

Ideals, friendship and cruel circumstance collide as war comes to the Hill Country. Book 2 of the trilogy continues the epic story of how one family of German immigrants became American, through the wrenching tragedy of the Civil War.

Adelsverein - The Sowing

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# **Adelsverein: The Sowing**

**Book Two of the Adelsverein Trilogy**

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## Chapter Five - *The Cold Wind of Secession*

*“We were there for the wedding of Margaret’s son to Miss Amelia Stoddard,” Oma Magda said, “in March of the year that the war began. Her father was a wealthy man and she his favorite child. The groom had volunteered for the new State Army. Everyone wished that they be married before he was called away with his friends.”*

*“Was it a splendid wedding, Oma?” asked Marie, although her brothers hooted scornfully at such a girlish interest.*

*Oma Magda smiled and answered, “It was. Our little Hannah was included as one of her attendants, at the last minute. It was Margaret’s doing, of course. I had never seen such a mansion as Mayfield until then; like a palace, in a grove of trees and a garden all around. Miss Amelia was married in the grand front hall. She came down the stairs, floating as if she were an angel. She looked so very happy. Everyone remarked on it, of course, even my husband.”*

That was not exactly what he had said, though, as she leaned on his arm. They stood with Doctor Williamson and Margaret, who was a splendid vision in burgundy-and-white striped faille—in the front rank of guests as suited their position as the family of the groom. The younger Vining boys waited at the foot of the staircase with Horace.

“I hope they are not teasing him too much,” Margaret said. “He had a nervous stomach as a child. So mortifying to be sick in front of everyone!”

“Surely not,” answered her husband with calm detachment. Doctor Williamson looked around in mild puzzlement, as if wondering what on earth he was doing at Mayfield, in its two-storied hall with the graceful wood staircase curving like a nautilus shell down from the gallery above. “And if he is, I left my bag in the brake. I am sure I can administer some curative tonic.”

“She looks so beautiful,” Magda whispered in German.

Her husband whispered back in wry amusement, “At least she doesn’t look as if her mother and sisters have just finished frightening the very daylights out of her about what happens tonight!”

“Shush!” whispered Margaret.

Magda returned indignantly, “I did not have the daylights frightened out of me!”

“You did, too,” Carl murmured into her ear so only she could hear, as his sister gave him an especially severe look of disapproval. “You looked for all the world as if you were about to run screaming. I could have wrung Liesel’s neck.” He covered her hand with his, the hand with Mutti’s heavy gold ring on it. Magda thought back to her own wedding day: tightly laced into a borrowed dress, herded into the church like a stray heifer, trembling on the thin edge of panic. But it had turned out well, for he had been kind. She hoped that young Horace would be kind and that he would have many days and nights with the girl Amelia, who was now floating downstairs in a cloud of whispering white silk and orange blossoms.

She hoped also that they would be happy together ever afterwards, as it was in all the old stories. Even if they all were now living under the shadow of war, as the confederacy of states seceding from the Union lined up, eager for the chance to aggressively defend their rights. Even if no one could quite agree on what those rights might be, even if one of the rights insisted upon—in the harshest terms imaginable—was the right to hold other human beings in cruel bondage.

Horace, young Peter and his brothers, young Stoddard who had talked so boldly at Margaret’s dinner table, and her husband’s old comrade, Colonel Ford; they all were prepared to ride away into war, perhaps tomorrow, while Margaret stoically basted together grey uniform tunics and Magda’s own husband feared for them all in the deepest recess of his heart.

But for a while at least it seemed as if Margaret and the Stoddards were wishing away that black cloud, almost through a force of will, as the vows were spoken and Amelia and Horace were pronounced man and wife. The invited guests gathered close to congratulate them, while Negro servants brought around trays of

glasses full of champagne for the toasts. Peter and his brothers drifted away towards their friends, trailed by Dolph and Sam. The bride stood with her new husband, her maids around her, like a bright flower-bed, as Mr. Stoddard stood on the lower steps of the staircase to call out toasts to young Horace and his daughter and to their loving families. Everyone drank to them, drank deep and with joy and hearty good wishes.

“Here’s to the Confederacy!” Mr. Stoddard called out, to a great and lusty cheer from all the company. At first Magda thought that all drank from their glasses, although she barely touched the glass to her lips, as did Margaret. Her husband ostentatiously did not lift his glass at all, a quiet and cold expression on his face that dared anyone to make something of it. People near them were already whispering, their disapproval and hostility almost palpable. Magda’s heart quailed within her. Mr. Stoddard scowled, his countenance already flushing red as a beet as he glowered at Carl. Her husband did not seem to care; he held the delicate glass in his hand, his head lifted proudly. This far and not an inch farther, he seemed to say with every fiber of his being. Magda was reminded of an etching in one of Vati’s books, of Martin Luther defying the Council of Worms—*Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise*. Neither would her husband go against his conscience. Not for the affection that he held for old comrades, not for love of his sister and nephews, not even for something as trivial as a wedding toast. There were many hard looks sent in his direction then, especially from the young men already in militia grey; but also from their elders, the men in fine coats. And then one of them stepped forward, a lanky man with fading red hair—Colonel Ford, in his grey uniform coat all sewn with gold braid, a sword-belt buckled over a fringed silk sash at his waist.

“A toast!” he cried. “To Texas, and all those true sons who fight for her!”

The roar of acclamation crashed in Mayfield’s hall like the sound of the surf. At that, her husband’s reserve seemed to break.

He drank deep and when he lowered his glass he looked around, observing mildly, “I’d throw the glass into the fireplace, if you had

such in the hall and the glasses weren't so rare, Stoddard. That's a toast such as that none other ought to be drunk out of them."

"None should know better than one of Jack Hays's comrades!" Colonel Ford answered fervently. From the murmur of approbation, the bad moment looked to have passed them by. Magda considered how and what she might say to Colonel Ford in thanks. It seemed to her that he had come to her husband's rescue at just the right moment. Many of the company were still looking at them, with such contemptuous disapproval in their regard!

Margaret appeared to rise cheerfully above the scene of the unfortunate toast, saying only, "Mr. Stoddard sent for the champagne all the way to France. At great expense, I might add ... although it is hard to see why."

"Indeed," Carl looked into his glass, now near-empty after that last toast. "I think I'd rather have some of Charley Nimitz's beer, instead."

"Oh, hush," Margaret said, turning to embrace Mrs. Stoddard. "Oh, my dear, it was lovely! She looks like an angel. This is my brother and his wife—you remember, they were at dinner the other night?"

"Of course." It seemed to Magda that Mrs. Stoddard would have been very chill, if Margaret had not been there. As it was, she murmured a dutiful welcome and rustled away like an enormous animated peony. Margaret maintained her usual serene face and said,

"The house is so very grand—in the very latest taste, of course. Mr. Stoddard made his money in Brazoria, growing rice and cotton ... and in trading." Magda noticed that she did not say what commodity Mr. Stoddard traded in and rather thought that she could guess. That must have been what Margaret meant when she had said something about not approving of slavery, but the practice being so common among one's friends. Margaret continued, "But I'm afraid unless you have a lot of guests, everyone rattles around like a pea in a gourd."

She kept Magda and her brother close to her side. Magda had thought at first that Margaret was sheltering herself from the gentle malice of the other female guests, the family and close friends of the Stoddards. She was only the country relation, the wife of a plain

farmer, in an unfashionably dark dress, ameliorated at the last minute by addition of a new lace collar which Margaret had pressed upon her. From the way that young Mr. Stoddard and the other young sparks were scowling at them, Magda realized rather that it was her husband that Margaret protected from social isolation, or worse, in this elegant company. Margaret and the Doctor, as parents of the bridegroom, could not be so easily snubbed, as Carl and Magda would have been if they were there alone. She resolved to follow Margaret's serenely gracious lead, but wondered how long this would drag on.

"I feel like the goose girl, invited to the palace," she ventured at last.

Margaret laughed softly. "I know! The truth is I do not envy the Stoddards for their house at all. I am always more than happy to go home, and sit in my cozy parlor."

"Looks more like a temple, from the front, than a house," Doctor Williamson commented. "Why a Greek temple, transplanted to Texas? I've always wondered about that."

"It's no more out of place than a Gothic church," Carl pointed out.

Margaret added, "Really, if you go by what was here to start with, we'd all be living in skin lodges," and they all laughed from the very absurdity of such a picture.

Doctor Williamson tugged at his tall collar and neck cloth. "We would not have to dress up to quite this degree, if such were the case."

"Stop that," Margaret ordered and reaching up straightened her husband's collar dexterously.

Carl began to laugh. "It reminds me of a party that the good folk of Bexar put on to honor Jack, back when we first began patrolling the countryside. The Comanche raided pretty close, back then, you know. It wasn't safe for farmers to plow in their own fields, even if it were just a stone's throw from town. Well, we put a stop to that."

"I imagine they were most grateful," Doctor Williamson ventured.

Carl nodded. "They were, so they resolved to invite Jack and two of his officers to a grand ball. Jack said that if he were going to

suffer through it that he wasn't going to suffer alone, so he detailed Mike Chevallier and me to come with him. There was only one problem." He grinned, reminiscently. "We were poor young sparks, with hardly two bits to rub together and very little thought about attending such formal doings. The whole company had only one good coat among all of us."

"What did you do, then?" Margaret asked.

Her brother laughed outright. "Well, Jack put on the coat and made an entrance into the assembly, but as soon as he could, he slipped out the back way, and took off the coat and gave it to Mike, who went in to be greeted by all. Then he came out and gave the coat to me and I did the same. That coat saw more of the party than any of us did."

"It sounds like a theatrical farce," Margaret said, laughing. "And how long did you keep that going, little brother?"

"Three or four times, I think. It was a very merry company. It took some time for anyone to notice that only one of us was there at any particular moment and that the coat fit all of us very badly."

"And then what did you do?" asked the Doctor.

Carl answered, "Oh, the party had advanced very well by that time, we all came in, and confessed up. Everyone was very amused—but it didn't increase our pay." He looked across the hall, at the moving crowd of guests—the women in their graceful, bell-shaped crinolines and at the men, so many of them already in grey tunics trimmed with braid—and added irreverently, "Somehow, I don't think many of them are slipping out the back and sharing their coats!"

"We shall have to slip out ourselves, presently," Margaret pointed out. "We must be there to welcome the bridal procession and there are many more guests who are coming to the reception." Margaret signaled to one of the hovering servants, who collected their empty glasses and agreed readily to take a message for Daddy Hurst to bring the brake around. "Peter will see to the boys," she said, "and Hannah will ride in the open carriage with Amelia and Horace. Do not worry about your little chick, Magda. I have already told her what to expect and Amelia said she will let her carry her bouquet during the drive to our house." They took their leave of the Stoddard's

magnificent house, with no small relief. Margaret had Daddy Hurst take the shortest way possible returning to her house. "They will be some time, with the other horses and carriages," she predicted. "And I myself would like to catch my breath before the deluge of guests."

"Just who have you invited, my dear?" asked Doctor Williamson in some alarm, appearing to have heard of this now for the very first time.

"Oh, everyone!" answered Margaret comfortably "But not to worry, my dear. If you wish, you can wander off to your study with a book. Everyone will think you are in another room. The one advantage," she added to Magda and Carl, "of a large house with many little rooms."

Margaret's little rest, though, took no longer than she needed to remove bonnet and mantle and pin a lacy white house cap over her hair. "I must see that the girls have put out the tables properly," she said, "And I had arranged to borrow plates and silver from Mrs. Edwards' establishment, and they have not arrived..."

"I thought I worked hard," Magda confessed, as Margaret's footsteps tap-tap-tapped down the hallway from the family parlor, "but she makes me exhausted, just to follow after her. I cannot imagine how she does it!"

"I've often considered," Carl agreed, "that the world would be in a much better state if the Almighty had just put Margaret in charge of it from the start!"

In accordance with her plan, they did have a little time before the procession of carriages bearing the wedding party, and the bride's parents and friends came up the gravel drive between the blooming apple trees. Time for Daddy Hurst to arrive with two hampers of plates and glasses and a plump lady breathless with apologies for having forgotten the very day, for her establishment was all upset with sending her daughter and the children off to rejoin her son-in-law. He was an officer in the Army, the plump lady explained to Magda and he had been paroled back North, and her daughter wouldn't listen to a word but that she had resolved to go to him, and the dreadful danger she and the babies would be in, wasn't it just

dreadful! Magda lost the rest of the story between the rapidity of the plump lady's English and Margaret's urgent plea for help with rearranging the table in the verandah with the wedding cake displayed upon it.

Thereafter, Magda followed gamely in Margaret's magnificent burgundy and white faille wake, as the latter attended to the arriving torrent of guests and the demands of bountiful hospitality, spread throughout the many rooms and deep verandahs of the Becker home place. She did catch a glimpse through an opened French door of her husband and some other men—dear God in heaven, they were not having words? The other men looked angry, and her husband had that cold, tense look to his face that she had seen only a few times before. But as she watched from inside the room, he turned on his heel and strode away, ignoring the other men. One of them shouted something after him, something she couldn't hear for the clamor of guests.

At that moment, one of the hired girls dropped a tray of dirty plates with an almighty crash. When she looked back again, the men were gone. She went to look for Carl and saw him sitting in one of the chairs on the verandah outside Margaret's little parlor, with an older gentleman who had a handsome craggy face and a mane of hair like an old lion. She had noticed him before, more because he also seemed to be another outsider. Well, she thought, at least Carl did have someone to talk to; another old friend like Colonel Ford, to judge by the look of them, at ease together.

“They seem to be giving you the cold shoulder as well,” Carl remarked. He held up the bottle. “I know you don't. You mind if I do?”

The older man shook his head, “Not at all. Houston does not spree. Miss Maggy Lea put an end to that long ago, but I have no objection to others doing so.” There was a deep glint of mischief in the old man's eyes as he added, “Mrs. Williamson would doubtless have a quiet word in her ear, if it proved otherwise. Houston wins no arguments with women named Margaret.”

“Funny how that works out, doesn't it?” Carl poured himself a couple of fingers. “I don't win many, either, and I've tried since I was

in small-clothes. She's my sister. Mrs. Williamson, that is. M' name's Becker."

"Ah." Sam Houston leaned back in his own chair, with a look of satisfaction. "Thought I knew you. Your father came to join us at Gonzalez in those desperate days in '36, I recall, with a scratch company from the upper Colorado settlements. A tall, fair-haired man—you have the very look of him, I vow. He scouted for us, then. You did something of that service yourself, later on, did you not?"

Carl nodded. "With Smith's company and then with Jack Hays,"

The old man sighed and offered, "Not a likely man to accuse of cowardice, then. In my young days, I'd have called him out for that insult."

"He was young and reckless," Carl answered only, "and I didn't want to spoil my sister's party. Seemed a waste to kill him, really, aside from the mess and the embarrassment to my sister."

"You'd only be depriving some Yankee of the privilege, down the road apiece," Sam Houston raised a shaggy eyebrow. "I take it you're a Unionist, then?"

"As you are yourself, sir," Carl returned evenly.

"Not an easy thing to be, these days," Houston rumbled. "It's the hardest choice to make, Becker; between the difficult but correct—and that which seems most inviting but wrong. And when it calls you to go against your friends? Houston says it is a rocky path, a rocky path indeed." He shot a very shrewd look at the younger man, adding, "They are waiting for Houston to take an oath, you know. An oath of loyalty to a Confederacy which the state has been rushed willy-nilly to join, without agreement or even discussion among the people, save those true believers."

"What will you do, sir?" Carl asked before he thought better of it. The old man smiled a sharp-edged smile, the smile of a lion with a bit of fight in him yet. And he must have a bit of fight left, for he was speaking of himself theatrically, as was his fashion, as if he were another person entirely.

"Think you that Houston would share his decision until the time is come for it?" Then he sighed again, looking very tired and every single one of his long years, and lapsed into ordinary speech. "In

truth, I have not made up my own mind over what is the best course for our people, out of all those that are available to me. Our people... contrary, fractious and quarrelsome as they are; it is a tragedy that it came to this pass. I think sometimes I have lived too long, to see such dissolution of everything that we fought for, that our fathers fought for. This... this peculiar institution of ours, it is a paltry passing thing. To see good men, noble men, stout and patriotic citizens, rush to dismember our Nation on its behalf; that fills a bitter cup to the brim. It's not a cup that will pass from us, I fear. We... all of us... will be forced to drink of it, to the very last vile dreg."

He had tears in his eyes. Carl did not think they were feigned, even if the old man was notorious for a penchant for the dramatic.

"You think there will be a war over this?" he asked.

Houston nodded, sadly. "Of that I am most assured. I cannot pretend to know who will launch the first provocation, but it will hardly matter, once the smoke clears." He pressed his left hand against his opposite shoulder and added, fretfully, "The wound I took at Horseshoe Bend still bleeds, you know. As if to remind me of what war is like, what it costs. Do you need such reminders?"

Carl shook his head. "No... I dream of it still."

Houston jerked his chin at the cluster of boys in grey, some of them dancing a quadrille with the girls in their bell-shaped skirts, under the apple trees hung with lanterns in the twilight.

"They will not heed any of your apprehensions or mine, either, I fear. They will disparage the Yankees, rush onto the field of war and think it a holiday to fight their own brothers, their cousins."

"President Lincoln will not just let the confederated states go?" Carl asked, from simple curiosity.

Houston shook his head. "He cannot; he is not that sort of man. He was a representative from Illinois for a couple of years, when I was first sent to the Senate after annexation. I saw him now and again. We did not agree on much, I fear."

"What did you think of him, from first hand?" Carl asked. This was heady stuff, speaking to someone who had actually met the man whose election had brought the whole awful, festering dispute to a head.

Houston considered for a moment, finally answering, “A simple man of the frontier; like you and I, of no great education other than what he could scratch up for himself. A tall, homely and ungainly fellow, but it would be a great mistake to dismiss him as the backwoods bumpkin he appears to be. If I am any judge, I think he uses that semblance to disarm his opponents in court, or in debate. He was said to be good company with an amusing fund of stories, and none better at winning a hostile audience to his side, but he is often given to black melancholy. We had some slight communication...” the old man stopped himself, “...on some trivial matter, of late. But it was enough for me to form an impression of fierce and unyielding determination. He will do what it takes, to his last breath, to preserve the Union.” Houston sighed again, deeply morose and added, “He is abused by so many and with such vigor and frequency on every aspect of his character and person, I confess that of late I find myself feeling considerable fellow-sympathy for him on that score!”

“I’ll say that for him.” Carl remarked, “He has aroused more bitter personal enmity in Texas than you ever did. Until this last year I did not think it possible!”

Houston laughed in delight. “That is so, and he only had a year or two to work at it, too. No mean accomplishment, that!” He lifted his head, reminding Carl again of a lion, and fixed him with a speculative look. “So, what are you going to do now, young Becker? The difficult right or swallow your considerable misgivings—don’t equivocate, man, I know you have them—and join the rest of the crowd?”

“I’ll do what’s best.” Carl answered firmly, “What is best for my family and in the eyes of those I honestly respect. It may work out to be the best for Texas, even.”

“Be sure you’re right, then go ahead? Didn’t turn out well for one man I knew who used to say that,” Houston said, with a steely glint. “But it’s no other’s decision but yours, even if it is your choice to just to go back to your place and grow cabbages.”

“My place is up in the hills, on the upper Guadalupe, sir,” Carl answered, with a grin. “I make a good living from it. But in cattle and orchards, not cabbages. This is not a fight I choose.”

“As long as the fight doesn’t choose you,” Houston rumbled. Then he sighed heavily and said again, “I fear that Houston has lived too long... too long for this. All the same, young Becker... I wish you luck.”

*“I saw him with my husband, talking long in the evening,” Oma Magda said, “but I did not know, until Margaret told me, that it was General Houston himself. He was the governor at that time, although not for many days longer. The legislature had passed a law, saying that all public officials must swear an oath of loyalty to the Confederacy. And he would not do it, so he stepped down from the office and went to his home, rather than fight it or swear falsely.”*

*“General Houston, himself?” the faces of the boys lit up. “Truly, did you see him, Oma? What did he look like?”*

*“Like an old man, and very weary.”*

*“What did he tell Opa?” Marie asked, and Oma Magda answered, “To be sure he was right, and then to go ahead.”*

“I’ll not join with them,” Carl whispered to her on the last night of their stay in Margaret’s house, alone in the bed that Margaret had allotted to them. “So you need not worry about me, looking to the sound of trumpets and drums.”

“I had no such concern,” Magda answered, although she did. She had seen her husband’s face, at being excluded from the company of his old friends. “But Margaret... she has the same apprehensions, yet her husband and sons are volunteering. Do they not see matters in the same light as you? Why do you alone stand aside, while everyone else here rushes pell-mell?”

“Two reasons,” Carl answered, after some moments. “Firstly, slavery is wrong. I’ll not be drawn into defending it, not even by Jesus Christ himself, come down from the cross to explain to me why. Secondly, I do not think the confederated states can win.”

“Why, my heart?” she settled into the curve of his arms around her, the rumble of his voice against her ear. “Why are you so sure of this, against the urgings of all your old friends, your comrades?”

“Blame your father,” he answered wryly, “Your father, who gave me books and taught me to think. Jack, too, had a part in forming my convictions. I’ve been sure of this, ever since I began to notice that all the things we buy at Specht’s or at Hunter’s, if it’s manufactured, mostly it comes from the north. Our Colt revolvers and other guns, as I pointed out to young Stoddard that first evening we were here, for all the good it did me. The books we buy? All printed in the North. Charley Nimitz hopes someday to see a railway built, to bring people to his fine hotel, but where are all those steam engines built? Who builds the ships that bring all these goods around to Galveston or down to New Orleans? I know there are shipyards in the South, but most of them are in the North. Where would Johann have gone to study medicine, if not back to Germany? He might have gone to Boston or some other school... in the North. There is no school where he might have studied in the South!” He sighed, seeming melancholy.

Magda tightened her arms around the dear sweet shelter of him and whispered, “So, my heart... surely it cannot be that bad!”

“Yes, it can,” he continued. “One more matter, my dearest Margaretha—where do all the new immigrants go, such as yourself?” Playfully, he squeezed her breast. “Herr Pastor Altmueller pointed it out; they go to the North. What matter if some of them stop in the factories, or tend small farms in the territories? To the free soil states, where they do not have to compete with slave labor! What are we, my heart? We are farmers, with our little orchard and our cattle herd. So are most of us. We grow what we need and sell the rest, buying only what we need and can’t make ourselves. I fear that we are rather like the Indians. We have our own ways, and like them best. We’ll change the Comanche as we are stronger, and the North will change us as they are stronger still. In the end, all I can do is attempt to keep my own safe; you and the children, my land and my friends. I took a vow once,” he said, and Magda knew from the way that his voice changed that he was coming close to speaking of that which he had never spoke of before to her. “I took a vow on the blood of my brother, which was splattered all over me—that I would never put my trust in a man who wore a fancy uniform. And that I would not follow a

leader who would surrender. The Confederation will surrender if it comes to war. Not right away, they'll put up a good fight—but in the end, they will surrender. Jack and General Sam are the two best soldiers I know. They'll have no part in this madness and I will heed their counsel over any other."

Margaret saw them away in the morning, standing on the verandah, neat as a pin in her plain morning dress with a large apron tied over all. Her husband stood with her and young Peter also, the Doctor saying in some surprise, "Were you leaving today? It seems as if you have just barely arrived, but it has been most pleasant to have you visit again." He shook Carl's hand warmly, and then seemed to remember something. "Does that shoulder of yours still bother you, then?"

"No. Hasn't in years, except when the weather changes."

Margaret embraced him, and her eyes seemed to shine with tears. "Come back soon, little brother! Don't you dare stay away for so long, again! And Margaretha, dear sister! You must write me, often and again and again. I would see the children again also, before they are grown men and women!" Over her shoulder, Magda saw her husband holding out his hand towards Peter for a farewell handshake. But with a stony look on his face, the younger man placed both of his hands behind his back and stared his uncle down.

She heard Carl say very quietly, "Goodbye, Peter. Stay safe. If for nothing else, then do so for your mother's sake." Peter turned on his heel and went inside without a word. Magda did not think anyone else noticed in the flurry of farewells, as Daddy Hurst began helping Sam and Hannah up into the brake. In a few minutes they were away, the gravel flying from beneath the horse's hoofs and the iron-shod wheels.

"That was so much more enjoyable than I had thought it would be," Magda said, breathlessly, although her husband seemed hardly to have heard her. He looked out the window as the brake rolled by the apple trees, as if he looked into the far distance and did not see them at all.

In Friedrichsburg, the stage stopped to let down passengers at the back of Charley Nimitz's hotel, at a little roofed shelter. The last leg from Neu Braunfels had been quite crowded. Hannah and Sam had needed to sit on their parents' laps, as the stage bowled along at a great rate, swaying effortlessly over the smoothly rolling road that Magda and Vati, with their friends in the first wagon train, had crossed with such effort.

"So glad to see the oak trees again," Magda said, as Carl lifted Hannah down to her. She stretched on tip-toe to relieve the cramp in her legs from sitting in one position for so long. "Wake up, Hannah my duckling... we're nearly to Vati's. We'll have to walk from now, but it's only a little way."

The coach was late, it was already twilight and the lanterns were lit in Charley's garden; the lanterns that hung from the pergolas that supported Charley's grape and hop arbors. The coachman's assistant threw down their bags from the luggage van into a mound, from which the passengers must seek out their own.

"I traveled twice as far as this with only a blanket and an extra shirt," Carl complained genially, as they pulled their own heavy bags to one side. "Why did we need so much, Margaretha?"

"Because of the children!" she answered, "And very respectable you would have seemed, wearing just a blanket to your own nephew's wedding!"

"Mama, are we almost home, now?" Hannah asked plaintively.

Carl ruffled her hair, answering, "Yes we are, duckling, don't you fret." Over her head, he added to Magda, "I'll carry her. We'll take the bags into Charley's place and I'll come for them later."

The smells of good cooking wafted from the kitchen at the back of the hotel and here was Charley, magnificently welcoming, walking down the path towards them and the other folk who had come in on the regular stage; the good bourgeois man of business, with a gold watch chain and fob stretched across his fine silk vest. He had grown out a good beard since Magda had first met him, tending the Verein storehouse and doing magic tricks to amuse the very much younger Rosalie, back when Friedrichsburg was a clearing of half-

built houses and simple cabins among the trees and the marks of Mr. Bene's surveying party.

"Hello, and welcome home!" he called, as soon as he was within distance. "You must be tired; everyone always is. Don't bother with your bags. I'll send them along. How was the wedding and your good sister?" He kissed Magda's hand with exuberant affection, grinning at Carl as if daring him to do anything about it. Once they had been rivals for her, but were still and always friends.

Carl didn't rise to the bait. "I spent the whole two weeks thinking I would kill for some of your good beer," he answered.

"Well then, stay and have some," Charlie offered, with the greatest good cheer. "It's suppertime, too. If you aren't expected at your father's yet, then sit down and break bread with us. I'll have one of the boys hitch up the dog-cart and take you all home afterwards—what about that, hey?"

Magda's resolve wilted; it was already late, past the time that Vati and Rosalie would have expected them. It would be a very great trouble now, to walk to Vati's house and put a meal in front of the children and themselves, and here was Charley, with a hotel kitchen at his disposal.

"Charley, you are an angel," she answered gratefully.

Charley beamed, "Right this way, ladies and gentlemen, mesdames and messieurs! Welcome to the very finest hotel between the grand city of Austin and the very inviting metropolis of... I forget, is it San Diego, or Yuma? Three log cabins and a saloon, so I am told. Certainly it is the only place where you can procure a hot bath."

"And clean sheets," Magda joked. Charley always made her laugh, but he was no charming lightweight. He had an extremely good head for business on his shoulders and she realized with an interior giggle that he and Margaret would get along famously, if they ever met.

"And good beer," her husband added, meaningfully.

Charley laughed and led them into the hotel dining room through the garden entrance. "Ah, I believe that is known in Ranger parlance as a hint! Sophie, Sophie dear, look who is returned! Fresh

from the amusements and excitements of the big city! I marvel they were able to drag themselves away.”

Sophie Nimitz, who had been Sophie Miller, once upon a time, exchanged a look of amusement with Magda and asked, “Was it wonderful? Did you have a nice time in the city, Magda? You must tell me all about it!”

Carl said ominously, “You promised us beer, Charley. And food.”

“It was terribly... well, interesting,” Magda answered and the children chorused their own excitement and hunger.

Charley commanded, “Well, sit down, sit down. We’ll bring it, straight away. What’s the latest news, though? Has the war started yet?”

“No,” Carl shook his head. “But the governor resigned rather than take the oath of allegiance to the Confederacy. We heard about it, the morning that we left. It was all over town.”

Charley was stunned out of his levity. “Is this true? He just... stepped down, like that? Without putting up any sort of fight at all? But he is the greatest man in Texas, how could that be?”

“Because he is the greatest man in Texas,” Carl answered heavily, as Sophie unobtrusively steered them towards an empty set of places at the table where the guests took their meals. “It would tear the state apart if he chose to call for people to take his side. He believes in the law and the will of the people.”

“And he is old, too,” Magda added with defensive sympathy for the man that she had watched now and again throughout that long evening after the wedding, “Older than Vati. He looked so very tired. He was at the party— after the wedding at Margaret’s house.”

“That makes it... very strange, now, doesn’t it?” Charley still looked unaccustomedly grave.

Carl said, “It means the first time in almost thirty years that General Sam hasn’t been in authority of one kind or another in Texas.”

“A bit like having your father die, I’d think,” Charley observed.

Carl laughed shortly, “Worse. I thought more of General Sam than I ever did of my father.”

"I'll bring you some beer, then," Charley said and slapped Carl's shoulder in a comradely way. "We'll send him off with a toast of our own, to him. And then I've got a question for you and news of my own that you wouldn't have heard."

"Wonder what that can be?" Carl looked across the table, raising his eyebrows. "We've just come from Austin, I thought we would have heard everything there."

"Here, to hold the children over." Sophie brought a plate of bread and butter, and set it before the children. It's pease-soup tonight and a ragout of smoked pork and pickled cabbage for main course. Apple pie for afters." She twinkled merrily at Magda and added, "The pie should taste familiar, we bought the apples from you, I vow. Did you have such good food at your sisters?"

"We did, almost," Magda answered tactfully and Dolph spoke up, "We had iced-cream, once. It was a very great treat. Aunt Margaret said the ice came all the way from New England on a ship, and then up from the coast in a special wagon."

"It was almost as expensive as gold," Magda marveled, "But very good, nonetheless."

"Here you go!" Charley set down a couple of tankards as Sophie shook her head in disbelief, and pulled out a chair. "To General Sam! Prosit!" Carl and Charley solemnly struck them together, and drank deeply.

"That's a toast that it's an honor to drink, in water, if nothing else," Carl said and Magda knew he thought of the toast in the hall of Mayfield that he would not drink. "So, what is this great news that we haven't heard, Charley?"

"Miss Magda's little brother is home from Germany," Charley answered, with a grin. "Surprised, eh? I knew you would be! He came up on the stage from San Antonio, four days ago. He's at your father's now."

"Johann!?" Magda cried, half delighted but worried all the same. "He's home? But why? He was supposed to stay in Germany and study until the end of summer."

Her little brother had been timid and serious as a boy, as much as Friedrich, his twin in every other way, had been a lively and

reckless young spark. He had gone to study medicine in Germany six years before, with the assistance of Vati's many friends who thought that Johann showed much promise, and that there was need for a doctor well-trained in a way that couldn't be found anywhere else.

"As for why?" Charley spread his hands and shrugged, "Who knows, really. He told me he became worried about a blockade. That fighting might begin before he could get home. If he didn't come at once, he might not be able to come home for years."

"He looks very much the earnest young doctor." Sophie added, "He has a mustache like Chancellor Bismarck's, but it doesn't help. He still looks very young. Now, I bring you the soup! I was waiting to see your faces, when Charley told you!" She bustled away towards the kitchen, as Carl said, "Well, at least he won't want to enlist, along with all the other young sparks. Since he just got home, he'd probably want to stay a while."

"You'd be surprised," Charley answered confidently. "You'd be surprised indeed." He looked thoughtfully at Carl, "You know, now that the Army is gone—the US Army, I mean—we're in a bit of a perilous situation, with no protection from the Indians and all. I've been recruiting men for our own company. It'll be official, part of the state army and all. Call ourselves the Gillespie Riders. I'd like you to come in with us. You'd be a Godsend, with your experience."

"No," Carl said at once. Charley looked a little taken back.

"You're sure?" he asked and Magda looked from his face to her husband's obstinate one.

"Charley, if it's something approved by the Committees of Public Safety and the secessionists in the legislature, there's going to be that oath involved. General Sam wouldn't take it and I'm damned if I'll take it, either."

"Be reasonable! We have to do something to protect our families," Charley said.

Carl answered wearily, "I already do that. My neighbors and our sons and hired hands; we'll patrol our lands just as we have, whenever there's reports of strangers. But this oath business stinks like an overfull privy on a hot summer day."

*Adelsverein: The Sowing*

Charley looked at his beer stein and ventured carefully, “It might not be a bad idea, you know... to take it. There’s a lot of suspicion about where we stand, now that it’s come down to secession. Maybe we should make a demonstration. Let there be no doubt about our loyalties. Prove that we stand with our neighbors—with all of them, not just the Germans. Lindheimer says—”

“I know what he says.” Carl finished his own beer and set the stein down with a snap. “And I think I proved where my loyalties are a long time ago. I don’t reckon I need to prove them again.”

*“So we thought,” Oma Magda sighed. “So we believed for a time that we could look to ourselves... that we would be left alone, in our high hills. That if war came, it would somehow pass us by. We were wrong. But as much as I thought about it, I could not find where we might have done anything different and still held ourselves with honor and pride.”*

Ideals, friendship and cruel circumstance collide as war comes to the Hill Country. Book 2 of the trilogy continues the epic story of how one family of German immigrants became American, through the wrenching tragedy of the Civil War.

Adelsverein - The Sowing

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