's territorial legislature became the first government in the world to grant female suffrage by enacting a bill giving Wyoming women the right to vote. Thus, Wyoming came to be known as the "Equality State". It wasn't long after the signing of this act that Ester Hobart Morris of South Pass City, became the first woman ever to be appointed as justice of the peace. Mrs. Louisa Swain, on September 6, 1870, in Laramie, became the first woman in the nation to cast a vote.

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While all of this was going on, the large ranchers in Wyoming were complaining of unbridled rustling by small “nesters” and that railroad contractors fed their crews with beef purchased from these rustlers. Without adequate law enforcement, the cattlemen took matters in their own hands hanging without trial those they thought were guilty. Regardless of such efforts to stop the rustling, the problem continued.

The infamous “Hole in the Wall” was located in Johnson County and seemed to attract various outlaws who preyed on cattle interests. Included among this group were Tom Horn, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid to name a few.

The cattlemen took it upon themselves to hire and send an “expeditionary” force of Texas gunmen, led by a former deputy United States marshal to go in and rid the area of these unsavory individuals who were rustling their cattle. Each man was promised a fifty dollar bonus for each “rustler” killed. The plan included the force, under the command of Major Frank Wolcott, to go to Buffalo Wyoming in Johnson County to replace the county government with individuals who would be more favorable toward the large cattle interests. It was this bunch of individuals, with nicknames that conjure up the best of the Wild West, and their shenanigans that caught my interest and brought my novel to the Wyoming Territory.

Much of the historical information I gathered was from G.B. Dobson’s web site, [About Wyoming Tales and Trails](#) and from the characters he described that many of the names used in this novel are derived.

During this time when the Wyoming Territory was going through its growing pains, Sweden was experiencing its worst recession since 1650. While the population in Sweden was increasing by an alarming rate, it was estimated that over forty per cent of its soil was unproductive.

People were leaving for America in great numbers aided by firms based in New York who sent representatives to Sweden to arrange passage on ships carrying iron to America. These ships would provide cheap passage and would only charge twelve dollars per person for a voyage that would last about seven weeks. It was an emotional time for these people, saying good bye to their brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers. Watching the countryside where they grew up pass by for the last time. They were never to see their family and home again.

These immigrants were often met by the Bethel Ship Mission in New York City, an organization which helped people arrange travel west. Many of these Swedish immigrants found work with the Northern Pacific Railroad helping build the Yellowstone Division. Once they saved up enough money, they purchased land close to the track so they could once again get back to farming. It is here where, Esben Hjerstedt and his mother, Corinne, went to live with his uncle, who was living in Wyoming while he worked for the railroad.

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**“Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves.” Confucius 551-479
BC**

Chapter 1

Near The Lakota Sioux Reservation Wyoming Territory 1871

The boy stopped on a smooth flat rock. He was barefooted and sweating, trying to catch his breath. He bent over gripping his waist, panting, looking into the darkness. A bullet slammed into the tree ahead of him. He heard the men coming. It didn't take them long to catch up to him.

He had run from the river bank, following a trail he had taken many times before looking for elk. He hoped he would be able to double back without being seen. Now that it was dark, he was stumbling and afraid he may have lost his way. His feet and ankles were sore and bleeding and he wanted to lie down and sleep. He had made his way into the mountains, climbing as he followed the winding path higher. In places sections of the hillside fell away beneath his feet.

“I can't stop yet,” he thought. “I have to get back to camp.”

Crashing into a rock, he lost his balance and hit the ground. He got up and kept running, straining to see obstacles ahead. He heard the men charging behind him. A second bullet whistled past his right shoulder.

Leaving the game trail, he began to zig zag and head away from the noise of the men following up the rocky incline. He gained the ridge top and looked down at the mist filled ravine with vapor rising in jagged wisps, like steam from a boiling pot. The night was cloudless and the moon was high in the sky. Between him and his pursuers the bushes were a shadow of black and gray. He saw the riders with their heads pressed to their horses' necks as they tried to avoid the dense trees, dripping with vines obstructing their way. They had to dismount and scramble up the steep trail, leading their horses as they skittered and slid, gouging out the red earth and loose rock which fell dangerously when they set their hooves upon it. If they got closer, they surely would be able to see his silhouette as he fled.

He kept moving. He scampered down the draw, snaking through the sage and pinion and coming out downstream along the bank of the river that ran past where he was camping with his mother and Grey Wolf.

When the scrub ended, he found himself forced into the open. He ran toward a buttress of rock that was a deeper shadow on the dark landscape. Upon reaching it, he sank to his knees behind a tree. His breath was rasping and he was aware of his thirst. He flattened out on the river bank and drank. It tasted sweet and cold. His eyes began to ache from drinking too fast.

Somewhere close by a twig snapped. His heart jumped. Scrambling up into a crouch, he fought to control his breathing. He heard a hushed exchange between two men. He stayed still.

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“He’s got to be in here somewhere Rory”, one voice said, very close now.

The boy shut his eyes, willing the men away.

“Shut up Jasper,” the other voice rasped. The boy heard them pushing through the scrub brush moving away from him. He was too afraid to open his eyes until the sound of their retreat grew fainter.

Heart pounding, he opened his eyes to see a pair of dark eyes staring back at him, glistening in the night. It was a small deer.

The deer turned, jumped down and nimbly scampered away, leaving him alone with the dark and still silence of the night.

He swore he could hear his heart pounding from fear and exhaustion.

I need to find someplace to hide until these men are gone, he thought.

He moved out. Reaching a rise, he stopped and turned to see if he could catch a glimpse of his pursuers. He heard horses snorting and their hooves striking the ground. The boy ducked into the brush along the path. The horses’ shadows passed over him. These were the other two men who had joined in the chase to capture him.

I can’t outrun them, he thought to himself, and darted away through the dark, effortlessly avoiding bushes and sharp, jutting rock with the ease of a rabbit. Occasionally he would stop to check on his pursuers, or to feel his way up a narrow gully. He was climbing, following a wild animal track up the side of a steep hill when he fell into some bushes, scratching the side of his face and turning his ankle. When he got up and put weight on his ankle the pain made his leg buckle and he collapsed. Lifting his head, he noticed a shallow cave directly in front of him, hardly four feet high but appearing to be quite deep. He crawled forward, forcing some bushes aside. Peering inside, he saw nothing but darkness. He put out his hand to find the perimeter of the cave and crawled forward. Involuntarily he shivered as he inhaled the dank musty air. The smell of wild animal was strong and he hoped the animal that stayed here was gone as he appeared to be blocking the only exit.

I don’t think those men will find me in here. I will stay until morning and then go back to camp using the river bank for cover. If my ankle will hold my weight, I think I can make it.

He peered out of the cave, parting the brush. The moon was high now and only a few stars could be seen in the bright light. He could see the creek far below with the sand shining like silver.

He saw no sign of his pursuers. He hoped they had given up and left.

He lay there, watching and listening for another few minutes. The breeze had died, and he started to shiver. Now that his sweat had cooled, coldness crept over him. He wrapped his arms around himself trying to keep his body warmth close; he curled up like a wild animal, resting his head on his arms

When he woke, dawn was close and the sky was flush with different hues of blue and the black shadows from the night before had melted into a deep green. Nothing moved outside the cave. The air was clear and the sun was rising on the horizon. His fingers traced the lacerations around his ankles and he winced when he touched a tender spot. He ached all over, still exhausted from running half the night and sleeping on the damp ground. Slowly he got to his feet. He was hungry and thirsty.

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Chapter 2

Just outside Starn, Sweden, 1863.

Cupping his mouth, Lars yelled, "That's the last one, Gunard."
"Ok, jump up Lars, we are going home."
Gunard marveled at the strength of his younger brother Lars. His forearms were huge and rippled with muscle developed from years of chopping, sawing and lifting of the heavy timbers they cut each day. Nothing seemed too heavy for him to lift with his powerful legs and back and it seemed he could work at the same pace for the whole day. His rugged face was covered with his winter beard that had a tinge of red. He always had a twinkle in his eye that made one think he was about to pull a prank. Lars was definitely born to be a lumberjack. Gunard usually tired by mid day and would like to take a break but he was shamed into working by Lars' stamina. If he took a break, Lars' booming voice and laughter would cause Gunard to stand up and get back to work so his brother wouldn't look at him in the way one does when they think their partner is shirking their share of their duties. One thing Lars didn't do well was drive a team of horses. This was always left to Gunard. When their father was still alive and teaching them how to be lumberjacks he had Lars drive the team back to the farm late on a cold blustery afternoon. The wind had kicked up and snow was falling at an alarming rate. The horses were a little nervous and required a steady hand, which Lars didn't have. The horses bolted and the sled ran off the road and into a ravine. The two horses were unable to pull the sled out by themselves so Gunard and their dad had to go to Gustav Anderson's farm to borrow his team to help. After that experience, Lars was hesitant to do the driving. He let Gunard do the driving whenever possible.

The sun was beginning to drop in the west and even though the temperature was below freezing, the ice was melting off the trees and dripping onto Gunard's hat and rolling down his neck. He leaned back in the seat of the sled to avoid getting soaked. Gunard and Lars had worked up a good sweat despite the cold temperature. The horses were prancing in place as they knew it was the time of day they would be heading home to a warm stall and some oats and hay. Gunard and Lars wrapped up in the bear skin they kept in the front of the sled as they headed to Starn to unload the trees they spent the past two days cutting down.

"Hiay, hiay, Gunard called out to the two big Belgian horses pulling the sled. They were going to Swenson's Sawmill for the last time. There just wasn't any demand for lumber any more in the whole country of Sweden and Peter Swenson said that he would be closing his sawmill at the end of the month. On the ride back both Gunard and Lars were lost in their thoughts. Gunard was concerned about Lars, his younger brother by five years who had a three year old daughter and another baby on the way. They were at a loss as to what they were going to do. Gunard and his wife had an eight year old boy, Esben. They lost a baby girl at birth five years ago and Corinne was unable to have any more children. It was probably just as well since Gunard was having a difficult time feeding the little family he had. All his brothers and sisters, beside Lars, have at least five children to help them on their farms. But now most land had become fallow and they were looking for something else to do to support their families.

The year was eighteen sixty three and Sweden was still in the middle of the worst recession the country experienced since the sixteen fifties. Poor harvests and

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unemployment continued to grow and the population continued to rise at an alarming rate. Wages were at the lowest Gunard had seen. People didn't complain about the low wages much as they were happy to have a job. Gunard and Lars found themselves on the outside looking in, much like their farming friends. Many of them had already left the country and emigrated to America. He and Lars were getting about one half of what they were getting ten years ago for the logs they would bring in to Swenson. They had looked for jobs in Starn and even went as far away as Stockholm hoping something was available but to no avail.

When they finished unloading the trees at the Swenson Mill, Peter Swenson said:

"Gunard, there just isn't any demand for wood. Nobody can afford to build anything. The farmers are losing their farms to the bank. I'll probably be closing the mill after we sell what we have here. I won't be buying anymore wood after tomorrow. I am sorry Gunard."

"I understand Peter. Something has to be done and it doesn't look like our government can figure out what. There are too many people living in Sweden and our land cannot support everyone. My sister Inger and her husband left for America five years ago and I am considering doing the same."

"I have thought of doing that myself, but I love my country. My father and mother are buried here. All my family and friends still live here. I just don't know."

"I love Sweden as well, but I have to feed my family and I can't do it here", Gunard replied.

Gunard and Lars thought that this recession would have been over by now but it seemed like it would go on for quite awhile. It was the rural folks who felt this more than the folks who had jobs in the towns and cities. They were able to hang on, at least for awhile. "Well, Lars, it looks like we will have to make a decision on what we are going to do to feed our families. Jons Jonsson is holding a meeting Friday night about going to America. It will be held at the little Baptist Church he started. It starts at six and I am going to go to hear what he has to say", Gunard said.

"Hell, Gunard, Jonsson is a religious fanatic. I don't want to hear anything he has to say. The Lutheran Church of Sweden as much as told him he had to leave the country."

All I know is that Jonsson has been writing to Gustav Unonius who started a Swedish settlement in America in a place called New Upsala, in a territory called Wisconsin in eighteen forty one. It is supposed to be beautiful and the soil is black as night. You can grow anything there and there are so many trees you could work every day for the rest of your life and not even come close to cutting them all down.

Inger said that the village they live in, New Glaurus, is in Wisconsin and she said it is not far from New Upsala. She also said the land is so fertile and black and that there are more trees there than in all of Sweden. She said we could stay with them until we could build a place of our own. She said Anders wanted us to come as well."

"I don't know, Gunard. I never got along with Anders. Ever since he married Inger he felt like all the Hjerstedts were now Carlsson's and he was the leader of the clan. I miss our big sister but not Anders. Also, this is our home. I don't want to leave. I may have to live on reindeer and bear meat, but I want to stay. What did she say, two months on a ship in the middle of the ocean? We're not Norwegians, Gunard."

"With that red beard Lars, I'm not so sure about you."

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“I am going to Starn tonight and listen to what Jonsson has to say and then make a decision, Gunard said, and I am going to talk with Corinne about this to see what she wants to do. She received a book on learning the English language from our sister in America and she has been teaching it to Esben for the past few months. He is learning quickly and already speaks it well. Corinne may want to stay here but I think she has pretty much made up her mind to go if that is what I want to do. I know it will be a hard journey on a six year old boy. I just don't know what kind of future there is here for Esben and I have to consider that.”

“Ah, yes, Esben, Divine Bear. Do you think they have any bears in America?”

“I am sure they do Lars. A country that big has to have lots of them plus they probably have animals we never heard of.”

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Chapter 3

Starn Sweden 1863

Jons Jonsson stood on a platform with torches blazing on all sides. It was six at night and the sun had faded into the darkness. Gunard and Lars had just arrived and were surprised at the number of people who were already waiting to hear Jonsson speak.

Jonsson's eyes were large and shiny, reflecting the light from the torches. The spittle was flying from the corner of his mouth as he spoke, interspersing religious rhetoric with the promise of the riches the new land, America, had waiting for them.

"God has made this land available for us Swedes and it lays in wait for us to plow the fields, lay the train track, to build our banks and start our businesses to make a new Sweden in this promised land. Where we can worship God in the way we want without a King telling us that his church is the only church. The crowd urged him on and he fed off them.

"How much does the land cost?" a squat man near the front yelled

"Gustav Unonius in his letter to me said America has so much land that they are practically giving it away. You can buy a forty acre tract of land in the Wisconsin Territory for twelve and one half cents per acre", Jonsson told them.

"What about wages?", cried a farmer named Paul Esbjorn.

"You can lay track for a railroad, called the Northern Pacific, and they will pay you \$1.00 a day in wages, replied Jonsson. They have so much work to be done in America and they don't have enough laborers to fill all the jobs."

"How much does it cost to travel over to America?" Paul Esbjorn's wife, a small woman with a pinched face and squat body asked.

"I have been in contact with the Bethel Ship Mission in New York and they have lined up passage for fifty people on a cargo ship carrying iron to New York. It will cost you twelve krona per person. They said the trip will take about seven weeks."

"How do we know where this Wisconsin Territory is, Esbjorn asked, and how will we get there?"

Jonsson pointed a boney finger at Esbjorn and yelled, "By God Paul, good question. I was told by the Bethel Ship Mission that they will have a representative meet us at New York harbor when the ship arrives. They will arrange passage West across America to the Wisconsin Territory. Everything will be done for you. All you need is the courage to pack up your things and leave and a strong back once you get there to do the work that needs to be done."

Jonsson raised both of his hands and looked to the heavens and cried, "Praise to the Lord for providing for His children. Amen brothers and sisters?"

The crowd shouted back "Amen", and a big smile spread across Jonsson's face

Looking over the crowd he said, "Now, are you coming with me?"

The crowd enjoined with a loud cheer, "We're with you Jons; we are ready to go."

"All right, then, if you are going, step up here and sign this manifest so I can get it to the shipyard tomorrow. The ship will be leaving the first of May."

Jonsson jumped off the platform and started shaking hands with people as they started to leave. People were excited and there were men clapping each other on their backs saying that they would see them on the ship in May.

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Lars turned to Gunard and said, "I don't think I will be going with you brother. I just can't see myself leaving my home. I talked it over with Candace at dinner tonight and she doesn't want to leave and never see her sisters and mother and father again. She said it would be too much for her."

"Well, Corinne and I decided that if the passage over there wasn't too much, that we would go. I have the thirty six krona it will cost so I am going to sign the manifest Lars." The brothers embraced before going their separate ways.

"Come by tomorrow Lars and I'll help you hook up the sled to the team so you can move it to your barn. Think you will be able to drive them without me?"

Lars just smiled, shaking his head as he waved before walking away into the dark of the night.

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Chapter 4

Hjerstedt Farm, Starn Sweden 1863

Esben was staring out his bedroom window watching the rain fall. It was very quiet outside. The family's livestock, what they had, was moved over to Lars' little farm. Their house was empty except for their beds and a dresser as they gave all their furniture to Lars as well. Lars would come back and get the beds and dresser later. The bark on the trees looked black in the early morning light and the leaves were just beginning their spring arrival. The day was dark and dreary as was his mood as he waited for his Uncle Lars to come with the wagon and team of horses to take him along with his father and mother to Stockholm. The forest surrounding their house was his whole world. Before he got older and had daily chores to do, he and his friend Richard would spend all day playing down by the lake where the trees were the tallest and full of wild animals. They had their own private place that they called their fort. They pretended they were in their majesty's special army and were responsible for protecting the King and his family. But tomorrow he would be boarding a ship with his mother and father heading to America and he would never play in this beautiful forest again. He was dreading the trip. He had never been away from home, let alone on a ship. He wasn't a very good swimmer and that bothered him. He was afraid he would drown if something happened and he fell into the ocean. How would they save him?

When his father told him that they would be leaving Sweden Esben was not happy. His father told him "Be brave Esben. When we reach America we will be traveling by train and wagon to the Wisconsin Territory. We will be staying with my sister, Inger and her family, until we have enough money to buy our own home."

"What is wrong with our home here?" Esben asked. Esben's best friend, Richard, didn't have to leave his home, why did he?

"Nothing is wrong with our home, Esben. But I cannot make any money here and we have to eat. We have to go to America now while we still have some money left.

Esben heard the bells on the horses' harnesses as they approached from the road. Sadness overcame him at that moment when he realized he would never see his home again. He walked out of his room for the last time and picked up the bag that carried all of his clothes. His father was carrying the trunk his mother had packed that contained the family's only possessions that they would be taking with them.

His uncle Lars walked in to help Esben's mother with the bags containing his mother and father's clothes. The usual twinkle that was always in Uncle Lars' eyes was missing this morning. Lars and his father were not only brothers, but they were the best of friends as well as business partners for over ten years. Esben realized that this move was going to be hard on his parents as well. Esben's mother's family was all dead. They were killed by the influenza that hit Sweden back in eighteen fifty before Esben was born. Esben's mother, Corinne, was close to Lars' wife, Candace, and Esben saw tears in both women's eyes last night when they parted for the last time. Richard and Esben didn't cry when they said good bye; at least not while they were together. Esben did cry when he went to bed last night and he wondered if Richard did as well. He bet he did. They knew each other all their lives. They went to school together, to the Lutheran Church together and

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played together every chance they got. Who will Richard play with now, Esben thought? Who will I play with? Will there be other boys my age on the ship? His Aunt Ingrid had two daughters who were much older than Esben so he couldn't play with them when he got to Wisconsin. All of this was going through his mind as his mother called to him to come out and get in the wagon. They were ready to go.

As Esben walked out of the house, he saw his father stroking the two Belgian's noses and speaking softly to them. There was a tear in his eye. Esben knew his father loved those horses almost as much as he loved Esben. His father felt love and compassion for all their animals and Esben loved that about him.

Esben's father was as tall as his brother Lars, but not as broad. They both had great strength in their arms and back and there were few men in their village that could compete with them when it came to the lumberjack games they would have every winter. They usually came in first or toward the top every year.

Esben climbed up on the back seat of the wagon next to his mother as his father climbed up next to Lars. Esben's mother put her arm around him and pulled him close as he silently cried.

Lars handed Gunard the reins and his father called out "Hiay, hiay" as he slapped the horses on their haunches. The horses strained against the load of the wagon and stepped forward with ease, taking Esben away from the only home he knew. Gunard looked back for one last time and Esben noticed the tears in his red rimmed eyes before his father turned around with an audible sigh. Lars put his arm around his brother as they headed for Stockholm for the last time.

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Chapter 5

Stockholm Sweden

Stockholm, the town between the bridges, is an archipelago, situated on the south central part of Sweden's east coast where Lake Malaren meets the Baltic Sea. The central part of the city consists of fourteen islands and the center of the city is situated on Riddarfjarden Bay. Over thirty percent of the city is made up of waterways. It is because of these waterways that the city was built as it was a strategic spot for trade within Sweden as well as between nearby countries in the Baltic Sea region. Stockholm's reason for being has always been to be the Swedish capital and is the largest city in the country.

By the time the Hjerstedts arrived, Stockholm was in the midst of a strong economic growth, as new industries emerged due to the introduction of steam engines which transformed the city into an important trade and service center; such a sharp contrast to the rural part of the country from which the Hjerstedts were fleeing.

They had traveled most of the night and it was still dark as they approached the outskirts of Stockholm when they turned on a street known as Bollhusgrand, near the square and passed a building with the number twenty three painted on the front. It was known as Ahlstroms jungfrubur, The Maiden Cage of Ahlstrom. It was bought by a captain Magnus Ahlstrom back in the seventeen hundreds who created a virtual temple of Venus with space for the priestesses on all three floors. Though the brothel made Ahlstrom rich, it resulted in squads of prostitutes with painted faces and gaudy attire, lining the street, nodding at travelers as they passed. The southern extension of Bollhusgrand was home to many more taverns and brothels making for a colorful journey for little Esben

Turning down Helvetesgrand, Alley of Hell, a place of disgrace suitable for criminals and thieves, they saw dark silhouettes of all the ships moored in the bay. One particular freighter stood out from the rest. It was gray and looked dreary and dirty. A group of people were milling on the dock in the vicinity of the ship, their shadows dancing eerily in the flickering glow of the gas lanterns lighting the pier. There must have been at least one hundred and fifty men, women and children all huddled together with their mattresses and blankets in bundles along with pots and pans and knives, forks and spoons sticking out in every direction. They were dressed in shabby gray overcoats and well worn caps and most with a small valise in hand. These people were to be the Hjerstedts fellow travelers to America.

The ship itself was a multi-masted sailing vessel, being square rigged with the fore and aft sails perpendicular to the body of the vessel; it was built for trans-oceanic voyages. It was nothing of beauty, built for transporting iron not passengers. It was constructed of wood and iron armatures which made it thirty to forty per cent lighter than cargo ships made of all wood. It was equipped with a screw driven steam engine that was fueled with coal which was stored astern below deck.

In front of the dock there were a number of peddlers selling steerage necessities such as mattresses, blankets, pots and pans along with plates, knives, forks and spoons and wash basins.

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When they arrived at the dock the putrid smells of the dead and rotting fish mixed with human waste and rotting food were nauseating. Corinne pulled a handkerchief from her purse and put it over her nose as she was helped out of the wagon by Gunard. Once they had unloaded their trunk, Lars hugged them all, holding back tears he turned back and stepped up into the wagon, snapping the reins, he clucked to the horses and went back up Helvetesgrand. His retreating back slumped over the front of the wagon was the last thing Esben saw of his uncle.

Corinne grabbed Esben's hand and Gunard picked up the trunk. As they walked along peddlers approached them trying to sell their wares. Esben buried his face in Corinne's dress and Gunard waved the peddlers away.

When they were down on the dock with their fellow travelers Gunard asked an older man standing next to them if he knew when they would be able to embark.

"No, that I don't. Nobody has said anything to us and we have been here for going on three hours already. The crew has been coming by in groups of threes and fours but they don't think of responding to our questions. We haven't seen anyone yet who might have some authority. Hopefully soon they will let us board. The little ones are getting anxious and some folks are getting pretty annoyed."

"Have you seen Jons Jonsson yet?" Gunard asked.

"Nary a hair of the man, the older man replied

The name's Andresen, Dagmar Andresen, what's yours?"

"Gunard Hjerstedt and this is my wife Corinne and my boy Esben."

Andresen nodded and tipped his hat in Corinne's direction and said: "That's my wife Jeanne over there with my boy Elmer and his wife Gladys."

By this time the sun was beginning to creep into the horizon changing the sky from black to a dark blue with streaks of white clouds passing by. A fog was drifting in over the bay and a lone fog horn sounded over the waters. A livery coach could be heard approaching over the cobblestone street coming to a stop in front of the dock.

The driver got down and opened the door and out stepped Jon Jonsson dressed in a top hat and a black coat and pants holding a walking cane and another gentleman dressed in a dark blue coat with a watchman cap on his head. The driver pulled down a trunk from the top of the carriage and started carrying it down the dock and up the plank way onto the freighter.

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Chapter 6

The only certainty is uncertainty; the only constant is change.

Jons Jonsson tapped the wharf with the end of his cane to draw the attention of the masses huddled together waiting to board the freighter.

“Please, everyone, listen up. We will be starting shortly. The purser will be stepping out and if you will, please line up in a single line and have your fare ready as you approach to board.

Your captain’s name is Knut Haukelid, a Norwegian, and the best seaman you could find. You are very lucky to have him at the helm.”

The purser stepped out by the gang plank leading from the dock to the ship along with two other sailors or persons of authority. When Gunard, Corinne and Esben approached they were interrogated roughly by the purser:

“Your name?”

“Gunard Hjerstedt. This is my wife Corinne and son Esben.”

“How old are you?”

“Twenty eight.”

“Your wife and son?”

“Corinne is twenty four and Esben is six.”

“What’s your city?”

“Starn.”

“Where are you going?”

“America.”

What do you work at?”

“I am a lumberjack and a farmer.”

After answering the questions, the Hjerstedts found themselves being pushed along by one of the stewards. When they stepped on board they were lined up with the other passengers in front of an open hatch with two ladders leading to some unknown place below. One man after another pushed forward and flung his boxes and trunks on board. The Hjerstedts were shoved and half thrown down one of the ladders. The steps were nearly perpendicular and very difficult to reach the bottom without stumbling and falling.

They were now in the steerage area of the ship, approximately sixteen feet below deck. The enormous cables that connected the rudder to the steering wheel ran overhead. Corinne glanced around and was filled with dismay and disgust. The ship showed no regard for the comfort of the passengers. This was no more than a wooden cell about sixty feet in length and twelve feet wide at the front end but narrowing to no more than five feet wide at the forecabin. There was no ceiling just the open area with the steerage cables. There was a hatchway where the two dirty ladders were placed almost perpendicularly that formed a staircase.

Along the sides, running the length of the steerage, a wooden partition had been constructed of bare boards, reaching to within a foot of the top. Spaced approximately four feet apart, were eight doors that were numbered; behind them were the sleeping quarters, each containing sleeping berths, each two feet wide. The boards that made up

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the doors at one time must have been painted, but now the paint was faded and chipped. On either side of the room two strips of canvas were stretched leaving a narrow alley, in which a single person could move but in which two people could not pass each other. On the floor the crew had strewn sawdust to absorb the dirt and spills during their voyage. In the center of the floor was an open wooden grating which was the entry to the steward's storeroom. It was packed with salt and cured fish among other items and vented directly into the steerage area. This dirty space was the dining and living area for the steerage passengers. It was certified to accommodate sixty passengers.

At the narrower end of the wooden cell stood seven beer barrels standing on end; three of these barrels contained broken bottles and a fourth decomposing and rotting food. The stench, combined with the heat, made staying below deck almost intolerable. Corinne and Mrs. Andresen departed to use the women's lavatory, which was in the forecastle, the part of the vessel forward of the foremast; the place where the crew eats and sleeps, making the women pass through the ranks of the sailors and stokers, who was employed to tend the steam boiler and supply it with fuel, which was coal. As they passed, a man stepped in their pathway causing them to stop. He was a large man, a stoker. His face was streaked and awash with coal dust. He leered at them and grinned, showing his blackened teeth. He didn't say anything but laughed and then stepped aside. Corinne didn't know if the terrible odor came from him or the lavatory, all she knew was that she was happy he moved out of their way and she hoped she wouldn't meet him again.

To use the lavatory was an inconvenience for the women for sure. The wash basins were supplied with water made from the sea water and condensed from the exhaust steam of the engine. It had a strong and disagreeable odor which remained on the skin after washing in it.

The closets in the lavatory had a smell that was so foul that Corinne thought she would be seasick before she could open the door.

Corinne turned to Mrs. Andresen and said. "I thought I would be violently ill before I could open the door to get out. I dread having to use it again."

"I know, let's get back to the steerage," Mrs. Andresen replied.

The sailors and stokers broke out in a chorus of catcalls and laughter as the two ladies, near tears, rushed through the forecastle back toward the steerage area of the ship.

"Breakfast will be served in approximately thirty minutes, the purser yelled. Make sure you secure your belongings in your berth before coming out to dine."

Breakfast consisted of bread and coffee with sugar and a hint of milk added. The main staple was an Irish stew, filled with potatoes and in which a piece of meat could occasionally be found. Esben looked glum as he looked into his bowl and stirred his stew listlessly.

"Come on now; eat your breakfast, boy. It will be a long voyage and you will have to keep up your strength," Gunard said.

"I know, it's just that this tastes horrible. Won't we get any eggs?"

"I told you that we will have to wait until we get to New York. The first thing I will do is buy you as many eggs as you want to eat Esben. Now come on, finish that stew; then we will go and unpack our things and make our sleeping quarters seem a little more like home."

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It was a long morning and they spent it completing their last preparations for the voyage. Afterward, they lounged on the forecastle head and looked off at the picturesque Baltic Sea, on which they would soon be sailing.

They left port later that day and trimmed their sails as they headed toward the Island of Gotland and The Sound, locally known as Sundet, the almost tideless strait that separates the Danish island , Zealand, from the southern Swedish Province of Scania. It connects the Baltic Sea, and the North Sea around the tip of Sweden and the city of Malmo and then into the Kattegat Bay on their way to the North Sea and finally the Atlantic Ocean on their way to America.

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Chapter 7

Traveling The High Seas

“Lunch is about to be served, a steward shouted. He had sandy blond hair, stout in stature, with a full sandy colored beard. You wanna eat? Then you better get below deck and find a spot at the table.”

By the time the Hjerstedts sat down, most of the seats were already occupied. The Andresen's were nowhere to be seen. Sitting across from them was the Lindberg family from Gardlosa Sweden. His name was August and her name was Louisa. Their son, Charles, was about seven years old and very shy. He kept looking up and staring at Esben but as soon as Esben made eye contact with him, Charles would drop his head again. Corinne had been told that August had left his wife and seven boys, quit his job at the bank and changed his name from Mansson to Lindberg. He was going to America to start a new life with his former mistress, who he now called his wife, and their son.

“Soup here, who's for soup?”

The soup was carried in tin buckets by two burly stewards. It was rather nondescript and made up of rice and a good dose of pepper.

Each passenger then stepped forward with their plates which were heaped with boiled potatoes and slices of coarse and tasteless beef that was so tough, Esben had a difficult time chewing it.

When they finished eating all the passengers gathered their tin ware together and climbed on deck. The sailors directed them to scrape their potato skins and other debris over the ship's side. The galley cook filled a tub with hot water on the lee deck close by the rail. Here the passengers stood in circles six deep waiting for a chance to rinse their platters. By the time the Hjerstedts arrived, the water was cold and had pieces of potato and meat floating around in the midst of congealed grease. Corinne felt their tin ware ended up dirtier than it was before they put it in the water.

After putting up their tin plates and cups, the Hjerstedts ventured to the foredeck once again to watch the sunset for the last time over Sweden. Pretty soon they could feel the water moving beneath them. They were on their way.

At two bells, signifying the passing of an hour, a sailor approached them and said it is nine o'clock and that Corinne would have to go below deck. No ladies were allowed on deck after nine.

Corinne was tired anyway and she knew that Esben had to be as well.

“Come along and let's clean up and get ready for bed Esben. Then we will study our English for awhile. Do you want to study too, Gunard?”

“Yes, but you two go ahead, I'll be along shortly.”

After they left, Gunard sat down on the foredeck. He was feeling a little dizzy and wanted to let the feeling pass before he went below. Here he was, not yet at sea and only twelve hours on ship, and he was sick. This was going to be a very long voyage he thought.

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