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**ATHENA'S
FORUM**

A Historical Novel

PHIL TICHENOR

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DEDICATION

Athena's Forum is dedicated, first, to the memory of Eileen Tichenor, my spouse of 47 years until her death in 2003 after a prolonged struggle with Parkinson's Disease and Chronic Leukemia.

She read, with enthusiasm, the first draft of the work and encouraged its development throughout the period when she was being overtaken by the ravages of her multiple ailments. She was a supportive partner in this project, just as she was a caring and dedicated wife, mother and grandmother, and volunteer mitten maker for hundreds of immigrant children in the St. Paul school district, many with backgrounds not dissimilar to that of the poverty-stricken children in the novel.

This book is dedicated, secondly, to the numerous graduate students in mass communication and rural sociology at the University of Minnesota, who were—and in many cases still are—immersed in the study of the performance and history of the community press in America.

Phil Tichenor
Winter 2006

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The main characters of this novel, including all in the Lindfors' lineage, are fictitious. There are no such places as Graskoping, Sweden, or Belleville and Athena County, Minnesota. Certain events and political figures of the times are portrayed in varying detail.

The warship *Vasa* did in fact sink in Stockholm harbor in 1628 and King Gustavus Adolphus was indeed a military genius of the Thirty Years' War. There was a Minnesota Commission of Public Safety during World War I and Judge John McGee was a prominent member of that body. A. C. Townley and Senator Robert M. LaFollette are described according to the record, with two exceptions. Townley's speech at the Athena County picnic is wholly an invention, although it is crafted to reflect his persona and oratorical style. Judge McGee did not write a letter to the Athena County farmers refusing to debate Senator LaFollette. McGee did, however, express, to a U.S. Senate committee in Washington, D.C., various views contained in that fictitious letter.

Given the scope of the novel, the circumstances in Sweden at the turn of the century, and a time of near-upheaval in the rural Midwest during World War I, a rather vast literature was consulted and the help of several individuals must be acknowledged.

The first acknowledgment is to Hazel Dicken-Garcia, a colleague who read and thoroughly critiqued the first draft. Also reading and offering important suggestions were LeAnn Tichenor, Trish Marx, David Chidester and Paul Lindholdt,

an English professor at Eastern Washington University. Pat Berg provided translations of technical materials on Swedish printing.

In Sweden, Karl-Erik Rosengren and Charlotte Bengtsson at the department of Media and Communication Studies at Lund University located critical but not-easily-found materials on the Swedish press, the Baltic coast of Sweden and printing history there. The House of Emigrants at Vaxjoe, Sweden, was a vital source of information on the massive immigrations of the time period. The Vasa Museum in Stockholm contains the actual—and restored—remains of the famous ship that sank at the start of its maiden voyage in 1628.

In Minnesota, the vast collections of the University of Minnesota Wilson library and its Rare Books collection were invaluable, as was the UM's Diehl Hall medical library. A number of critical materials were found through the help of numerous individuals at the Minnesota History Center.

Among the various bibliographic materials consulted, certain ones stand out as rich and readable references for those who might wish to delve into certain periods or themes of the novel. They include:

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I. CONVICTION AND SHAME

Ivar Lindfors gazed wistfully across Stockholm Harbor that autumn day in 1908, wondering how he would fare in America as a would-be crusading editor in disgrace. Dare he hope that his shame in Sweden would be unknown in Minnesota, except by one of the two immediate victims of his folly?

These two victims were beside him, along the gunwales of this rusty and aging steamship. His wife, Inez, cradled his infant daughter, Charlotte, in her arms and slowly rocked her—the infant cooing to her more as a nanny than as a mother, which Inez was not. Together, the threesome would ride this rude vessel around Sweden's southern tip and up to Gothenburg, where they would board a large passenger ship for the Western Hemisphere. They would leave their troubled past behind them and hope that Ivar could finally realize his unfulfilled crusading dreams.

Ivar's mind roiled with the ironies of the fix he was in. He believed with indignant, self-righteous conviction that he had devoted the best of his 28 years to the most noble of causes, becoming a journalistic champion of the poverty-stricken masses, especially the multitudes of woebegone children sired by men who disappeared or simply avoided acting as fathers. Yet, here he was, kicked out of his family business and ancestral land, accused of being one of those same wayward, errant men.

Nothing short of such humiliation would have torn him away from the secure and promising career he anticipated a short few months earlier. He had fully expected to extend an

illustrious Lindfors family tradition in Swedish publishing, and thereby contribute mightily to the churning but progressive changes that would lift downtrodden Swedes out of abject poverty and elevate them to more comfortable, satisfying, and noble livelihoods.

He marveled at his one consolation: Innocent as Inez was, she had chosen to stand by him even though this meant sharing his disgrace. For such a blessing, one could hardly be thankful enough.

* * *

Stockholm harbor was where Ivar's great family publishing tradition had begun nearly three centuries earlier. It was a legend that Ivar knew by heart. On an August day in 1628, a very famous progenitor, Anders Lindfors, apprentice printer-turned-seaman, perched high on the masts of the splendid new Vasa, a warship about to be launched on its maiden voyage with the triumphant fleet of a brilliant young King Gustavus Adolphus.

That proud new ship, garishly resplendent in her plump hull of green, blue, gold, and red, slipped away from the wharf before a multitude of cheering Swedish patriots, noble and common, on its way to take command of the Baltic Sea. But in one of those monumental blunders of maritime history, the Vasa was so badly designed that it capsized when the first winds caught its sails, only a few meters from the dock.

This much was well known Swedish history. Less known to the nation, but dear to the Lindfors family, was the legend of Ivar's revered ancestor Anders Lindfors, who was a seaman on the Vasa that fateful day. Ivar knew the tale by heart, and looking out over the harbor he could hear it being told by old-time family members:

Yes, Anders Lindfors was clever enough to not drown, as did most of the 150 crewmen. How did he do it? He caught a broken boom and floated to shore. Did he help save others? It

was too late. He was so angry at the stupid people who had caused this that he went to the print shop where he worked before joining the navy.

Why did he do that? Because he wanted everyone to know who was at fault. He picked through his clutter of wood and metal type and put together a pamphlet and printed a hundred numbers. Did he make a woodcut? No, he didn't have time. He did it fast, just with words. He then dropped it around town.

Do we still have that pamphlet? One copy, in the museum. It said the ship was badly designed and the officers had heads like oxen. They couldn't keep the world's best warship afloat for 10 minutes. Those criminals should pay for their misdeeds.

What did the Navy people say when they saw the pamphlet?

Well, as you would expect—they were angry and defensive.

They said the ship was designed by King Gustavus Adolphus himself, and who was this common sailor—this Anders Lindfors—to say these treasonous things? He is the one who should be brought to trial. Where is he now? He must be arrested. That's what the Navy people said.

Anders saved his neck by escaping Stockholm as a stowaway on a fishing trawler, landing on the Pomeranian coast. He hired out to a Stettin printer, publishing pamphlets and broadsheets.

Yes, in Pomerania, Anders Lindfors was Martin Luther's best printer. His pamphlets told how Roman Catholic priests have no better connection to God than a man laying bricks. And when our great King Gustavus Adolphus brought his army to Pomerania, Anders printed things that aided the holy war against the Catholic armies. Go to the museum and see his first broadsheet. There is the King, astride his magnificent horse, leading the cavalry charge against the Army of the Holy Roman Empire. Lion of the North, that's what the broadsheet called our famous king.

In their fascination with family lore, Ivar's aging relatives even seemed to know—or insist they knew—what people said 280 years earlier on the streets and in the inns of Stockholm, when this broadsheet arrived.

Yes, everybody said, see how our King is winning great and glorious victories. Sweden is the greatest power in Europe. The Papacy is doomed, for sure. How wonderful it is to see a picture of how our Swedish soldiers deal with those Imperial soldiers of the Pope. Oh, yes, they are great pikemen. See how they shove their long lances through those barbarian Catholics.

As the story continued, however, it seemed to Ivar that Anders Lindfors must have seen the aftermath of the carnage and oppression of war. Anders had left a letter about his personal life that was long lost, but the Lindfors family oral tradition kept it alive.

Anders caught a German peasant stealing potatoes from an Army food wagon. When he yanked the potatoes away from her, she told him how Imperial soldiers had run a sword through her husband and children and spilled their guts over the floor of the family hut. Soldiers took her cows, killed and ate her pigs, and burned the buildings. She thought soldiers were all brutes.

The rest of the Anders Lindfors story was less clear and certain, and Ivar remembered how the family discussions often became contentious.

Well, we all know that the Imperial Army was full of brutes. Well, maybe some of the Protestant soldiers were brutish, but not the Swedes. Our King wouldn't have allowed that. Oh, are you sure of that? Weren't there atrocities on both sides? And what happened after our King was killed at Lutsen? Didn't Swedish soldiers run in disarray from the field of battle? Well, they lost some battles, but Sweden still kept Pomerania—don't forget that.

Everyone agreed that Anders Lindfors and his German wife left Germany shortly after the King's death and returned to the town of Graskoping on Sweden's Baltic coast,

where they established the Lindfors Publishing Company.

Then they worked out this Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. That was the end of the gruesome Thirty Years' War. To show what a great day that was, Anders did another broadsheet. This one showed the human tragedy of war. The title was "The Great War in Germany gave tragic witness to man's inhumanity to man."

Ivar knew this 260-year-old woodcut well. It was now stored in Ivar's meager collection of publishing materials, in a trunk below deck that would accompany him to America.

In the coarse but solid lines and bold Gothic letters that Anders had cut into the wood printing block, the broadsheet portrayed soldiers running lances through a peasant man and woman, while four small children nearby covered their eyes in horror and an older one sought to flee another soldier wielding a cavalier's sword.

This 17th century broadsheet touched a raw nerve in the Lindfors family, and Ivar remembered well the disputes about its meaning.

We all know it shows Saxony soldiers killing Protestant civilians. Oh, do we? How is that clear? The soldiers didn't have uniforms, so they looked the same on both sides. Ah, but this was in northern Germany, where we know the peasants hated the Pope. Oh, maybe so, but that doesn't guarantee that our soldiers were nice and gentle people, does it? Well, what do you expect soldiers to be?

In any case, the "Man's Inhumanity to Man" broadsheet from 17th century Sweden had ensured the lasting, if somewhat dubious, fame of its creator. There was one other copy of the broadsheet in existence, displayed in the same museum, along with a citation that bestowed on Anders Lindfors the status of mythic hero.

It was a family treasure, revered by nearly every person named Lindfors—with one exception. The one skeptic was Klas Lindfors—Ivar's tall, austere father.

* * *

Brooding on ship deck, Ivar remembered when, as a much younger man, he had stood one day in the typesetting room, at the ancestral family printing business in Graskoping. He was gazing at and enthralled by that famous “inhumanity” broadsheet that he had pulled one more time from a flat storage drawer. Klas Lindfors, known to his family as “Papa,” appeared behind him, bemused if not mildly annoyed at his son’s fascination with this old family artifact.

“Yes, Anders was a great Swedish patriot, in our family tradition,” Klas said, putting his preferred definition on the aging, musty print.

Patriotism was not exactly what Ivar was thinking. He rubbed some ink off his scruffy leather printer’s apron, searching for a way of telling his father what he thought.

“It seems to me, Papa, he was telling about all the killing.”

“My son, war IS about killing. That broadsheet shows how the inhuman Catholic armies put helpless Protestants to the sword. What else did you think the broadsheet meant?”

Ivar was too troubled to respond. He had told a history teacher at his Gymnasium School about the broadsheet, and that teacher said the Thirty Years War was the worst catastrophe in all of Europe’s history. This teacher had added some dark details about Swedish soldiers slaughtering civilians not only in Germany but earlier in Poland.

“I thought,” Ivar said, haltingly to his stern, heavily breathing father, “that printed things like broadsheets and newspapers should help end wars.”

Klas thundered: “Newspapers tell about wars, why enemies are cruel, and help their nations be victorious. Newspapers must be patriotic, for their nations and their cities.”

Ivar wanted desperately to be a good printer, publisher, and newspaper writer. He expected to take over the family business, since his older brother Sten left several years earlier to go into the shipbuilding business in Stockholm. Yet

Ivar wasn't seeing things the same way as his formidable—and financially quite successful—father and veteran publisher.

“The big daily papers are telling about the problems of our poor people, the starvation, the diseases. Shouldn't we do more of that?” Ivar almost choked on the word “more,” since the Lindfors newspaper had so far done no reporting of that kind at all.

Klas Lindfors was blunt. “Those newspapers in Stockholm spill too much ink on what is wrong in Sweden. They want us to weep and fuss and spend our public money on the poor people. That is not for us. Moreover, you waste too much time on this.

“Put that old, crumbling, broadsheet away. And let us get back to finishing the pamphlets the shipping company needs. That is what makes us profitable.”

With that, Ivar's irritated father turned and stomped from the room.

Ivar felt frustrated and unsettled. He knew that while the winds of reform were blowing strongly in Sweden, the family business that he would one day inherit was deliberately lagging behind. At least, it would so as long as the company was owned, managed and controlled by his stubborn, archaic, and domineering father. And while he knew his father wouldn't live forever, he also knew the prominent men in Graskoping—a regional town of modest size—shared Klas Lindfors' views of what a newspaper should be.

But now, in 1908, even more annoying to Ivar were the circumstances of the disgrace that had forced him to emigrate.

* * *

Ivar had been a rather odd child who never got into much trouble. He was tall and lanky, yet soft-muscled and sometimes called a weakling. Even during his later years in

Gymnasium, he had preferred the duties of a printer's devil to the rough and tumble of soccer, rugby, skiing and sailing that so captivated his elder brother Sten. He was a good enough student to avoid severe reprimands from teachers. He befriended less fortunate youths, so his sensitive side was well known if not always appreciated.

A troubling yet salutary experience in his early youth was the gain and loss of a companion—the audacious, belligerent and bellicose Olof Moller. Olof never knew his father; he was known as a bastard child.

Olof and Ivar would walk and talk, run along the moat edges at the old castle, play board games, and spend hours ruminating on the world as they saw it. They were an odd but complementary pair. Where Ivar was physically weak, Olof was strong. Where Olof was aggressive but socially awkward around adults, Ivar was on the shy side, but courteous and correct. Where Olof was trouble-prone, Ivar was restrained enough to keep both of them out of serious difficulty. Ivar would talk about his interests in music and the printing trade, while Olof would boast about his exploits on the game field. Ivar would marvel at famous paintings of tall-masted sailing ships, and Olof would wax ecstatic over prize-fighting. Neither of these youngsters had the knack for striking up conversations with girls, although the bluff Olof was a bit more successful this way, especially among those from the poor streets.

Olof wore ragged clothes and he smelled bad. Once when Ivar took him into the Lindfors kitchen for sweetbreads, Ivar's mother Ulrina asked Olof if he would like a bath, an offer that absolutely terrified the otherwise pugnacious lad. He ran from the house and never went near the Lindfors place again—a fact that brought no protests from Ivar's family.

A short time later Olof said that his mother was acting queerly. "Stares out the window, for hours. Never hears anything I say. Forgets mealtime. Starts sobbing for no reason and weeps and cries all afternoon." Olof's father was

no help. He was a ne'er-do-well who was often caught stealing food and liquor, spent time in jail and met an early death in a brawl on a seaside wharf at Kalmar.

The distraught woman was committed to a mental institution, and a social service agency sent Olof to an orphanage at Stockholm. He and Ivar exchanged a few brief notes by post, and after a time Olof failed to answer Ivar's letters.

* * *

With his best friend gone, an adolescent Ivar became absorbed in his family's printing business. He learned to set type, clean the cases, ink the galleys, run proofs and spot typographical errors as quickly as the seasoned proofreaders. He had the smell of printer's ink up his nose early, some said.

In the year 1900, Klas Lindfors decided to send Ivar to the University in Lund—a picturesque town on the southwestern coast. Ivar did reasonably well as a serious, chaste student during his first two years. His contacts with female students—who were few in number—were limited.

As his third year began, he hankered for something more than English language study, physics, mathematics, and classics.

He had attended some student Social Democrat meetings on the cobblestone streets in Lund's central square. Speakers railed about poverty, underpaid workers, and social misery. All these things interested Ivar, yet he didn't find the meetings fully satisfying. The arm and fist-waving speakers told of needs for new laws to aid poor people, but somehow they never seemed to really touch the problems of people like his young, one-time friend Olof.

Ivar's philosophy finally came together when he registered in 1903 for the Social Philosophy lectures of Professor Elverna Eklinden. She was well-known among the young reformers, he learned, and he was the first in her lecture hall when the term began.

So fixated was he on the upcoming lecture that he barely

noticed the husky, raw-featured young woman who eased into the chair beside him. “I am Birgitta Gejvall,” she announced. “I know Professor Eklinden well. She is unlike the men who teach here. You will learn from her much of what is wrong with our country.”

Now Ivar was truly excited. This brash young woman—not gorgeous but full of vitality—had sought him out. He had seen her at some of the political meetings, but they had not actually met.

His reserved nature left him searching for a response to this vivacious student. He was saved when Professor Eklinden walked into the room and began a discourse that reached into Ivar’s mind in a way no teacher before had succeeded. Her soft but deeply vibrant voice resonated as a poignant peasant ballad over the lecture hall. Deceptively so, since her spoken truths materialized not from rote memorization, but from deep conviction and shrewd calculation forced upon her evidence and her rapt listeners. She neither thundered nor gestured nor manipulated her vocal cadence to take the measure of flagging attentiveness. Her mildly cleft chin jutting just slightly forward, she spoke directly and with an intelligent warmth that seemed so common and natural.

She began by weaving social philosophy into the fabric of Scandinavian history. She explained how an old warrior culture could adopt Lutheranism and accept a remarkable theological doctrine called predestination, taken from the thoughts of Protestant reformer John Calvin.

“Everyone,” she said, pausing to let the idea sink in, “was predestined, but without knowing for what. If you were predestined, would you go to heaven or to purgatory? All one knew in seventeenth century Sweden was that those to be saved showed outer grace. The problem was that having grace was not guaranteed, and you could do nothing to change it. Imagine what these beliefs did for the Swedish view of life and the world.”

Ivar was astounded. A Swedish teacher talking this

way? Ivar could only imagine how his father would react to such heresy.

It wasn't the formidable woman Professor alone who was arousing Ivar. He sensed the responsiveness of the emotionally and intellectually charged Birgitta sitting next to him in this musty old lecture room, her breathing changing almost in rhythm with the tempo of the engaging lecture.

"You see," continued the Professor in her soft and mellow, yet overpowering voice, swaying easily from side to side to accentuate her words, "you're in quite a mess if you never know whether you are saved or damned. It gets even worse when you realize that if you worry about it, you may just prove that you really don't have grace. It might be said," she smiled, now with her hands on her ample hips, "that the stone faced stoicism of the Swedish man covers up his confusion about whether he's headed for heaven or hell."

My stoic father confused about his salvation? Ivar was astonished that such might be possible.

At this point, a mischievous Birgitta shoved Ivar a note asking if he was a stone-faced stoic. Now shocked—and yet tantalized—by such brash behavior, Ivar turned to find her looking straight ahead, stone-faced herself as if nothing had happened. Never had Ivar encountered such impishness among students. The few female students in Swedish universities were usually models of decorum, never speaking in class and deferring to the males. Reform of all kinds was alive in Sweden, but he hadn't seen young women act this way before.

When the Professor softly concluded the lecture, she left Ivar exactly where she intended: hungry for more and eager to delve in. Later that day, on an impulse, he found Professor Eklinden's office in a remote and dark hallway, and knocked on the door. The rich voice of this full-bodied woman quickly and warmly invited him in.

Ivar entered, snapping to attention in almost a military way, quite out of place given her easy, open manner and the

very unmilitary surroundings in her cluttered and musty office. Among the piles of ragged edged books, papers, scattered pencils and dip pens sat this amiable woman with the cleft but rounded chin. Her modest woolen garments, including a heavy dark sweater, in color and tone seemed a natural extension of her simple wooden desk with the chipped corners.

Her soft gaze overwhelmed her unexpected visitor in a way that was both scholarly and, oddly, motherly—although not in the manner of his own mother Ulrina.

“I am Ivar Lindfors,” he said. “I am in your lecture.”

“Yes,” she replied. “I remember you. I hope you can tolerate all of my bunkum. But tell me, what interests you about social philosophy?”

Again, Ivar was nonplussed. She could refer to her profound lectures as “bunkum?”

He had hoped to impress her with his zest for improving the human condition through creation of uplifting words. In his romantic fantasy, he was atop the mainmast of a gallant ship of human progress, spreading words to the winds, to shower out upon a receptive multitude, there to take root and blossom into an energized curiosity that would cry out for still more words to be scattered again.

Yet, with all his excitement about words, Ivar struggled for any to say, and his life-long reticence took over. Her self-effacing modesty would make his thoughts—as they rested in his mind—seem pompous, if not ridiculous. He bowed his head and blushed.

Could he tell this tall, amiable woman scholar about his father Klas? How the man was a strict and haughty publisher of the middle aristocracy who actually disdained reformist newspapers? Should he let her in on his embarrassment and disgust with the mediocre Klas newspaper, the *Veckoblad*? How cheap it looked in comparison with the proud and imposing *Dagens Nyheter* and *Aftonbladet* from Stockholm. Should he look into the Professor’s eyes and tell her how proud he was of ancestor

Anders Lindfors—a patriot and publishing wizard who knew also how to turn a profit?

“I want to write about people, for newspapers.”

She nodded.

“What kinds of things? About what kinds of people?”

Could he now pour out his concern about his coarse and smelly friend Olof, and people like him? The poor kids on back streets of Graskoping who talked openly and brazenly about drunken and missing fathers and frantic mothers who died from overwork in their thirties? And sisters hardly past puberty who found themselves pregnant, sometimes by brothers, fathers, and uncles?

No, he couldn’t put these things in words to this kindly but overpowering teacher.

“There are too many poor people in Sweden,” was all he could say.

Professor Eklinden nodded again, never shifting her mild yet penetrating and unblinking gaze from this agitated young man.

“Yes, that is so true. And you wish to be a journalist who helps make these things right?”

A relieved Ivar shook his head rapidly in agreement.

“That is a good wish. I hope you find the lectures helpful. Meanwhile, you might like to read this.”

She handed him a worn magazine, with the name *McClure’s* across the front. “It is American. One of the writers is a woman named Ida Tarbell. You read English well? Fine. She has written many times about a big oil company and how it has failed to do the good for common people that one might expect.

“I heard this writer speak at a university in Paris, where she studied and worked many years ago. She is one of the world’s best journalists. See how she writes.”

Ivar took the magazine, thanked the Professor, and left.

In the hallway, he found Birgitta waiting. For him? His pulse quickened.

“Were you surprised I saw how ‘stoic’ you are?” Birgitta

asked. “And that it all comes from this ridiculous belief about predestination?”

Ivar grinned, happy to have this uninvited friendship and common interest. He was pleased that Birgitta said “stoic” when she could have said “shy.” Searching for something to say, he fell back on the recent lecture about predestination.

“I’m not sure about this,” he offered. “I thought Christians believed, as my family does, that whether you go to Heaven or Hell depends on how good a person you were.”

“You’ve never heard someone call a child a damned brat?” Birgitta responded. “Damned from their first moment on earth? Did it ever occur to you that people act badly because they think they are already damned and just give up?”

No, he hadn’t thought about it that way but wondered whether that was part of Olof’s problem.

Birgitta changed the subject. “I’ve seen you at the meeting of the student Social Democrats. We meet again Thursday evening. Will you come along?”

He certainly couldn’t refuse. They met on the outer fringes of the gathering in a dingy meeting room just off the cobble-stoned town square.

The meeting fulfilled two purposes. It meant more time with this intriguing, if combative, Birgitta. At the same time, the raucous speeches and heated exchanges seemed like a laboratory for the inspired lectures by their mutually esteemed Professor Eklinden.

Ivar found Birgitta even more infused than he with political passions—suffrage, alleviation of poverty, and orphaned children. Besides, being around her and among the reformers loosened Ivar’s tongue, much the way aquavit did for his uncles and older cousins. So, after the session, he and Birgitta chattered incessantly, arms waving, as they skipped past the medieval-era buildings of the Lund campus. They paused in full debate on the spiral stairway of the musty old King’s House tower—first Birgitta above and Ivar below,

then with positions reversed. They continued this animated exchange through the shadow of the ancient Domkyrkan, a cathedral rarely used any more for Christian worship.

“I like these talks,” he told Birgitta. She looked at him askance, eyes turned more toward him than her head.

“They have possibilities,” she said.

Was this suspicion, honesty, or flirtation? Ivar hoped for the latter.

They met again at the next lecture, when Professor Eklinden talked about the “social contract” idea of such writers as the Frenchman Jean Jacques Rousseau. This impressed Ivar. The idea of a striking a deal—a social contract—between governors and those who are governed appealed to him, as it had to millions before.

The Professor folded the thoughts of various Swedish philosophers and Rousseau into that of the American Thomas Jefferson.

“If the social contract fails, or the governing group is oppressive and does not respect it, the people have the right and the obligation to change it—by force, if necessary. That was, essentially, what the American Revolution was all about.

“This notion that the contract can be changed was, of course, anathema to the religious order, the monarchy and most western philosophers for millennia. At the same time, it stimulated the minds of revolutionists in both France and America.”

To Ivar’s delight, Professor Eklinden next turned to newspapers. She noted Jefferson’s statement that newspapers are essential to democratic government. “What was impressive about Jefferson is that given a choice, he would prefer newspapers without government to the reverse condition.”

Was she responding to my brief conversation with her? Or was it simply part of her lecture plan?

Either way, Ivar thought, these are fine words. *Why can’t we think that way in the Klas business, in Graskoping?*

He stopped at the Professor's office again, and her intellectual warmth once more overtook him. This time, she handed him a copy of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, written in 1838.

"Read especially the chapters on newspapers and how they advanced American life," she said. "Tocqueville wrote that in a democracy, people get control over their lives and government only if they stick together. The glue is the newspapers that report what the associations do and think."

The glue of society! What a great way to think of newspapers.

Ivar wished that Anders Lindfors had expressed the richness of his "inhumanity" broadsheet in a book, because he was certain his legendary ancestor would have anticipated Tocqueville.

Professor Eklinden, who was aware of the Ivar-Birgitta friendship, added, "You two might do a joint study project on a better life for the masses, especially through aiding the poor, the feeble-minded, unwed mothers, and bastard children. It comes down to rules set and enforced by men. This is not dogma. What we have is a logical outcome of everything that went before."

Ivar later told Birgitta about Tocqueville and the American writers he had learned about from the Professor. Birgitta wasn't as impressed as he expected.

"Elverna told me about all those writings last term," she said. "Why don't you just read Charles Dickens. His novels swarm with children who came into the world without their asking. They were born to unmarried and destitute women or to couples too poor to feed them or school them."

Ivar was stunned. She had called the Professor by her first name. Were they personal friends?

"My family always taught me that causing childbirth outside of marriage is the most unpardonable of sins." He told Birgitta about Olof, his hapless, but bastard, friend from younger days.

"This poor fellow was born because his mother, a

seamstress, had slept with many men. He had no father, so he used his mother's surname. She was so poor she even resorted to prostitution. She and Olof were scorned by polite company. On the street, people would say 'how's the little bastard,' and then spit in his mother's face. Finally, she went mad and they put her into an asylum."

Birgitta shrugged.

"So you are saying that Olof's mother committed the most unpardonable sin?"

Ivar hadn't thought out that part of it.

"Well, not what a proper woman would—"

She leaned forward, roughing his shoulder with her strong hand. "Ivar, Olof's mother was the victim of men who were all sex and no responsibility. And then, she tried to live in Bourgeois society, or what you call 'polite company.'"

"Now see where that left her? You see, if she's going to practice free love, she should be either a noblewoman in a castle or a stitching woman in the countryside."

Birgitta's eyes flashed. "Both places, bastards are accepted. They get the worst treatment of all among people like you, Ivar. Maybe you don't know it, but you and your kind are totally infected by Victorian morality."

"What do you mean, Victorian morality?"

Birgitta, exasperated, glared at him.

"Your education has a long way to go, Ivar."

She paused to underscore the gravity of his obtuseness.

"In Queen Victoria's time, the English middle class became so puritanical that nobody could even talk about how babies are made or what men and women do to get them. They designed women's clothing to cover the entire body, the way it does now.

"Look at the dresses today. They make women look as if they have no legs, because legs are sinful."

Ivar stole a glance at the calf-length flared skirt Birgitta was wearing.

"Go ahead, Ivar, have a good look. All you can see is an ankle covered by a dark stocking. And what of it? Does that

do anything to your imagination?”

She didn't wait for a response.

“Don't you see, Ivar? Hiding the female body leaves men in charge, so they can have a nicely perfect family at home and then go to bawdy houses for their extra entertainment. Brothels flourish in that kind of society.

“So the proper woman becomes a creature of divine mystery and procreation never gets discussed. Tell me, how many discussions about sex and procreation did you have as a child?”

Ivar, rattled, answered self-righteously. “Nobody in our family would talk about such things.”

He wasn't telling the whole truth, because, from her seventh until her eleventh year, his younger sister Gretchen had discretely peppered him with questions about human origin. As a most proper lad whose parents had put the fear of Lucifer in him about such matters, Ivar would rarely attempt a substantive answer to Gretchen's questions. He did remember that she had piqued his own interest in the ultimate adolescent puzzle.

“Ivar,” Birgitta asked, “if your family never talked about it, how were you supposed to learn?”

“That comes later, with adulthood.”

“You're an adult now. How much do you know?”

Ivar's face turned red. “Know?”

“For example, what do you know about the process of ovulation?”

This, he thought, was easy, because his biology class had covered it. He gave a brief textbook description.

“That's a good answer for mice, but tell me: When in the human menstrual cycle is human conception most likely?”

The texts hadn't covered that point and Ivar was perplexed.

“Yes, I have a lot to learn, but doesn't a pastor tell young couples these things just before they are married?”

Birgitta rolled her eyes upward.

“Ivar, what pastor will tell you anything biological,

except perhaps how to keep the wife from becoming pregnant when she doesn't want to? Or when the man doesn't want kids?"

"But are pastors supposed to be biologists?"

"Well, Ivar, that's the point. They aren't, and they don't tell you the most elemental things. What do you know about the pleasure spots on the female body? Or do you think women are supposed to just enjoy the man's ecstasy? So the man just climbs on, has his thrill, and climbs off?"

Ivar reddened again, then came up with a response he thought appropriate.

"Wouldn't education about that kind of thing make young people more anxious to sleep together before marriage? And then have more fatherless children."

Birgitta threw up her hands.

"Isn't sleeping together what young people—especially men—have on their minds all the time?"

Ivar couldn't dispute that. It was exactly what he had in mind at the moment.

Birgitta was relentless, but shifted direction.

"You're hopeless, Ivar, because your middle class doesn't want everyone to do as well as you do. Your kind doesn't want village people to have your income or your life—or to go to the well-behaved childhood dances you did, because then your life wouldn't seem so high and virtuous. If poor country people did those things, you would stop doing them because they would seem cheapened."

Ivar recalled the dancing school where he and a dozen other eight-year-olds paired up around a flower circle. Boys wore white and blue sailor suits while giggling girls skipped delicately in frilly white pleated dresses with large light blue ribbons in their smoothly combed hair. Ivar's mother Ulrina often said how fortunate he was to attend such wholesome and enjoyable events instead of cavorting with the boisterous, naughty children, like Olof, on the back streets. He often wondered, with some shame, whether this boisterous and naughty side of poverty was what attracted him to it.

Was it the voluptuous charm of the back street kids that attracted him to Birgitta? What was her background?

As if reading his mind, Birgitta told him about her family. Her father was a dock worker in Stockholm and her mother worked in a grocery.

“Did we envy richer kids, like you? You bet we did. We wanted your wealth and ability to have nice houses and clothes, but not your way of life.

“Did my parents tell me not to sleep with boys? What they said was, ‘don’t get pregnant and have a bastard child. Because that’s what men will do to you, if you give them a chance. Especially rich boys.’ Like you.”

But she softened these remarks with a smile, leaving Ivar aroused but confused.

* * *

Ivar was walking across the village square near the Lund campus, when he was jostled by a rough hand on his shoulder and a bellowing laugh from a husky, tousle-headed and broad-shouldered fellow slightly shorter than himself. It was Olof Moller, now several years older, better dressed but still carrying a strong smell. After warm handshakes, Olof said an older couple in Stockholm, whom he laughingly called his “uncle and aunt,” adopted him after he left Graskoping. He spoke almost derisively of these people, as if their sending him to the University was somehow a cute trick he had played on them.

“I fooled them into thinking I would eventually wear suits and fancy overcoats,” he grinned. “I talked to them like I thought you would.”

The camaraderie of more youthful years could not be recaptured fully. Ivar had become more inward, Olof more brash and crude. Ivar nevertheless convinced his old friend to attend Professor Eklinden’s lectures, but Olof’s assessment after a single lecture was swift and blunt. “So much manure” he called it, an earthy observation that Ivar patiently

dismissed as unfortunate ignorance.

Olof was outspoken, irascible, and unpredictable. He would skip lectures for weeks and yet do reasonably well on exams. He needled Ivar about his relationship with Birgitta.

“You won’t get a good roll in the hay with that one,” he laughed. “That is, unless you first wrap her in the socialist flag. And promise that any brat you produce will be raised a Marxist.”

Ivar decided to spend less time around Olof, in favor of seeing more of Birgitta.

Ivar now felt strong passion for Birgitta, although with mixed feelings. He was unsure about what to do with an opportunity—should one occur—and how he should follow through. He burned with realization that Birgitta saw through his naïve beliefs about youth, love, and poverty.

Then, opportunity arrived.

It was a Saturday afternoon, after one more discussion of the Eklinden lectures, when Birgitta made the offer.

“I have a paying job shelving books in the old storehouse. Why don’t you come help me, and we can continue to talk.” She turned to face him directly as she said “talk,” implying that it would be more than that.

She led him to a musty back room of the storehouse, an ancient building for storing books out of date and badly worn, but still too precious for a money-strapped university to throw away.

At the end of a darkened hallway, Birgitta put an experienced hand on Ivar’s smoothly combed blond head, ruffled his hair and kissed him. He tried to conceal his arousal.

“Ah yes, Ivar, you are indeed a stoic. But can’t a stoic also be stiff?” Her touch answered her own question.

Ivar, green and clumsy, botched the moment. He didn’t understand her garments and he feared disrobing. So he awkwardly asked whether it would work if he simply unbuttoned.

She responded by almost brutally yanking his trousers

down, breaking buttons in the process.

“You don’t know how to undress yourself, much less a woman,” she scolded.

She then undid her own clothes and grabbed him, knocking a row of books off the shelf behind them.

Ivar feverishly achieved the male high point, then withdrew and quickly redressed.

An angry and unsatisfied Birgitta berated him.

“Just as I feared, Ivar. You are like a wild stud horse. Shoot your wad and then ignore your partner. And I thought that with your concern about people, you would somehow be different.”

She dressed, shook her hair, and refused to look at him.

This inept and unsatisfying sexual experience left Ivar with pangs of humiliation, shame and guilt. Had he exploited Birgitta in exactly the way they both abhorred, or was she merely toying with him? Either way, she was obviously badly disappointed with the result.

He assumed that with all she knew about ovulation, she wouldn’t get pregnant.

Ivar remembered that the headman at the dormitory had an old violin that needed repairing. This was an escape he relished, making new pegs and fixing the bridge of the old instrument. It was one of the skills he had mastered, along with the craft of printing.

While Ivar was rated well in Professor Eklinden’s course, the joint-study paper she had suggested was never written.

* * *

His friendship with Birgitta now eroded, Ivar put more energy than ever into his human mission. Since he found it hard to go alone to meetings of the Social Democratic Labor Party, he sought out Olof and took him to one of the gatherings. Once there, Ivar again listened raptly to the renunciations of violence, advocacy of universal suffrage, and

calls for a wide range of societal reforms. His complicated friend, though, was hostile to the socialist view.

“Yeah, I hate the king as much as these people do. The king is a whoremonger and the members of parliament are a bunch of bloodsuckers. But would the socialists be a political improvement? Frankly, Ivar, they are a bunch of vermin, too. They just want to cringe and grovel to the king and get his blessing. I say down with the king and all the other leeching bastards. Maybe the Bolsheviks are right.”

That was the last time Ivar saw Olof at the university. It was said that Olof tired of school and returned to Stockholm.

* * *

Ivar finished at Lund in 1904 and returned to Graskoping, where the family print shop was making good money publishing pamphlets for the emigration business. Steamship companies glorified the myth of an American Utopia, through billboards and pamphlets that offered an exotic way out. Sail to America to opportunities of one's dreams, for a wondrous future, the companies urged. Their messages were posted in gristmills, way stations, railroad depots, market squares—wherever gathered those souls without hope or means except enough hoarded cash or borrowed funds or saleable possessions to pay for a one-way steamship ticket to the New World. These billboards and pamphlets were read with longing by those having little to lose and, or so they hoped, much to gain in the New World.

While his firm printed these glorifications of emigration, Klas Lindfors thought the Myth of America was rubbish. He agreed with the higher circles of Graskoping that America was little more than a dumping ground for lost souls, the depraved, and the delinquent. But if promoting that myth was a way to rid Sweden of its 'problem' population, so much the better.

Klas was pleasantly satisfied with his lot. His wife

Ulrina had borne him five children, three of whom had survived past age ten—Sten, Ivar, and Gretchen, in that order. Sten, unfortunately, had eschewed printing and publishing and was working for a shipbuilding company in Stockholm. Gretchen had married early—and satisfactorily—to an accountant who was well positioned in Gothenburg.

Sten's leaving Graskoping left Ivar destined to take over the family business, and he initially received much encouragement from his stern father. Klas enjoyed watching Ivar slide the type from the cases onto the composing stick and drop the assembled lines deftly into the galleys. Ivar understood steam engines and presses, and what it took to keep those wide, flat belts from whirling off pulleys on line shafts. In the print shop, he could anticipate and deal with such problems as uneven inking, maladjusted pressure levers, and static electricity in paper.

But then, Ivar went to the University, and, when he returned four years later, Klas was worried. He was annoyed by the young man's obsession with the problems of poor people. "Leave that to the churches and the Poor Relief Board," Klas tried to counsel Ivar. "Not our worry."

About two years after returning to Graskoping from Lund, Ivar noticed a bakery worker named Fredrika Grinnhaal. The handsome young woman had arrived, destitute but vivacious, from the birch woods and rolling grasslands of rural Smaland. Fredrika, with a tall and strong frame, ample bosom, and almost muscular shoulders, was a semiliterate fugitive from a fearsome past. She was the eldest of nine children, six surviving, born to Axel Grinnhaal and his successive wives on a small farm in the poverty-wracked countryside. In 1903 Axel deserted his most recent wife, Ana, so this woman forced Fredrika to care for a houseful of irritable younger children. On the day of her 18th birthday, Fredrika left abruptly for Graskoping and took a job in the bakery near the Lindfors printing firm.

Ivar knew the bakery well. It was in the sharp end of a V-shaped building, where three streets crossed and thus

assured that no structure using all its space could be square. The warm aroma of yeast, moist flour and sugar frosting wafting from the pointed front of the bakery offered a pleasant contrast to the oil-and-ink smell of the print shop. He would stop there in the morning and, oftentimes, on the way home in the evening.

Ivar's first encounter with Fredrika was a pleasant if mildly embarrassing collision. Standing at the end of the bakery shop's high counter, she caught his eye while handing him his pack of coarse-grained brot and havrekaka. Gazing back to her moist, dark pupils under brunette eyelashes, Ivar fumbled the package. It dropped and both he and Fredrika stooped immediately to retrieve it. His nose brushed her dark, auburn hair and he absorbed her alluring scent. Her breast touched his arm.

He excused himself profusely and reddened a bit. She slowly straightened, smiled softly, but showed no embarrassment at all. Instead, her manner radiated warm invitation. All he could do at the moment was thank her, turn and leave. He returned for more bread the following week. No miscues this time. Their eyes connected briefly, without overdone expression but nonetheless with silent electric energy.

Ivar thought it was time to think ahead. He saw a young doctor, whom he had known as a medical student at Lund, who loaned him a book about human reproductive anatomy. He thus gained some technical knowledge as a response, he admitted to himself, to what Birgitta accurately called his ignorance. This would be useful should he see this alluring bakery worker again.

It was June, when Graskoping's young people chattered excitedly about the coming Midsummer's Eve, a traditional romp of gaiety that promised raucous fiddle music, dancing and much beer and aquavit. Ivar and two male friends decided to be part of this most uproarious, rollicking, and potentially erotic, adventure of the year. The frolic was in a large barn at the outer edge of Graskoping, with fiddle and

folk music quite different from the piano and violin concertos through which Ivar had struggled under his mother's strict tutelage. There would be shanties of the sea, melancholy herdsman's ballads from the summer "fabods" in the mountains, plaintive love tunes from the villages, and rousing beer-drinking songs.

Scores of young men were already drunk when Ivar entered the barn, and at least one fight had broken out. His friends went in separate directions, toward one group of young females or another. A rough hand grabbed at his shoulder and the slurred male voice behind it challenged him. He shrugged off the dare and eased himself to the other side where Fredrika stood in anticipation. Like most young women there, she wore a full dark skirt held up by shoulder straps over a blowzy white shirtwaist. Unlike the others, she wore no white scarf with points fore and aft. Her reddish-brown hair curled openly and daringly down her shoulders, one lock reaching almost under her smooth, country-tanned chin.

"So you do come to these things," she said and without hesitation led him into the panting, stomping, and shouting that passed for dancing. His blood rushed as she grasped his hand and shoulder. Her energized body leapt and swung in sensuous rhythm, with sometimes jerky, sometimes smooth motions, but always with vigorous vitality. As they were swept up in the lustful gaiety, Ivar was transported back to pre-adolescence and the vibrant wrestling with the appealingly aggressive girls, some a year or two ahead in age and eons ahead of him in back alley wisdom. Yes, he acknowledged, those in poverty have their own delightful magnetism.

Ivar felt a tugging at his back, from the same oaf who had jostled him earlier, but now with an equally thuggish companion. They weren't after him so much as Fredrika. She spat an insult at them with a verbal ferocity that nearly stunned them from their drunken stupor. She grabbed Ivar's hand, pressed it tight against her warm thigh, and led him

quickly out of the barn and away from the beery merrymaking. They headed straight for the woods, where Fredrika found an isolated glade and pulled Ivar down to her. She opened his shirt and his trousers, a maneuver reminding him of his vexatious escapade with Birgitta at Lund.

This quickly became very different. Instead of yanking at his garments with the impatient disgust of Birgitta, Fredrika deliberately and methodically folded them back and free, much as one peels away a fruit rind in delicious anticipation of satisfying an overpowering hunger.

She ran her fingers through his blond hair, and asked him if he liked that. He murmured a yes. She then guided Ivar's hands to help with her own disrobing, so expertly he thought he was doing it all himself. She was, in this way, a much more accomplished teacher than Birgitta. And he was a better love partner because of Birgitta's assessment and his recent study of the medical text.

Fredrika made love to Ivar, giving him—and her—an ecstatic thrill that had been missing in his tryst with Birgitta.

Thus began a two-month affair of lust with Fredrika that completely contradicted Ivar's own ideals. Not that it was unusual. In fact, it was almost commonplace among other single professional men in their late twenties. It was primal passion, exploding sexual paroxysm without commitment. The ecstatic energy transmitted by Fredrika's nubile body and feminine scent captivated him, much as his newly found male strength and self-assurance seemed to attract her. They continued to meet clandestinely, retreating to a wooded park, a stable barn, or her cramped room for untamed, often acrobatic love, during late summer of 1907.

All sense of admonitions from his earlier days left him, replaced by what he frankly accepted as the unbridled passion of the dispossessed. He allowed to himself that Birgitta would have denounced him for taking advantage of a troubled woman. What would the idolized Professor Eklinden say? Well, he couldn't allow himself to even imagine

that.

One night after making love with Fredrika in her cramped third-floor room, he asked her about life in the crude village of her childhood. She told him matter-of-factly that young women were often impregnated early, by men both young and older, often relatives.

“They watched bulls ram their rods into heifers, and acted like bulls with any woman they could get their hands on.”

Ivar asked, “Do these women ever find husbands?”

She shrugged.

“Sometimes they do, more often they don’t. Take Katreena, whom I called my sister. She was Ana’s kid—had her long before marrying Axel. They signed her away to work at first the Soderruds, then at the Svennebring farm and I don’t know where after that. She was pushed over by so many men, no one knew who fathered her brat. Nobody would marry her.”

Ivar eventually ended his trysts with Fredrika, deciding that it was the proper thing to do. Given his righteous distress over poverty and illegitimacy, hadn’t this really been a mature study experience? As for Fredrika, she was a knowing, capable adult quite unlike her hapless stepsister Katreena, *wasn’t she? So, it was a mutually agreeable arrangement.* For diversion, he now spent more time mending his sister Gretchen’s old violin, the one that always needed bridge repair.

* * *

Since returning from Lund, Ivar had continued to read socialist literature—but privately, without talking with his father about it. He refined his printer skills and gradually worked into management of the Lindfors family enterprise. For the next two years, he worked on the technical side as well as the business.

His first real experiment with newspaper crusading

followed the brief affair with Fredrika, and he regarded his writing as an uplifting inspiration from his Lund days rather than escape from his own moral transgressions. He set in type three articles, intended for subsequent editions of the *Veckoblad*. The first was **CHILDREN WITHOUT FAMILIES**, which was about fatherless children, their numbers in a particular local parish, and the Poor Relief Agency's work with them. When he saw this piece in print, Klas was aghast.

"It makes Graskoping look bad," he thundered.

He concluded, ruefully, that giving his immature son so much editorial latitude had been a major error. Then as he feared, he was reproached in strong terms at lunch with town notables two days later for putting such bunkum in print.

Klas again confronted his son. "Printing such things is like breaking the law."

"But Papa, that doesn't break any law at all. Sweden has had a law giving freedom to the press since the 18th century."

"You don't know the whole history," Klas shot back. "But I do. That law was passed by a new party in power, so that they could turn up some secret papers that showed how corrupt the old party was. It was a revenge law, pure and simple."

"But it is still the law, and shouldn't we observe it?"

"Not in the way you have in mind. We don't mistake the intent of the law. We have to respect the wishes of the community, what is good for it."

Later, to Klas' further chagrin, Ivar wrote another piece, about a charismatic country reformer named Per Jonson Rosio who spoke at a gathering in Vaxjoe, calling for reform of laws that—in the opinion of many—would eventually be harmful to rural people.

Ivar's headline was: **IS PER JONSON ROSIO AN ACCURATE PROPHET?** Klas saw this one in galley form, before publication, and was again displeased. As a businessman, he mistrusted Rosio as a man opposed to development of Swedish industry. This time Klas put his foot down, and decided to personally review

all of Ivar's writing before it appeared in the *Veckoblad*.

This included another item that Ivar had set in type, **WORKERS WITH STARVING FAMILIES**. Klas dumped the galleys of type into a bin. Ivar's crusading career would be on hold until he took full control of the family business from his domineering father.

* * *

Meanwhile, Ivar saw more and more of Inez Zetterlund, a worker at the Lindfors publishing firm. Like Fredrika, Inez had grown up in a rural home, but the similarities ended there. Inez was raised on the island of Oland, just a few kilometers off the eastern coast from Graskoping. She and her two younger brothers were all born to the same parents—a Swedish father who operated one of the ancient wind-driven flour and gristmills that dotted the long, flat island, and an immigrant daughter of a Portuguese sailor. Having a modest but dependable income, her father Larss managed to keep his children in school

Inez, who grew to be an attractive and amiable blonde, had darker eyes than usual for a light-haired person and an almost perpetual, ingratiating smile. Neighbors said she had her father's hair and her mother's eyes and lovely smile. So congenial was her personality that as a child she was commonly known in school and neighborhood as "Jovialisk Inez." Her disarming demeanor coupled with a low toleration of nonsense enabled her to neutralize annoyance and wrath among those around her. When she was 10, a young male ruffian slightly superior to her in physical size foolishly yanked her pigtails. She caught this rascal and pummeled him to the ground, without losing her smile. The boy was never so foolhardy again.

She was not given to long sentences. She spoke generally in short, blunt statements—a characteristic learned from her immigrant mother that would greatly affect her manner of speaking when she shifted to a second

language, English.

As an able singer, Inez fantasized becoming another Kristina Nilsson, a daughter of a lowly tenant farmer who rose to fame with her balcony arias in Stockholm opera houses. Yet, Inez was not a born or coached advocate of suffrage or other female privilege and was quite accepting of the ways of the world as she knew them. Like most women of her generation, Inez contemplated motherhood and a family. She was educated enough to secure a lowly paid office clerical job at the Lindfors Printing Company when she was nineteen.

She and Ivar became acquainted as a matter of course and occasionally had conversations, which were brief at first and grew longer over time. Inez Zetterlund enjoyed her work, which consisted mostly of menial tasks in the production of books, magazines, calling cards, social announcements, and pamphlets. She quickly acquired a sense of design and artistic symmetry in printed work—a talent highly valued in a small publishing firm like the Lindfors. She gained confidence in her growing expertise and modestly offered her advice whenever it seemed needed and appropriate.

Thus Inez and Ivar's first contacts were more or less technical. She showed some curiosity about the printing cases and the new letters the firm had acquired.

"Mr. Lindfors."

"Please, Inez, call me Ivar."

"Yes, of course, Ivar. What are these new cases of type—the ones delivered this week?"

"That," Ivar said, "is actually an eighteenth century Italian type, called Bodoni, named for the man who designed it."

"Bodoni. With letters thick on one side? And thin on the other?"

"Yes. It is an old type but not used much before by us. Some even think of it as modern. We are considering it for the headlines in the *Veckoblad*."

Inez smiled her approval, knowing that the *Veckoblad*

looked like pages torn from an ancient Bible. But she said little because it was not her place to be too opinionated, or to presume to sanction decisions large or small at the firm. Instead, she pointed to the large glass-covered picture of an ancient engraved printing in the hallway just outside the pressroom.

“Ivar, what is the type called, just above the picture of a king on horseback?” This question allowed Ivar to ease into his favorite family legend—the story of the heroic 17th century publisher Anders Lindfors. Ivar said little about military gallantry portrayed in this broadsheet and instead led Inez to a display cabinet in another room, where he pulled out a carefully preserved copy of the yellowed and crumbling broadsheet with the violently grotesque village scene—the one over the words “man’s inhumanity to man.”

“Anders Lindfors saw the horror of war. How military campaigns destroy whole villages, murder people, leave thousands of children as starving orphans in rags.”

“How terribly awful. I had been taught the Swedish army was kind. Even to people in conquered lands.”

Ivar and Inez shared this moment of common compassion for unfortunate peoples, and from that time on saw each other more frequently. They lunched together, in spite of Klas Lindfors’ known intolerance of fraternization with lowly hired personnel.

All of this became moot when, in December of 1907, Ivar asked Inez to marry him.

“Of course, Ivar,” she responded.

Their formal courtship lasted three more months. It included a train trip—with his uncle Karl-Henrik and aunt Inger—to the charming Royal Opera house in Stockholm for a performance of *The Queen of Golconda* by Swedish composer Franz Berwald. More enjoyable for Inez was a shorter trip to Malmo, where she was entranced by the wistful strains of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, played by a Swedish-German orchestra.

They were chaperoned to such formal affairs, but

sometimes met privately for job duties around the print shop. One day they managed to stay late in the afternoon after others had left, ostensibly to inventory the paper stock. They moved together. Their bodies touched, then their eyes. She curled her hands around his neck and said, quietly, "You may touch me, Ivar."

"And you may touch me."

Ivar Lindfors and Inez Zetterlund were married March 7, 1908, in a ceremony marked by dignified festivity. On their wedding night, Ivar tenderly practiced all the biological and emotional aspects of lovemaking that he had learned. He hoped Inez would never discover where these talents had been acquired.

* * *

Klas Lindfors never quite got over his pique about Ivar's interest in reform-minded journalism. He accosted Ivar at the type galleys one day, and this time Ivar argued with him.

"If Swedish newspapers were responsible, Papa, they would tell us what is really wrong in Graskoping. The hovels around Graskoping are crammed with people lacking food and warm clothing, living in filth, their children always sick—"

"They moved in from the farming country, where they failed," fumed Klas. "Why should we bother our readers with those failures? Are we responsible for them?"

"We should let the facts be known—let people know what the conditions of the poor are, and what the authorities are doing about it. That's what an independent paper should do."

Klas shook his head and stated with vehemence that "a good newspaper tells people what their neighbors are doing, what their clubs are doing, and not the private troubles of people."

"Papa, the hospital people say one child in four here eats poorly and wears rags."

“I know hardly a single case,” Klas responded. “Except, of course, for the child of Fredrika Grinnhaal—that poor thing who used to work at the bakery. Her baby has no father and no future, but the Poor Relief people will take care of her. No doubt the child will be one more for the orphanage.”

Ivar paused and said slowly: “That’s the thing. If we talk about the women on poor relief—like this Fredrika you mention—nearly half of their babies nowadays are illegitimate.”

Father and son had reached another impasse and ended their conversation, lest it degenerate into acrimony. Besides, Ivar was eager to terminate this particular debate.

Fredrika Grinnhaal had told a social worker that her baby Charlotte was Ivar’s daughter. A week earlier, Elmira Lidstrom, an agent with the Poor Relief programme, had called Ivar into her office and had given him the shattering news.

A stunned Ivar wondered why Fredrika hadn’t known how to avoid pregnancy.

“She—has a child?” he stammered. “But when? I did not know.”

“The child is named Charlotte and was born June 12. You did not know because Fredrika knew of your recent marriage and at first did not wish to embarrass you.”

“Too many men,” she added, eyeing Ivar narrowly, “sleep with women and then leave them, as if they were simply promiscuous prostitutes. New laws are putting a stop to that, and Fredrika has been apprised of her rights and your obligations. Elmira added that Fredrika had seen several men, but that she knew “as only a woman could” that Ivar was Charlotte’s father.

Ivar was humiliated by this woman, who scolded him as Birgitta might have.

“So what am I compelled to do?”

“Whatever the judge decides when Fredrika presses her statement about your fatherhood.”

“And Fredrika? What will she do?”

“It depends on her holding a paying job. Her bakery work hardly kept her fed and clothed, let alone pay for rent or care for a baby. Furthermore, her despondency is such that she may be committed to the pavilion for the mentally ill.”

Ivar wanted to escape to the family workshop and work on Gretchen’s old violin some more, or maybe one of his father’s fowling guns. Now, though, no escape seemed possible.

Ivar had to act. *But how?* He took a train to Stockholm, to consult his brother Sten. The elder brother had blunt advice: either pay her off or take the child to America.

Ivar next went to Gothenburg to talk with his sister Gretchen. She showed little sympathy for him but much for Fredrika. “Ivar, the only way you can keep your head high is to support Fredrika and the child until Fredrika is able to do it alone, either through occupation or suitable marriage. Adoption leaves a sad mother without a child and quite alone, perhaps to repeat the same tragedy.”

Ivar decided it was time for the difficult confession to Inez, but he was too late. When he returned from Gothenburg and approached their home, Inez did not greet him at the door. She sat in an inner room, staring at the floor in stony silence.

Her vacant posture obviated his question.

“Inez, you have heard?”

“Yes,” she screamed, shaking. “Yes. I have heard. All about the fine man I married. And you know who told me? I heard,” she quavered, “from a woman you made love to. So much love she bore you a child!”

“Inez, I didn’t think—”

“You didn’t think what? That she wasn’t with child? Or just that she wouldn’t worry you about it when it arrived?”

She turned away, then back toward Ivar.

“Ivar Lindfors, what was I to think when this woman comes to my door, arms folded? ‘Are you Mrs. Ivar Lindfors,’ she asks. ‘I am she,’ I answer and ‘what may I do for you?’ And then this woman, calm as a morning sea, tells me she is

Fredrika Grinnhaal, who has ‘just dropped off’ your brat, as she put it.”

“And then you know what?” Inez was screaming even louder now. “She asked me if I was satisfying you in bed. Because if I wasn’t, she could give me some useful advice! And with the most horrible smirk on her face, she walked away from the door. But still staring back with that terrible, vicious look, like a wild person.

“Ivar, do you know how that makes me feel? Dirty. Betrayed. With a husband I cannot trust!”

Ivar didn’t know what to say. He left the room.

Two days later, the word around Graskoping was that Fredrika had committed suicide. This news further deepened the crisis between Ivar and Inez. For days, the recently wedded couple engaged in clumsy, stumbling conversation, punctuated by more than a few heated outbursts of indignation, accusation and contrition. Inez alternated between outrage over Ivar’s secrecy and worry that her own righteous appall at Fredrika’s visit may have somehow caused that woman to take her own life.

Ivar struggled for a statement. He acknowledged that he had taken advantage of Fredrika, but pointed out that he had stopped seeing Fredrika long before asking Inez to marry him. He then promised Inez that he would never be unfaithful as a husband.

Inez was in doubt. She left for her home in Oland, but found her parents far from sharing her sense of indignation.

This was the result of a fling before marriage? But this is rather common. You have married well. Overlook what is past.

There is a darker side. If you leave Ivar, you will be shunned by other men of his level of education and class. You might have to marry a carpenter or even a wagon driver, a man who always smells like the back end of a horse.

While Inez was gone, Ivar retreated in his consternation to the print shop, seeking a craftwork escape from his dilemma. He offered to do a signature etching on his father’s

double-muzzle bird gun. He smeared some engraving wax on the shotgun's metal breech and blackened it with candle smoke. He then traced his father's own signature on the wax with a thin stylus.

It didn't look right. The signature had to be enhanced, and Ivar's craftsmanship failed him at this crucial point. His cursive sweeps were not smooth and bold; his flourishes looked like limp spirals. He smeared the wax again but still failed to make the right twirl. In frustration, he put the project aside.

When Inez returned to Graskoping, she refused Ivar's advances. But she accepted his child. "Ivar, we must speak to the Poor Relief agency. They must allow us to adopt Charlotte. We will raise her as our own child. I believe that is the best course."

Ivar was so gratified by this offer that he didn't know what to say. Then he recalled Inez' talent for design and adept use of marking crayons.

"Inez, I need your help." He told her that he was unable to create the stylistic strokes on the shotgun he was trying to etch. Would she give it a try?

Bemused, she agreed. She looked first at Klas' original signature, replicated it at least a dozen times, and embellished it. She suggested that the personal signature with the big K would not work well. "Let's just make it, 'Lindfors,' she said, and Ivar acquiesced quickly.

"Now let's do it on the gun," she said. Inez then created an elegant calligraphic script version of the Lindfors signature, with sweeping curlicues at the beginning of the capital "L" and after the final "s." Ivar did the rest. He brushed the exposed metal with hydrochloric acid, enough to bite the traced lines into the metal in neat, sharp grooves. The result was an exquisite work of gunsmith art. Inez and Ivar were again working together, joining their talents with splendid results.

By early October, the adoption was arranged and Ivar and Inez took Charlotte home.

Ivar's mother Ulrina was more silent about this arrangement than he wished, and his father was truculent. *Why not simply provide a sum for the child's support, now that the poor wretch Fredrika had taken her own life? Let the child be adopted by another family, one not previously connected with the child's background in any way?*

These questions Ivar put aside. What he could not put aside were his parents' apprehensions about what was being said around town. Klas was hearing untidy talk about the bastard child. Worse, people were noting that Fredrika had hanged herself less than two days after calling on Inez. No one was making accusations directly, but there was talk.

Ivar noticed during the next few weeks that he and his father met less frequently. Then one day his father approached him.

"Ivar," Klas said, "it is no longer possible for you to take over the family printing business. Too many things are being said around town, for reasons I'm sure you understand.

"They are even saying, incorrectly, I am sure, that your unfortunate piece about children in the *Veckoblad* was nothing more than attempted atonement for what you knew you had already done. Some even call it hypocrisy. You will be compensated fully, I assure you, at least to the extent that is possible, since business has not been quite as good as it was four or five years ago."

The news stunned Ivar. He asked what arrangements would be made for the future of the firm. His father said there would be different management, but it would take some time to work this out.

A week later, Ivar found out about the "different management." His brother Sten gave up his shipbuilding career and moved back from Stockholm to take over Ivar's position within the family firm. Ivar was given a modest sum and kicked out—replaced by a brother who had once deserted the family.

When the disgraced trio packed to leave Sweden forever, Klas Lindfors brought the beautifully etched fowling gun to

Ivar.

“Take this with you to America,” he said flatly. “I won’t be needing it. I’m giving up bird shooting.”

Within a month, Ivar, Inez, and adopted daughter Charlotte booked passage to the United States of America. Their only major possession was a large trunk, which contained the gun, the famous and deteriorating “inhumanity” broadsheet from Anders Lidfors, and a few personal possessions.

Ivar, standing at the ship’s rail, looked again across Stockholm harbor and sighed.

II. MINNESOTA

During the twenty-one-day trip across the North Atlantic, amidst the usual seasickness, strained conversations and constant caring for an infant child, Inez told Ivar that she had a miscarriage. After talking with the one doctor aboard, Inez had doubts whether she would ever have a normal pregnancy again.

“Charlotte might well be an only child,” Inez confided to another woman on board.

“If the Lord wants you to have a child, you will,” the woman answered.

“Yes, if the Lord wishes,” Inez mumbled to herself.

Holding a heavily-wrapped Charlotte on the open deck, facing a stiff wind from the rough sea, Inez was at least satisfied to have accommodations that were a modest step above steerage. This relative good fortune prompted her to ask Ivar: “The Lord has treated us as He sees fit. We should be thankful. Will we be close to the Church when we reach America?”

“I suppose so. Both our families went to services regularly.”

“You suppose so. Isn’t it important for your—our—daughter to grow up in a Christian home?”

Ivar hesitated. He knew of people leaving Sweden because they were Catholics—rare in Sweden—who felt persecuted and sought the religious freedom of the New World. America was the land of freedom of religion. He knew others who were seeking freedom from religion.

He thought of himself as a printer and publisher—as

well as a Christian.

“Inez, we will somehow and somewhere be with a big newspaper. There are many Swedish language newspapers in America. They will speak strongly in support of the Lutheran Church and against Godlessness.”

Inez frowned. “So we are Christians because it is good for the newspaper business?”

Ivar squirmed, then forged ahead with his point.

“Inez, I have given this much thought. I hear that many Swedes in America are trying to convince more pastors to go there. They are needed to keep the faith alive. In fact, the *Dagens Nyheter*, the big newspaper in Stockholm, carried an advertisement a while ago.

“I remember that advertisement well. It said: ‘Pastors who are dedicated to Jesus, you are needed in America. All sense of grace, salvation, and prayerfulness that had been part of Swedish upbringing seems lost to hordes of our people. Without inspired Christian leaders, America may become a Godless and satanic nation.’

“You see, Inez, people in Sweden aren’t going to church as much as when our fathers were young. So our church may actually do better over there than back in Graskoping. And I’m told that the Swedish language newspapers are the flame that keeps the faith alive.”

Inez looked over Charlotte’s bundled head at her husband. *Was this conviction talking, or business-like calculation?*

Ivar tried to bolster his ideas about promoting religion with his life-long convictions about reporting on the problems of poverty and orphan children.

“Just think, Inez. We might start a newspaper that helps the church cure the problems of poverty and orphan children. Our journal will spell out a social contract for immigrants like us in America.”

“A social contract?” Inez asked. “For what? For a job to build houses? To work in a factory?”

Ivar had never told her much about his heady days at

Lund. “Not that specific, and not for each person,” Ivar answered, now parroting the words of Professor Eklinden. “A social contract is for everybody, like a good constitution, between the people and the government. It tells how laws will be made, what the government can do and not do. What rights people have.”

“So the contract is good for all time?” Inez asked.

“Not exactly,” Ivar said. “Maybe the main idea lasts forever, but the details change. We were seeing many changes in Sweden. Hjalmer Branting and the Social Democrats are changing the social contract there. Sweden needs more changes, to make life better for children, for mothers, for farm people. We would expect changes in America. We don’t expect it to be perfect, maybe far from it.

“There will be much thinking about change in America, we can be sure of that. The job of our newspaper will be to explain different ideas for changing the contract. Then, people can choose the best.”

This would be a newspaper with vision, Ivar thought, encompassing the full sweep of human life, enthusiasm, and inspired venture. He assumed that the Church and immigrants generally would provide him with a ready-made and eager audience, receptive to his eager notions—though not developed well—about how things should be done.

Was his idea feasible? That was the big question.

While Ivar’s words were racing ahead in this newspaper dream, Inez’ thoughts took a different turn.

“Perhaps, Ivar, we should have a contract.”

“You mean a newspaper contract?”

“No. A contract between you and me. About Charlotte. And whose responsibility she is. Yes?”

To underscore her point, she handed Charlotte to Ivar, and led him inside their modest and cramped cabin, away from the driving ocean wind.

“Inez, of course, we have an understanding. We treat her as our real daughter, do we not?” He patted Charlotte, awkwardly but affectionately. The infant squirmed slightly.

Inez squinted at him—whether with mocking mischief or absolute certitude, he was uncertain.

“An understanding,” she suggested, “is a contract, is it not? So let us say we have a perfect understanding? That we go, let us say, half and half? She is half yours and half mine?”

* * *

Ivar had heard about a well-known Swedish language newspaper, edited by a famous Swede in Minneapolis named Swan Turnblad. Ivar had also learned that the reputation of Turnblad did not extend to Minneapolis' city government, which had become known as one of numerous cases of wholesale urban corruption in America. Syndicates, corruption, crime, prostitution, gambling, and other vices were rampant. A mayor had been exposed, indicted on criminal charges, and convicted. Lincoln Steffens, a muckraking journalist, had published a magazine story under the sensational title, “The Shame of Minneapolis: The Rescue and Redemption of a City That Was Sold Out.”

As a young printer in Graskoping, Sweden, with few reliable ways of checking up, Ivar in the years before emigration had found the Minneapolis story both stimulating and depressing. It was stimulating because it romanticized an energetic newspaper and magazine industry that Ivar wished to join. It was depressing because of the logical conclusion that burgeoning Scandinavian immigration had not yet made this city the idyllic place of his dreams.

* * *

The Lindfors trio followed a route familiar to immigrants: to Ellis Island, by train through Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana to Chicago, and then through Wisconsin to St. Paul and Minneapolis, where they arrived in early December of 1908.

The hard bench seats of the railroad cars, along with the

clicking and clacking on every rail connection, kept all but the most hardened travelers from relaxing. Children fidgeted. Babies cried, some incessantly. Inez was proud that she knew how to keep Charlotte cooing contentedly, even though they had no Pullman car. While they had enjoyed modest cabins at sea, their funds were now stretched to where first-class train travel was unaffordable.

For Ivar, English was no great problem, since he read English well and had tolerable speaking skills. His schooled accent was different from the typical Smaland immigrant, more clipped and without a sing-song cadence. Inez knew the language less well, but with Ivar's tutorial help, was a willing and able student. On the ship, they had gone entire days conversing in English alone. It was a fresh and exhilarating experience, although Inez was privately relieved after the end of each "English" day to revert to her native tongue. Her way of speaking in short sentences was accentuated when she adopted the new language.

Not suffering the privations of most of their predecessors, the Lindfors family was nevertheless a rumpled and tired lot when they stepped off the streetcar on Minneapolis' Cedar Avenue and sought the lodging house run by an earlier Swedish immigrant. It stood among shabbier hovels in an area heavily populated by Scandinavian Americans and would eventually be known jocularly as "Snoose Boulevard."

* * *

Ivar had one distant relative in Minneapolis, a man who worked on Swan Turnblad's Swedish-language newspaper, the *Posten*. With his aid, Ivar was employed immediately by that newspaper as an apprentice printer. It was a start, a place where he could get his feet wet in American publishing and support his family while looking for a better opportunity.

As a skilled worker at the *Posten*, Ivar did no writing or creative work. He worked entirely with printing equipment.

He soon became a foreman in a composing room, working eight to 10 hours daily but with few evening demands.

Ivar—in his long black printer’s apron, hands continually smeared with ink, wrist skin cracking from exposure to desiccating paper and cleansing agents, nostrils invaded by redolent fumes from cleaning solvents—honed his expertise in the gadgetry of American publishing.

From the newspaper proofs that he read routinely, he became impressed with the commercial side of the *Turnblad* paper. Its advertisements extolled the virtues of such products as “Pillsbury’s Best Flour” and “Cassarets candy cathartic.” The paper promoted tickets for cultural events throughout the region, including Ibsen’s plays and opera productions in Chicago.

Ivar, though, found he was learning little about the newspaper world, apart from the printing technology. He needed to learn American politics. Inez had similar interests. As the wife of a crusading newspaper man, she wanted to know more about the English language, and about Minnesota and its history.

The two worked out an agreement.

As part of their “contract,” Inez said they would each spend two evenings a week at the Minneapolis public library, while the other cared for Charlotte. Most husbands in those days would have objected, but given the circumstances, Ivar hardly found that wise. The contract between him and Inez was firm and there would be no violating it.

An energized Inez immersed herself in books and old newspaper reports about Minnesota history and politics. She was struck by an 1885 law that created a large public orphanage in southern Minnesota, organized as an agency for placing children in homes through adoption or other arrangements. She read with admiration about John Lind, a popular politician who from 1899 to 1901 served as Minnesota’s governor.

“This Governor Lind,” she said to Ivar in her characteristic short sentences, “he wanted a state law for

insane asylums. It was a law he copied from Wisconsin. Each county, eighty-seven in Minnesota, would have its own asylum. The insane people—half of them work on the farm. They are near family who see them often. It works good in Wisconsin. Each county gets state money to keep the people. But the political people here didn't want that. They voted instead for two big asylums."

"One at Anoka, one at Hastings," she said, stressing the vowels in these strange names.

Ivar thought a moment. "That's odd. You mean each county had a chance to get something from the state if they followed the Wisconsin plan, but turned it down? Why would they do that?"

Inez shrugged. "Well, these politicians—legislators, they call them—from those two towns said they hadn't got treated good from the state. Other places had different things they wanted. University in Minneapolis. State prison at Stillwater. Orphanage at Owatonna. These towns wanted their share.

"There was another thing. Many people worried about their neighbors. Didn't want crazy people scattered around every town. Put them in one or two big places. Get them out of the way."

Ivar nodded. If they had their own newspaper, he was sure they would have written strong words backing up the ideas of this former Governor Lind. A countryman like that could use strong editorial support.

Inez told Ivar about Minnesota's governor at that time—John Albert Johnson, a second-generation Swede, whose alcoholic father had died in a poorhouse.

"This man," Inez said, "went to work at a store at age 13. Then for the railroads, to support his mother who washed clothes for a living. All this while teaching himself about literature. He joined debating clubs. He was a big man in St. Peter and was editor of a Democratic newspaper there."

Inez was amused by an incident that helped Johnson win the 1904 election for governor.

“It was political mischief that—how do they say here—backfired.”

She told Ivar how some hostile public official, in a moment of dubious inspiration, put out a campaign pamphlet that told what a miserable, sotted wretch John Albert Johnson’s father had been.

“During the election,” Ivar said. “What did Johnson say about that?”

“Well, he just said it was all true. And then you know what? Many people think a lot of people were pretty unhappy with that pamphlet. They said it made Mr. Johnson look good. He worked his way up from a poor family. So they elected him.”

“Like Abraham Lincoln, yes?”

* * *

As months went by, Ivar and Inez wondered whether they would ever be able to publish, write and edit their own paper in a place that would be their town, as Graskoping had been—where they would put down roots and become immersed in local life; where their newspaper would be a guiding light if not a propelling engine.

These lofty aspirations, Ivar reflected, were remarkably similar to the ideals of Klas Lindfors. What Ivar had rebelled against a year ago now seemed increasingly like his own convictions. One day he took out the faded, crumbling, and ancient ‘inhumanity of man to man’ broadsheet of Anders Lindfors and wondered whether he would ever publish anything with so much impact.

Ivar and Inez were not penniless, but paying several thousand dollars for a small town newspaper and its print shop was far beyond their means. Ivar talked of these ideals and constraints with Inez and his new acquaintances, who included Pastor Ernest Bjornholm—a clergyman who would eventually help them achieve their goal.

* * *

In autumn and winter of 1910, the Reverend Ernest Bjornholm was named pastor at a Lutheran church in Minneapolis, not far from where Inez and Ivar lived.

Pastor Bjornholm was a short, slightly rotund and balding man in his mid-forties, with sweeping eyes and a quick, reactive manner that lacked the smoothness of most people accustomed to speaking before crowds and congregations. Not an immigrant himself—his parents had come to the United States from Vaxjoe in 1862—he had grown up in a bilingual household dominated by a deeply religious mother who was determined to keep the Swedish heritage alive. After graduating from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, he developed the manner of the devout and pious clergyman. His verve for upgrading the religious convictions of Swedish-Americans matched those of the letter writer to the *Stockholm Nyheter* that Ivar had seen shortly before coming to America.

Ivar and Inez first met Pastor Bjornholm in a most unplanned and accidental way, through a horse-and-buggy incident on an Autumn Sunday. Like most ministers, Ernest Bjornholm did not enjoy automobile ownership. His deacons provided him with a well-worn carriage and an equally worn sorrel mare whose usual calm demeanor was sorely tested that day by a backfiring delivery truck near the church.

The mare bolted toward the sidewalk path where Ivar and Inez walked with two-year-old Charlotte in a folding perambulator contraption known as a Go-Cart—so-called because it could be packed up and hauled in wagon, train, streetcar, or automobile. A startled Ivar reacted by instinct, grabbed the horse's bridle, and kept it from prancing over the Go-Cart.

All the while, the pastor was shouting to the horse, while bracing his feet and pulling back on the reins with his arms behind his head and back. A professional horseman he was not; he had been driving with a loop in the reins,

allowing himself no holdback room.

A humiliated Pastor Bjornholm was effusive in his gratitude. "Ah, you saved me for certain, my friend. You are? Oh, yes, Ivar and Inez Lindfors. And this is your delightful daughter Charlotte? May the Good Lord bless you all. And perhaps one day I can take lessons in horsemanship from you."

The pastor's lack of humiliation turned into acute embarrassment for Ivar and Inez. In his sermon, the clergyman introduced the Lindfors family by publicly and profusely thanking Ivar with a highly embellished account of the incident. An uninformed listener might reasonably have gathered that Ivar had leaped heroically from his chariot to throttle the runaway stallion of King Agamemnon in the battle for Troy.

The two new members of the church prayed less for salvation than for baby Charlotte, hoping she would not fuss and draw even more unwanted attention to them.

At the end of the service the pastor repeated his gratitude to Ivar personally, with even greater enthusiasm. He said he would call on the Lindfors soon.

"Wednesday evening? Very well, we shall see you then, and may the Saviour bless you all."

Inez was not particularly pleased with the prospect of this ministerial visit. She said with obligatory pleasure: "Yes, we'd love to have you come by."

Ivar thought this would be fine, given the notion that his dream newspaper would certainly involve working with clergymen.

Although Inez displayed more genuine religiosity than Ivar, a new church presented problems she found hard to face or even discuss with Ivar.

She told herself that she was a good mother, as devoted as any natural mother could be. But for obvious reasons, she had never been able to nurse the child. She thought they should tell people the truth.

Their story onboard the ship, usually glossed over

rapidly, was that she had married Ivar as a widower, soon after his first wife died giving birth to Charlotte. This lie was not necessarily believed by all. It was rarely questioned, either, since for many immigrants, entanglements from the Old Country were happily left in a state of benign mystery for the good of everyone. They may have been gossiped about frequently, but the targets of gossip were rarely confronted. Except possibly by a professionally inquisitive clergyman.

Ivar and Inez Lindfors had an edgy discussion about the matter.

“Ivar, the pastor—he will ask about Charlotte’s baptism. What do we say to him?”

“What we have been saying. That Charlotte’s mother died two years ago.”

“And her mother was your wife?”

“Well, not unless he asks.”

“And if he does?”

“He won’t. He’ll assume we were married.”

“Ivar, that’s dishonesty. To let him believe that. That you and Fredrika Grinnhaal were man and wife.”

“Well, we have been letting others assume it.”

“Yes. And we are tangled in a sticky web.”

“Inez, you call it dishonesty. Can’t we just treat it as our own business, and none of theirs? I mean, isn’t this the land where people can have their own private lives, to themselves? Something we came here to find? You know, we don’t need to even tell people that Charlotte’s mother is anyone other than you.”

“But is that what we will say? Will you tell the pastor that all of this is our private business? And none of his? Charlotte’s birth and baptism? If that’s what we do, why even go to the church?”

Ivar paused at this, because he had asked the same question of himself. But he found it hard to make this point now to his wife, for a most practical reason. As he had already admitted to her, his future in publishing might well be tied to the Church. Affronting or perplexing Pastor

Bjornholm might jeopardize that future.

Inez said it instead. "Ivar, we talk often of a newspaper in Swedish. And that means close work with the church. Doesn't it?"

Ivar sighed, "Yes, it does."

"So, Ivar, there's one way out. We tell the pastor the truth."

"If he asks?"

"Yes, if he asks. That you and Charlotte's mother were never married."

"And if he doesn't ask?"

"Then we act like Americans. We mind our own business. And everyone else minds theirs."

She chewed the inside of her lip a moment, then added: "And make sure you mind Charlotte as much as I do."

* * *

As the Lindforses expected, Pastor Bjornholm Wednesday evening asked immediately to see their daughter. He picked up the child in a grandfatherly way, said a blessing, and then to Ivar and Inez: "A lovely name, Charlotte. It is a family name?"

Without hesitation, Ivar answered: "Actually, Reverend Bjornholm, Charlotte was the name of our pastor's wife in Graskoping."

"Indeed. How beautiful."

Inez fired a bewildered glance at Ivar, in both reproof and admiration for a response that put to rest the whole matter of christening. Ivar's statement was technically correct, even though the fact was simple coincidence. He had no idea why Fredrika had chosen her daughter's name.

The deception was intact. After the pastor left, Inez stood with arms folded and her mouth set in a straight line. Acknowledging her silent question, Ivar asked, "I've been wondering, Inez, what do we tell Charlotte when she is old enough to understand?"

“Her first word was ‘Mama.’ Remember?”

* * *

Pastor Bjornholm had a concern far more pressing than Charlotte.

One Sunday he asked Ivar and Inez to see him in his cramped little office in back of the sanctuary, after the sermon. The office—little more than a broom closet—had a single chair, other than the pastor’s. He graciously offered it to Inez, holding a momentarily quiet Charlotte.

The Pastor took Charlotte from Inez, chucked the two-year-old under the chin and said again, “What a beautiful child.” In terror, Inez wondered whether the baptism question would come up after all.

It didn’t. The clergyman eased Charlotte to the floor and watched her scamper to the next room. Then he went to what was on his mind.

“My good friends, Ivar and Inez. While we have known each other for such a short time as members of Christ’s Fellowship, I must share with you an urgent matter. It will be in the letter I am sending to the congregation tomorrow. The Bishop, after prayerful consideration, is sending me to fill a vacancy in a small town northwest of Minneapolis.

“It is Belleville, in Athena County. You wouldn’t gather it from either name, but Belleville has a large number of Scandinavians, and primarily Swedish at that. The town has slightly more than two thousand residents, yet two Lutheran churches. Many of the members are farm people, from around the county.”

In a more modest tone, he added, “I shall become the pastor of the Trinity Lutheran Church there, which I am told has the largest membership of all churches in Belleville.”

After humbly accepting congratulations from Ivar and Inez, Pastor Bjornholm proceeded strategically and tactfully to his next point.

“I should say, Ivar and Inez, that I fear my reputation as

a clergyman is outdistanced by yours as members of the publishing professions. In the few months you have been here, your names have been mentioned frequently as those of citizens with much to contribute to our Swedish-American heritage.

“There is a small Swedish-language newspaper in Belleville that has, unfortunately, languished in inspiration, quality, and ultimately in circulation. The current publisher, an unfortunate soul, has decided to offer the newspaper for sale. We in the Lutheran ministry hope to attract Ivar and Inez Lindfors to take it over.”

Ivar in his short time at the *Turnblad* enterprises had seen the pile of other Scandinavian language papers delivered there, including the Belleville *Veckomonitoren*, meaning *Weekly Monitor*. He had noted its thinness, a mere four pages. It was a mixture of news items, various letters, weekly contributions from the pastors, a few advertisements, and “boiler plate” from a variety of other religious and Scandinavian-American organizations. It was a most unimpressive publication, badly edited, and saturated with grammatical and typographical errors.

Ivar also remembered the name of its editor, a recollection he had mentioned to no one, not even Inez. It was Olof Moller, his troubled old chum from Graskoping and Lund University.

Ivar had no doubt that this sloppy mess of paper reflected the character and marginal competence of its editor. Olof was sharp with words but inept in editing. This in itself was not unusual, since the publishing of small papers did not require language expertise. Most of Moller’s readers were semi-literate in Swedish, at best, and rarely noticed the shoddy editing. Many actually read Swedish for the first time after reaching America.

Ivar learned from Pastor Bjornholm that Olof continued to drink, as he had as a Lund University student, frequently and heavily. His French wife had packed up and taken their two children to Quebec a year and a half ago. Moller had

been escorted home often by police.

“This editor has a mischievous side,” Pastor Bjornholm noted. “Quite on his own, it seems, he wrote a piece on the sorry differences between the Missouri and Ohio Synods. This was the predestination controversy.

“This idea that certain persons are elected—that is, predestined to be saved and possess grace because of that predestination—has been at the root of much debate. It is an unfortunate position, in my view, since it leaves a person powerless to do anything to achieve salvation.”

Ivar recalled Professor Eklinden’s lectures on predestination in earlier Swedish culture, and how it led to Birgitta’s needling him about his stoicism.

“Do any Lutherans here accept that notion?” he asked.

Choosing his words carefully, the pastor replied, “Pastor Ray Kurtz, my predecessor, has shown sympathy for some aspects of predestination. However, he and I heartily agree that it is a matter for the clergy and not public discussion, since it invariably leads to strife and confusion. Putting all this in print for popular reading, as Mr. Moller did, was unfortunate.”

Ivar asked about the price. The pastor replied that so far as he knew, the entire publishing company, including press equipment, name and circulation, could be purchased for about three thousand dollars. Ivar expressed interest in buying the newspaper, but would need to look into the matter further. This meant visiting the print shop and Olof Moller.