

Love Story

by Jake Barnes

We take a flight to Oslo, meet our kinsman who is building a new house on land that has been his wife's family for years. He has two kids, the boy a precocious brat, and a girl who's interested in horses. His wife is an amiable Dane. It's a matter of status for a Norskie to marry a girl from Denmark, I have no idea why.

Hans gets us rooms at a hostel close to the old family farm, which is owned by no one in the family now, but the current owners, who are going to be on vacation, have graciously given us permission to have a picnic on the property.

Meanwhile we poke around Oslo, gawking at this and that. My favorite excursion is to the big ski jump. They let you go up but not to the top. From the observation box it looks like a long way down, and it's only half way. Who'd be crazy enough to ski down this thing I ask a cousin. He shrugs. He's an architect, and he's only interested in buildings.

I fall in love with a second cousin at the picnic. I make sure I sit next to her. She is a blonde with a reddish tint to her hair. A family trait, I'm told. She also has enormous breasts. I tease her about the bonfires. I tell her I heard that Norwegians like to build a bonfire on the shore of a lake and stay up all night dancing and singing and being naughty. She scoffs and punches me on the arm. "Oh, you Americans!" she says.

At sunset I find Inger standing on the dock looking out at the lake. I come up behind her and put my arms around her. I cup her breasts. She leans back against me and covers my hands with hers. I whisper sweet nothings. She sighs.

I look out at the lake. The sun is a fiery ball just above the horizon. I think to myself this is what my ancestors saw. Same lake, same trees.

