



An Untamed Land

by Lauraine Snelling

Excerpt provided courtesy of LauraineSnelling.com

Ingeborg Bjorklund shifted on the hard bench and fingered the tattered newspaper article in the pocket of her reticule. She lifted her face to the offshore wind that brought a fresh breeze to nostrils filled too long with only salt-scented air.

They had safely crossed the great Atlantic Ocean. In spite of several cruel, unrelenting storms at sea and a ship that moaned its desire to join comrades now crushed in the ocean depths, they could smell the robust fragrance of land, even though they couldn't yet see it. Seagulls screeched around the sides of the ship, harbingers of the new life that waited for them. Bonanzaland, some called it.

She didn't have to reread the article. In the last months Ingeborg had read it so many times that she had every word memorized. Paul Hjelm Hanson, a Norwegian-American journalist from Minnesota, had sent his articles to newspapers all over Norway, writing of rich, flat land that lay empty, pleading for the bite of the plow. "New Canaan," as he called it, had land free for the claiming, land that promised untold wealth and farmsteads for their children. It was the promise of land that fed their dream and pulled them from the security of Norway in that year of our Lord, 1880. And Ingeborg had promised herself that once they left the shores of Norway, she would not look back. There would be no regrets, only dreams of the new life that lay ahead. Together with Carl and Kaaren, she and Roald would build a good life in a new land. God had made possible this journey to Amerika, and God would be with them here, just as He had been with them all along the way.

But she couldn't help thinking of her family—Mor, Far, Katrina, and the baby—would she ever see their beloved faces again? *No, don't think of all that's left behind*, she ordered herself sternly. *Only look ahead to the future, and all the good things it holds.*

She laid a hand on her stomach, queasy again from the constant pitch of the ship. Long rolling swells raised and lowered the prow of the complaining steamship as they surged westward. She knew for certain now that the nausea didn't come only from the motion of the sea. Ingeborg would tell Roald the joyous news after they landed. She carried within her their first child, the first Bjorklund to be born in the new country.

"Mor," called five-year-old Thorliff, interrupting her thoughts. He dashed across the heaving deck to clutch at her dark wool skirt. He'd called her Mor from the first time his father introduced the boy to his new mother, just a little over a year before. "We're almost to our new farm. Far said so."

Ingeborg couldn't resist the beaming smile on his round little face. She tucked his curly wheaten locks back under his black wool cap and cupped his rosy cheeks in her mitten hands. "Yes, my son. But you must hang tightly to your far's hand. A large wave could come and wash you into the sea. Then what would we do?"

He stared reproachfully out of eyes as deep blue as the Norwegian fjords, eyes that matched those of the man standing behind him. "But I have something to tell you."

"What's that, den lille?"

"Far said I can have a baby dog."

"A puppy?"

"Ja, for me." His eyes danced above cheeks made ruddy by the biting wind. "And a horse, and a cow and"—he scrunched up his eyes to remember—"and two sheeps."

Ingeborg laughed, the sound lilting above the hiss of the surge against the prow like the trill of a songbird in flight. From the railing, two men turned to see where the laughter came from and smiled at the tableau of mother and child.

"Land, ho!" The call passed from one eager passenger to the next, spoken in a symphony of languages. Those brave enough to face the wind crowded to the rail, hoping for a glimpse of solid rock.

In her excitement, Ingeborg leaped to her feet and started toward the rail. But when she recognized the narrowing eyes and straight brows of her husband's frown, she stopped midstep and returned to her bench in the lee of the funnel, Thorliff beside her. She clasped her mitten hands, wishing she could crowd the rail like the men. If allowed, she'd have been standing in the foremost inch of the prow, straining to catch the first sight of land. But according to Roald, proper women didn't do such things. At least not his woman.

Ingeborg's sigh of disappointment drifted away on the stiff wind. Wishing did no good. Her mother had diligently instructed her daughter on this and many other principles of behavior becoming to a Christian woman, such as never wasting even a minute and always obeying her husband. As she'd been reminded by her mother more than once, Ingeborg, at her advanced age of twenty-two, was fortunate to have married such a fine man. An upstanding Christian, a good farmer, a man strong and brave enough to leave the old country and go to Amerika to start a new life. It didn't matter that she felt no love for

him when they first married—only a deep and abiding respect. But love had blossomed later, as her mother had promised it would.

A second sigh floated on the wind after the first. If only he would smile, even once. She thought of the new life growing safely inside her. Mayhap *that* would bring a smile to his sober face.

"Mor, why are you sad?" The small voice drew her back to the windy deck.

Ingeborg drew in a deep breath of land- and sea-scented air. "Let's go see if Tante Kaaren is feeling better. We'll help her with the baby." How rich and refreshing a first glimpse of land would be rather than sitting in that fetid hole-in-the-wall they called a cabin. True, she should be grateful they weren't crammed together like the poor souls down in steerage. And she was grateful, but, oh ...

"I want to see the new land." Thorliff dragged at the firm hand that pulled him toward the stairs.

"Me, too, but Far wants us safe from all the pushing and shoving. A little boy like you could get squashed like a bug."

"Ugh," Thorliff said, puckering up his face.

"I know. Far will come for us when it is time. We must be patient."

Roald Bjorklund escorted his wife and son to the companionway and saw them start down before turning back to shoulder his way to the crowded rail. Amerika! The land of his dreams for far longer than he'd been married to Ingeborg, his second wife. Beautiful Anna—the love of his youth—was gone forever. Together they'd dreamed and scrimped and saved to buy tickets for passage to Amerika. But then she had died and taken his heart with her. The son she'd labored so hard to bring into this world had died only a few hours later. Sometimes he still dreamed of her, but when he awoke, it was Ingeborg's face on the pillow beside him. Comparisons did one no good.

He tugged his black felt hat farther down his forehead. Off in the distance he could see the dark shoreline of his new country. Here, he would have his own land, unlike in Norway, where only the oldest son could inherit the family farm.

Roald blew his nose on a handkerchief pulled from the pocket of his black wool pants. The time for mourning was long past. *Ingeborg is a good, strong woman*, he reminded himself again. *A woman built to bear many sons and help me face the hardships I know are coming in this new land.* And he had come to care for her as he knew he would. That was why he wanted her safely below. It was too dangerous for her and Thorliff to be in the thick-pressed crowd on deck.

Like a rock battered by the surging sea, he stood solid against the surging masses of humanity around him. Where was Carl? Tall as Roald was, he searched the crowds for his younger brother, wiped his nose again, and shook his head. Probably off swapping stories with the other group of Norwegians they'd met. Carl frittered too much time away on foolishness.

Roald had spent enough time dreaming at the rail. They would be disembarking soon, and there was much to do. He turned and left to search for his brother, for they should be gathering together their possessions. They could not afford to lose a single thing.

Ingeborg carefully made her way down the steep, narrow stairs and stopped to open the second door on the left. With the porthole closed against the sea spray, the room stank more than usual. Bare wooden bunks, stacked along the walls in tiers of three, were so shallow that a broad-shouldered man could barely roll over. People had to turn sideways to navigate between them. Quilt-tied bundles, wooden trunks, and satchels of black leather filled the empty spaces where many had lain in an agony of seasickness for much of the voyage. All the others who'd shared their cramped quarters had packed their belongings and were already up on deck.

All but Kaaren Bjorklund, wife of Roald's brother Carl. Beside her lay a mewling infant, born just four days ago and three weeks earlier than they'd expected. No one had thought the tiny babe would live this long. Suffering the pangs of labor for two days had drained what little stamina Kaaren had left after her voyage-long illness. It seemed the churning sea did not agree with Kaaren, for she'd been sick all the time since they'd left their beloved homes above the fjords of Norway.

Ingeborg knelt beside the hard bunk and stroked back the tendrils of sun gold hair framing her sister-in-law's wan face. "Soon, kjaere, my dear, we will be standing on the new land. Then you will feel better. Perhaps we can remain an extra day or so before we board the train, and then you can regain some of your strength. Good cow's milk will help you, I know."

"Ja, that is good," Kaaren agreed, her words faint in the cacophony of creaking hull and slamming waves. The swaddled infant in the crook of her arm stirred and whimpered. "She is hungry again. My milk is not enough for her." Despair colored her words the gray of the walls. "Ingeborg, promise me you'll care for her." Kaaren gripped her sister-in-law's hand.

"You will raise her yourself. You must not give up hope." Ingeborg gentled the tone of her voice. "Rest easy, Kaaren. Soon we'll be on land again."

"Thirsty. I'm so very thirsty."

Ingeborg pushed to her feet and sidestepped her way to the water bucket wedged in the corner. She dipped out a cupful and sidled back to the bunk.

"Here." Kneeling again, she gently raised the sick woman's head and held the cup for her to drink.

"Mange takk. You have been so good to me." A tear slipped from the edge of Kaaren's eye. "What would I do without you?"

Precious little, Ingeborg thought as she continued to murmur words of comfort. *These men of ours are so quick to beget children, but we are the ones who bear them and care for them and each other.* She thought again of the look of sorrow on Carl's handsome face when he was informed he had a daughter. Ingeborg shook her head. *And such a perfect baby she is. Men, how to ever understand them!*

"Mor." Small Thorliff tugged at her sleeve, his eyes huge in the dim light from the hanging lantern. "Can we go on deck now? I don't like it down here."

"Soon, den lille." She stood again and studied their pile of belongings. How would they ever be able to carry all their possessions off the ship when Carl would have to carry Kaaren? She was much too weak to walk and might not even be able to sit up once they reached the dock.

Worry lined Ingeborg's forehead and drove the dimple in her left cheek into hiding. Her mother would say to leave all her worries in God's hands. But lately, with the trip as hard as it had been, it seemed that God had hidden His face from them, much as He had from His people in the Old Testament. Had their leaving home and kindred to search for new farmland been against His will? While pondering the predicament, she tucked a stray strand of hair up into the thick, honey-hued braids that circled her head like a crown.

Ingeborg stood five feet seven inches tall, and her elbows bumped against the low ceiling beams as she repaired her hair. She clamped her full bottom lip between teeth that were even, but for the slight overlap of the left front, and tilted her head, the better to reach the strands trickling down her neck. Birdlike, she called it, but others had laughed and said the bird was certainly a swan. She adjusted her skirt, the waistband now loose. Like the others on board, she'd lost a fair amount of weight on the diet of thin soup and hard bread provided by the steamship company. But at least the seasickness hadn't laid her out as it had so many others. For that she was grateful.

Suddenly the door burst open, and Carl, slender of build but wiry and an inch shorter than his six-foot-two-inch older brother, rushed in. "We'll be docking by midafternoon. The shoreline stretches north and south as far as the eye can see. Soon we'll be entering the mouth of the Hudson River." He stammered over the English "Hudson River," always trying to improve his new language.

Ingeborg rose so he could take her place by the rough bed. Excitement seemed to bristle even from his black wool coat. He took his wife's thin hand in his and stroked her limp hair with the other. "Kaaren, you must fight to get well again. Now there'll be good food

and plenty of fresh air to get you back on your feet. And then we'll settle on our own land."

Kaaren smiled wistfully up at him and clutched her babe close to her side. "I will, I am." She reached up to stroke the golden strands of his full beard. "I'll be waiting right here when you're ready to go ashore."

"Take Thorliff with you, please," Ingeborg pleaded as Carl sidestepped his way to the low door.

"Come, boy." Carl stretched out his hand. "You should be on deck with the men on such an important day." The little boy's face shone with pride as he waved goodbye to his mother.

Ingeborg busied herself washing Kaaren's face and brushing and rebraiding her hair. She changed the baby and then helped Kaaren into her petticoats and thick woolen dress. By the time they were finished, the sick woman lay back, exhaustion graying her face. Ingeborg rubbed at a crick in her back from bending and lifting in the cramped quarters.

She stood in the wider central aisle and dug at the small of her back with both fists. *Oh for a whiff of the sea and a sight of the land.* Making her way to the open area of the cabin, she rubbed the glass of the porthole and pressed her nose against it to look out.

A gasp escaped before she could contain it. They were in the river, steaming parallel to the shoreline. Off toward the green coast, several ships tugged at their sea anchors. She bit her lip against the urge to dash up the companionway and over to the rail.

A glance at Kaaren showed both mother and child sleeping peacefully. Ingeborg quietly cracked open the cabin door and slipped out into the narrow passageway. She *had* to see the docking, she just *had* to. No other time in her life would there be this excitement. *Besides, I must save this story of our coming to the new world to tell my grandchildren,* she told herself. With that mission in mind, Ingeborg darted up the companionway and out onto the crowded deck.

The brisk wind tugged at her scarf and clawed at her hat with demanding fingers. She pressed a hand over the black felt hat pinned to her coronet of braids and clamped the veil between her teeth as she threaded her way toward the railing. No one paid any attention to her murmured "excuse me," as it meant nothing to many of those around her. She didn't understand their replies either.

The crowd fit together like bricks in a wall. Ignoring her mother's frequent admonition that a true woman of God was never rude, Ingeborg pushed and shoved her way through the human bricks to the railing and leaned out to see around others in front of her. There ahead lay New York City. The scene was breathtaking, more than she had imagined. Tall wooden buildings lined the long docks, crowded by ships berthed prow to stern.

The ship's horn bellowed above her. Ingeborg ignored all the ballyhoo around her, feasting her eyes on the bustling city ahead. Ferries, tugs towing barges, boats and ships of all sizes and kinds anchored, steamed, or sailed the harbor. Colorful flags snapping in the wind above the vessels proclaimed homelands from around the globe. The ship's bells clanged, and Ingeborg's ear, trained by her days at sea, heard the cutback of the engines. What glorious sights and sounds! She would never forget this day!

Knowing she needed to go below before Roald discovered her latest adventure, she stole one more long look at the city ahead, imprinting every detail in her memory. But when she turned, she bumped nose first into a familiar broad chest.

Roald steadied her with massive hands clenching her upper arms. "Leaning out like you did, you could have fallen overboard. I told you to stay below with your sister-in-law."

"Ja, that you did." Ingeborg stiffened her back and raised her squared chin to look into his stern face. "But ... but I had to see the city. Kaaren was sleeping, along with the babe, and ..." Why did just looking at his frown make her stutter and stammer like a schoolchild?

"And where is my son? I left him with you."

"Carl has him. Thorliff wanted to be on deck, and I was caring for ..."

"Far, Far!" A happy voice interrupted their discussion. Ingeborg looked up to see the subject of their debate waving from the shoulders of the young man striding toward them. The little boy's chubby hand was locked in the blond curls on his uncle's head. "Did you see?" Thorliff's entire body bounced in the thrill that wreathed his ruddy face with joy.

Ingeborg looked up to her husband's face in time to see the softening of the granite features that only occurred when Roald was with his son. It was as close as she'd seen to a smile. Would he share a smile with her when *their* son was born? She shifted her gaze back to the child at his giggled, "Mor, see me."

"Let off." Carl laughed upward as he removed the boy's arm from a hammerlock over his eyes. "One of us has to watch where I'm going, and it should be me. You want us both to end up in the water?"

Thirliff crowed and bounced again. Carl reached up with both hands and swung the boy to the deck. "Now, you go with your mor so you don't get trampled in the rush to get off the ship. Your far and I will come for you when it is our turn."

"But, I want to—" At a stern look from his father, Thorliff ducked his head and cut off the words. He reached for Ingeborg's hand and sniffed.

Ingeborg clasped the boy's cold hand, wishing like Thorliff that she could remain topside to watch all the hustle and bustle. Instead, she leaned down and asked, "Where are your mittens, den lille? Your hands are freezing." Thorliff held up his arms to show the mittens

dangling from their knitted yarn chain. Ingeborg shook her head as she held the mittens open for him to insert his hands. When both hands were snug again, she dropped a kiss on his nose. Hand in hand they followed behind Roald, who shouldered his way through the crowd to the companionway like a ship's prow cleaving the waves.

"Uff da," Ingeborg muttered after he ushered them into the cabin and closed the door. The urge to stamp her foot was quelled by the remembrance of the utter horror on her mother's face the last time she'd succumbed to that temptation. The thought made her laugh. Poor Mor.

"Ingeborg, is that you?" The weak cry from the figure in the bunk banished all thoughts of rebellion from Ingeborg's mind and replaced them with the nag of guilt. She really should have stayed with Kaaren. They were closer now than sisters after all they'd been through together.

"Ja, 'tis me. Can I bring you a drink or something?" she asked as she sidled down the aisle to the bunk. The thought of crabs scooting sideways in the fjords of home brought a merry smile to her face. Now, after all these days of traversing the narrow aisles, she certainly knew how they felt living a sideways life.

"Are we nearly there?" Kaaren raised her head, careful not to disturb the sleeping Gunhilde.

"Ja, the tugs are guiding the ship into its berth just like a mallard hen with her ducklings. Hear all the noise? The crowd on deck is waiting for sailors to lower the gangplanks. Roald and Carl will come for us as soon as the crush is over." Ingeborg perched one hip on the edge of the bunk. "Any minute now they'll throw out the hawsers and cut the engines. Then we will walk down the gangplanks with all the others on board and begin a new life in this new land." Ingeborg lost herself in the dream. Soon, after a long train ride and a journey by horse and wagon, they'd find land to homestead, rich flat land in the Red River Valley of the North. That's what the article, folded up and saved so carefully in her reticule, promised.

"If I don't ... if I ..."

"You *will* go with us. You mustn't even think of anything else. Just like we planned all those evenings around our kitchen table, this year we will build a sod house for us to live together in for the winter, and next year we will build another. Our children will grow up on farmsteads side by side, and one day we will send money for more of our brothers and sisters to come and join us. We will build a town for all the Bjorklunds with a church and a schoolhouse. You will see it, Kaaren, kjaere, you will." Ingeborg clasped the thin cold hand of her sister-in-law. "You will."

"Me, too." Thorliff leaned against her knee, his head resting against her arm. "Far said a big farm, bigger than all in Norway. Bestefar, grandfather, will come to see me."

"Yes, you too." Ingeborg circled him with her arm and patted his cheek, holding him for a moment against her. "Please, dear God, let it be so." Her whisper held a note of desperation that told of uncounted repetitions. Had she pestered God too much? Would He be like the judge in the Gospel that gave in because the woman persisted? Ingeborg had been accused of pestering before. When was too much? Or not enough? But, she knew that for all the needs of those she loved dearly, there could never be too much prayer. *And, God, please give this sister-in-law of mine strength again. Bring the roses back to her cheeks and the laughter to her lips, so she can raise this beautiful child you have blessed her with.* She dipped her head. *Amen.*

The baby whimpered and stretched; her mouth opened and closed with tiny lips circling a pink tongue. She turned her face toward her mother's chest, already nuzzling and seeking the breast that nourished her.

Kaaren undid her dress with shaking fingers and turned so her daughter could nurse more easily. As soon as the little one was sucking contentedly, her mor readjusted the quilt in gentle modesty.

"She is so perfect." Ingeborg watched the age-old process with delight. In seven months or so, she looked forward to doing the same. Fall would bring the arrival of her son. So certain was she, she'd already chosen a name—Carl Andrew. Since Thorliff was named after Roald's uncle, they could choose what they liked. Couldn't they? Couldn't she?

Thirliff stuck his first finger in his mouth, his eyes drooping in weariness. The sucking of the nursing infant sounded peaceful in the gloom.

"Listen." Ingeborg sat ramrod straight.

"What?"

"The quiet. The engines are still." She leaped to her feet, grabbing Thorliff up in her arms, and sidestepped her way to the porthole. "Look, Thorly, the wharf. We are docked." She spun him around in the small open space. "We're here. We're finally here."

"In 'merika. In 'merika. Me see." She lifted him to the tiny window, where he banged his hands against the wall as he peered out. "People, lots of people." He wriggled in her arms to be let down and ran to the door. "Far come now."

Ingeborg snatched his hand away from the handle. "Soon, den lille, soon."

The minutes stopped, dragged, and stopped again. In what seemed like forever, Ingeborg retied the quilts for the third time and rechecked under every bunk in case they had left something precious.

Finally she heard Carl's voice and the low rumble of Roald's answer. The door flew open, banging against the wall as the men strode through.

"Our first stop will be Castle Garden, where we must go through immigration. Ingeborg, I'll take you and Thorliff first, along with as much baggage as we can carry. Then I'll return to help Carl with the rest. An official from the dock warned us not to leave anything unattended. There are thieves who prey on new immigrants." Roald handed one satchel to his wife and loaded himself with others as he spoke. "Now, Thorliff, you hang on to your mother's hand and don't let go, you hear?"

"Ja, Far, I'll be good." The little boy danced in place, already leaning against the restriction.

When they cleared the companionway to the deck, Ingeborg stopped still. "Oh, hutte meg tu!" The words were whispered in awe. Buildings rose so high they blocked out the westering sun and numbered beyond her time and ability to count them all.

"Come, come." Roald turned around and frowned at her when he realized she wasn't right beside him. Ingeborg put her feet in motion, though her mind remained suspended in disbelief. Could men really build anything so tall? Or was New York like the Tower of Babel, and God just hadn't gotten around to crushing them down yet?

Roald grunted under the weight of the load he carried. Not bothering to excuse himself, he pushed and shoved through clusters of jabbering immigrants who swarmed the docks like flies. The sight of huge black men, naked to the waist, lugging crates and barrels up a plank to a neighboring ship gave him pause. "Uff da," he muttered, shaking his head. But it didn't slow his pace.

He stepped out of the way of a horse-pulled cart when the driver yelled at him. The tone and sneer of the man told him the words were lacking in hospitality.

"If you'd speak Norwegian like any decent man, I'd have moved sooner," Roald responded, returning glare for glare until man and beast passed by.

So much for a warm welcome to his new land. He clapped his mind shut against the thought that the newspaper articles had been less than honest about Amerika welcoming all newcomers with open arms and free land.

After three long years of planning and saving, he was finally here. That was enough. And his family was safe. He flinched again at the memory of Ingeborg leaning so far over the rail. One accidental shove and she'd have flown overboard. Uff da. Yet the merry smile that crinkled around her gray eyes made his mouth twitch in response. *Ingeborg, Ingeborg. What am I to do with you?*

He stopped when he reached the head of the pier. Now he stood on solid land. *His* new land. His dream had come true! He set the bundles down and rubbed the shoulder where the box had dug a furrow into a muscle. "Ingeborg, just a ..." But when he turned, she wasn't there.

Ingeborg followed the laden Roald down the ramp and up the cobblestone pier. Teems of immigrants from other ships and stevedores surged around her, carrying them along like twigs on a stream newly released from the bondage of winter. She hurried to keep Roald in sight. God help them if they got separated now.

Strange languages flowed around her, people shouted above the noise of the crowd, and ships' whistles bellowed out their calls—all blending into a mishmash of sounds that crashed against her eardrums. And she'd thought the ship's engines loud! She wrinkled her nose and tried to breathe in small sniffs at a time. Rotting vegetables, horse droppings, smoke, unwashed bodies—the pungent smells assaulted her nostrils as intensely as the sounds did her ears.

Roald strode on ahead of her.

"Come, Thorliff, we must hurry." She pulled him closer to her side and tried to move faster, but the carpetbag on her other arm weighted her down. A brisk wind snatched at the veil of her hat, threatening to carry it over the edge and into the oily water below.

Roald disappeared in the surging mass ahead of her. She could no longer see his tall hat above the others.

Fear clutched at her chest, driving the air out and cramping her belly. "Hang on to my skirt," she commanded Thorliff, her voice breathless. She set the carpetbag down with a thump, reached up with both arms, and unpinned her precious hat, stuffing it in the bag at her feet. At least she wouldn't lose that. She hefted the bag again, grasped Thorliff's hand, and determinedly set forth. Roald would be waiting up ahead.

When they reached the juncture of wharf and pier, Roald stood amid their pile of belongings, his arms crossed. His eyebrows formed a straight line, and his scowl cut deep slashes from nose to chin.

"I thought you were right behind me. What if I lost you?"

Ingeborg bit back a reply. She knew that Roald's concern always came out gruff. "Ja, I know. But we're here now, and we're safe." Her hand twitched with wanting to smooth away the worry lines on his face. But one did not do such a thing in public. And with Roald, one didn't do it at all.

Roald hoisted his load again and strode past the wide doorway of a warehouse. "Castle Garden is ahead of us. We'll go through the immigration process there. They say there are doctors too, so there will be help for Kaaren."

Ingeborg saved all her breath to keep up with his long strides. And poor Thorliff practically had to run as he held on to his mother. Besides, the fear that Kaaren would be considered too ill to enter the country left Ingeborg with no spit to swallow, let alone breath to respond.

Roald nearly disappeared again in the crush of immigrants when he set his bundles down in a square open area. On the land side of the point, a wooden fence with tall vertical posts protected a circular building. "That's Castle Garden. There is help for us there," he said as he finished mounding their belongings. He pointed to a wooden box. "You sit there and wait for us. I'll return as soon as I can. Once we have a bed for Kaaren, we'll get our trunks out of the hold."

Ingeborg nodded as she gathered her dirty skirts about her and sank down on the box. Thorliff stared wide-eyed at the commotion around them. Two boys, whose pants were held up with twine, chased each other around the flag pole. Young, old, and all ages in between—the lines of immigrants stretched four abreast out of the gate and curved around the courtyard. If only she could take a place in line, but then who would guard their belongings?

Shortly after Roald disappeared back into the throng of disembarking passengers, a broad-shouldered man in a dark blue wool uniform stopped in front of her. Ingeborg shook her head when he spoke to her, then shrugged. She had no idea what he'd said. He leaned closer and raised his voice. At her shrug, he pointed at the gate. "Norwegian?" The one familiar word brought a smile to her face that lit up the dimming square.

She nodded. "Ja, Norwegian," and continued in a stream of her own language.

He shook his head, disgust visible on his square-jawed face.

Fear clawed again at her throat when he picked up the roll of quilts and a box. "Nei, nei!" Ingeborg leaped to her feet and grabbed for his sleeve. He shook her off and nodded to the fence with his chin. When he reached the wooden pillars, he dropped her box and returned for more.

Ingeborg breathed a sigh of relief. He was not a thief waiting to run off with her things. He was merely helping to move them out of the way. She carried the carpetbag over and smiled her thanks. "Mange takk." But her gratitude only bounced off his disappearing back. With a sigh, she sat back down on the box. "Thirliff?" The second call rose to a near scream. "Thirliff!" She searched behind the stack and all around her. Roald's son was nowhere in sight.