

COMING TO ASTORIA
A Readers Theater (Elementary Version)

By James Dott

CAST

Narrator 1, 2, 3, 4 (Narrator Roles can be combined)

Lars (Father of Astrid, uncle of Axel)

Anna (Mother of Astrid, uncle of Axel)

Jacob (Anna's brother)

Astrid (a young girl)

Axel (a young boy)

Narrator 1: Our story begins on a small farm in Scandinavia. Lars and Anna are visiting Anna's brother Jacob. His wife has died recently and he is very sick himself.

Jacob: Anna, Lars, I fear I am dying. Since Ingrid is gone, Axel will be alone in the world. Will you take care of him?

Anna: Lars, we can do that, can't we?

Lars: Of course, we can. Rest easy, Jacob.

Anna: We will treat him as our son.

Jacob: Thank you. Thank you. What little money I have, is yours to help care for Axel.

Narrator 1: Sadly, Jacob died a few days later. Lars and Anna brought Axel home with him. On the way they picked up their daughter, Astrid, who had been staying with her father's parents.

Astrid: Mother, why is Axel with you?

Anna: Because his family is all gone. We are his family now. Now you have a brother.

Astrid: I don't want a brother.

Anna: Astrid!

Astrid: Well, I don't.

Anna: Enough. He is a part of the family whether you like it or not. You will have to get used to him.

Astrid: Yes, Mother.

Narrator 1: That evening Lars has a talk with Axel.

Axel: I don't want to live here. Why can't I go home?

Lars: I am sorry, Axel, but since your parents have died, you will have to live with us. Anna and I will be your parents, and Astrid will be your sister.

Axel: I don't want a sister.

Lars: Life does not always work out as we expected. You will get used to living with us.

Axel: Do I have to call you Mama and Papa?

Lars: Aunt and Uncle will do.

Narrator 2: At first Axel and Astrid did not get along. They were mean to each other.

Anna: Lars, what can we do? Axel and Astrid are constantly arguing.

Lars: We must be patient. I know it's hard but in time they will get along.

Anna: I hope you are right.

Narrator 2: One night at dinner Axel had an announcement.

Axel: I am moving to America.

Astrid: That's good news!

Lars: How are you going to get there?

Axel: By foot, by ship, by train, and then by another ship.

Astrid: Are you rich?

Axel: No. But I have money from my father.

Anna: I am afraid that was all spent on food and clothes for you.

Astrid: I wish you were rich then we could get rid of you. But you are poor, poor, poor.

Lars: Astrid! That is enough!

Astrid: Yes, father.

Lars: But perhaps you will get your wish, Axel. Listen to this letter from my old friend Erik.

Narrator 2: Dear Lars, it was good to hear from you. I am glad my first letter reached you. It is sad to hear that so many have died in the home country. There are good jobs here in Astoria. Many have moved here from our home country and found work. You and your family should come. You will not regret it. Your friend, Erik

Axel: Astoria, is that in America?

Anna: Yes, in the part called Oregon.

Astrid: Is it far?

Lars: Yes.

Axel: You have to walk to the port city, then take a ship to England, then a train across England, and then another ship to New York.

Anna: How do you know all this?

Axel: My friend told me. His cousin went there last year so he knows!

Lars: From New York, we must take a train all the way across America and then go on another ship to Astoria.

Astrid: I don't want to go.

Axel: I do!

Anna: We are going.

Lars: But we must save a little more money first and then sell our farm.

Axel: I will get a job to help get the money sooner.

Astrid: You're too young.

Axel: Am not.

Astrid: Are too.

Axel: Am not!

Lars: Children, enough!

Narrator 3: It took a year to save enough money to buy tickets for their trip to America.

Astrid: I was sad to leave my friends.

Axel: I was excited.

Anna: I had nightmares about shipwrecks and losing the children.

Lars: I worried that our money would run out before we reached Astoria.

Astrid: I hoped that I would make new friends.

Axel: I wanted to see Indians and cowboys and buffalo.

Anna: I dreamed that the children would thrive in Astoria.

Lars: I prayed that what my friend Erik said about Astoria was true.

Narrator 3: They traveled to the nearest port and boarded a ship to England.

Axel: The first leg of our journey was short.

Anna: We took a train across England.

Lars: And boarded a larger ship bound for New York.

Axel: It was named the *Majestic*.

Astrid: The sea was rough. Mother and Father were sick. Axel was REALLY sick.

Axel: Was not.

Astrid: You threw up all day, every day.

Anna: Astrid!

Astrid: I was never sick!

Lars: Our ship arrived in New York Harbor on a cold clear morning.

Anna: We all cheered when we saw the Statue of Liberty.

Astrid: Except Axel. He was too busy throwing up.

Lars: We went through Ellis Island to register as immigrants to America

Axel: We took a train. There is no such thing as being train sick.

Astrid: Just being bored for days and days.

Axel: I saw cowboys and Indians and buffalo...

Astrid: and cows and dirt and rocks.

Anna: America is a big country.

Lars: At last, we arrived in San Francisco.

Narrator 4: In San Francisco they got tickets on another ship that would take them to Astoria.

Axel: It was named the *SS Columbia*. I didn't get sea sick! But Astrid did.

Astrid: Only a little bit.

Anna: Luckily it took only three days to get to Astoria.

Lars: When we landed, I looked up my friend Erik. He found us rooms at a boarding house. I got a job fishing for salmon on the Columbia River.

Anna: I found work in the laundry and kitchen at the boarding house.

Axel: We had to go to school and learn English.

Astrid: I made new friends.

Axel: So did I.

Narrator 4: Astrid and Axel learned English quickly. Lars and Anna learned a little but mostly spoke their first language.

Anna: Much to our relief and surprise, Astrid and Axel finally did get along.

Lars: Most of the time.

Astrid: We graduated from Astoria high school. I worked in a cannery and got married.

Axel: I joined the Navy but moved back afterwards and became captain of the ferry that took people across the Columbia between Washington and Astoria.

Narrator 4: There was no bridge across the river in those days.

Anna: They each had two boys and two girls - our grandchildren.

Lars: It was a good choice to come to Astoria. We made a good life here.

Astrid: Our grandchildren...

Axel: and great grandchildren...

Astrid: still live in Astoria.

Axel: Maybe you know them.

THE END