



Per Kjolseth

or

Marit's Husband

by

Gulbrand Hagen

Første Kapitel

Indledende Bemærkninger

Efter Marits viderværdige Reise til Chicago var det som Per ikke var rigtig stø i Geografien og Udenrigsgreierne. Det duede ikke længere, som det før havde gjort, hverken i Huset eller Selskaber, i Kjælder eller paa Loft: thi Marit havde det Moderne at komme med bestandig, og det tog Vind udaf Seilene på Pers Ark saa ofte, at han til sidst lod den strande paa Indignationens Klippe.

Hvad andet kunne han ha gjort?

Per var ikke mere end et almindelt Menneskei Overalls, naar han ikke havde Søndagsbuerne paa, og det var ikke saa ofte!

Han var original og resolut i sine Opfatninger, Per, og det hjalp ham ofte til at redde sig, naar Vinden stod paa.

Før havde han havt sin store Fornøjelse i at fortælle om Gamlandet, hvor alting var saa storartet: Luften var bedre, Solen skinnede klarer, Landet, Melken, Fløden, Prim, Ost, Spegekjød, Rakafisk og Lefse var meget bedre derover end her. Alt, som han syntes smagte nogenlunde ligt, var Ludefisk, naar han fik af bedste sort, og Marit var heldig med Tillavningen. Ikke for det at Per var en Knurrepotte i Madveien eller lastede paa Amerika. Langfra! Men han var patriotisk og fædrelandssindet nok til at lade Folk forstaa visse ting, naar de skulde paa Vegtskaalen, og at Norge var det mest velsignede Land paa Kloden.

Chapter One

Introductory Remarks

After Marit's eventful journey to Chicago, it appeared that Per had become somewhat uncertain in matters of geography and foreign affairs. It just didn't work anymore, neither at home nor in company, in cellar or loft; as Marit had the modern habit of always coming along. It so took the wind out of the sails of Per's Ark that in the end he left it stranded on at the cliffs of indignation.

What else could he have done?

Per was nothing more than an ordinary person in overalls when out of his Sunday best, and that was not often!

He was independent and resolute in his opinions, which often saved him in a storm.

He had previously had great pleasure in telling stories about the old country where everything was so wonderful. The air was better, the sun shone brighter, the land, milk, cream, butter, cheese, dried meat, cured fish and *lefse* were much better there than here. The only thing that tasted the same was *lutefisk*, when he found the the best sort and Marit's preparation was successful. Not that Per was particular about his food or blamed America. Far from it! He was patriotic and loyal enough to his fatherland to allow people to understand certain things when they were weighed up, and that Norway was the most blessed country on earth.

Herover kan man ikke få seg et ordentlig Skiløb engang, sa Per ofte, da her ikke er slik Sne som i Norge, og følgelig kan ikke Forenede Stater "sætte sine vakreste Jenter i Rad til at følge vor Idræt med Smil og ined Kvad." - At "sidde høit i Sagastol med Maaneskinskaaben op under Pol" var det ikke at snakke om, da vi ikke har nogen af Delene.

At Per kom til at utvandre til Amerika, det la han i Skjæbnens og Marits Haand. Marit vart nemlig født og opvoren i Wisconsin, og havde Per ikke kommet hid paa Frieri, vilde vist Marit den Dag idag gaat Jent, skjønt hun var baade snil og vakker, et forstandigt og godt Arbeidsmenneske, som nogen hver vilde væørt tjent med, men dette kom aldri for Per, som trodde på Skjæbnens lundefulde Tilsiktelser ogsaa i Giftermaalsveien, og det var nok.

Per og Marit var som skabte for hindanden, og deres Ægteskab var baade godt, lyst og oppmundtrende. Hjemmet var deres kjæreste setd paa jorden, og hjemme var de ogsaa bestandig, naar man tar fra Kirkegangen paa Mestesøndage og enkelte Ture til nærmeste By i Ukedagene. De var altsaa ikke av disse reisende Familier. Men Kjølseth var et meget besøgt Sted for baade Ung og Gammel, da de syntes at finde sig vel tilfreds der i den hjemelige Atmosfære. Præsetr, Afholdstalere og andre omreisende Brødre, med eller uden Mission, kjendte altfor godt til Per og Marits Gjestfrihed og gode Hjertlag, saa de tog ind paa Kjølseth tit og ofte. Dette bragte mangen Salgs Paavirkning ind over Familien og virkede en alsidig Kjendskab til mangt og meget, hvad Uddannelse angaar, saa det tilsidst knapt fantes en Ting som ikke Per hadde et svagt Begreb om eller kunde udføre i al tarvelighed. Ofte fik han Ros og Forsikringer om f.Gr. at være musikalsk anlagt, og naar Vennerne var reist, dyrkede Per Musiken med stor Ihærdighed - til han blev kjed af den og tog fat paa noget andet. Han blev saaledes en Alslagskar, og Folk benyttede ham meget, da der i Settlementet ikke var nogen Overproduktion av slige Mænd at ta til. Saaledes blev han Organist ved Vor Frelasers Kirke, Leder av et Musikkorps m.m.m.

Over here one can't even do any proper skiing, said Per quite often, as there is no snow like the Norwegian. Consequently the United States "cannot line up its most beautiful women to follow our sport with smile and song." - and "sitting high in the *Saga-seat* with the moonlight cloak up under the Pole" is out of the question as we have none.

That Per came to emigrate to Amerika, he put in the hands of fate and Marit. Marit was born and raised in Wisconsin and had Per not come here to court her, she would have remained a maiden to this very day. Although she was both kind and pretty, an understanding and hard worker who would have served anyone well, it never occurred to Per, who believed in fate's fickle ways, also in matters of marriage and was enough.

Per and Marit seemed made for each other, and their marriage was good, light and encouraging. Their home was their dearest place in the world and they were always at home excepting church most Sundays and occasional trips to the nearest town on weekdays. They were in other words, not of the traveling families. But Kjølseth¹ was often visited by young and old as they seemed to appreciate the homely atmosphere, Priests, prohibitionists and other traveling Brothers, with or without mission, knew Per and Marit's hospitality and kindness of heart all too well, staying at Kjølseth time and again. This brought all manner of influences on the family and brought about a diverse knowledge of many things concerning education so that there in the end was hardly a thing that Per did not have some faint knowledge about or could do in a rough manner. He was often complimented and assured that he was musical, and when the friends had left, Per worked at his music with great dedication - until he grew tired of it and turned to something else. He became a "jack of all trades", in much demand as there was no surplus of such men in the settlement. Consequently he became organist in Our Saviour's Church, band leader, etc. etc. etc..

¹The name of the place they lived. (Their farm?)