



Jingo Fever Chapter 1

“Why don’t you go back to Germany where you came from!”

“Yeah! Go on home, Kraut.”

The boys’ shouts followed Adelle as she raced toward her uncle’s house on the shores of Lake Superior. She wished she could just scream at them: *I’m not from Germany, I’m from Milwaukee!*

But of course she didn’t have the nerve. Why did she and her mother have to come to this awful town anyway?

Suddenly, the heel of her high button shoe caught in a rut. Adelle’s dress and petticoat went flying up as she tumbled to the ground. *Ugh*. Mother’s groceries flew in all directions. The spring thaw had turned the streets of Ashland to mud. As least she had long stockings on. The hooting laughter of the boys came closer. Tears sprang to her eyes and she wished she could just disappear into the ground.

Adelle scrambled to pick up the cans of food and fresh fruit, now bruised. A can of beans rolled out of her reach.

“Quite a mess you made there, Kraut Klein,” one of the boys teased. “Hey, Howie, you like the sound of that—Kraut Klein?”

“That’s perfect,” the other boy answered. “Wanna’ play kick the can?” He sent the canned beans spinning across the street.

Adelle crawled through the mud, frantically grabbing the remaining groceries and stuffing them back into the sack. She stood up, eyed the can that had rolled away and started walking toward it. But the boy named Howie was faster than she. Just as she bent over to pick up the can, he kicked it out of reach once again. Mortified, Adelle straightened and ran.

When she neared her uncle’s house—a cabin really, by Milwaukee’s standards—she slowed her pace. Even though there was a chill in the air, sweat trickled down her forehead. Adelle took a deep breath. She didn’t want Mother to know those boys were picking on her because she was German. There was no telling what embarrassing thing Mother might do in response; she was so proud of her German heritage, she didn’t seem to realize that it was 1918, and the United States had been at war with the Kaiser for almost a year.

Adelle admonished herself for even thinking such a thing. Mother was more concerned about the outcome of this war than anyone. Adelle’s brother, Karl, had volunteered for the U.S. army against her wishes and was now somewhere in France with his division. For a brief moment Adelle imagined Karl being shot at, being hit, blood dripping down his forehead. She winced. These horrible images came to her more frequently now, since his letters had stopped coming.

Adelle took a deep breath and shook off her fear. The faint scents of cedar and pine were smothered by the odor of fish. *Yuck*. The whole town smelled of it, but Uncle Mike's house was right on Lake Superior, so the fish smell was even stronger here, especially now in the first months of summer. For some reason it bothered her more this year than before.

"You're finally home," her mother said as Adelle entered the small cabin. "What took . . . ?" Mother looked at Adelle's mud-spattered dress. "What in the world?"

"I . . . fell down." Adelle avoided her mother's eyes.

"Look at me, *Mädchen*." Her mother drew out the German word for *girl* in a way that meant trouble. "Adelaide, tell me the truth."

Adelle had never been successful lying to her mother. "I was running." *That much was true*.

"Running? On these muddy roads? Whatever for?"

Adelle kept silent. She couldn't lie, but she didn't want to tell the whole truth either.

"Ad-e-laide . . . I want the truth." When her mother used her full name, instead of Adelle or Addy, she knew she couldn't avoid the true explanation any longer.

"Some stupid boys. They were calling me names."

Her mother turned quickly and began putting the groceries away with purpose. "Because you're German." Her words sounded like a quick slap.

"I guess." She didn't want Mother to start in again on how she must stand up for her German roots. It seemed everybody hated them since they'd come to Ashland, and Mother wasn't helping the situation. These days, with the Great War on, some people thought anyone from Milwaukee was an enemy spy. Her Uncle Mike said it was because there were so many Germans living in Milwaukee and a lot of them had only been in this country a short time.

Her mother was still mad. "They're just uninformed, foolish boys. *Dummkopfs*. Ignore them."

Adelle wished Mother wouldn't use those German words, but she wasn't about to tell her so. Instead, she joined her at the cupboard, helping to put things away. "Do you really think this is the war to end all wars?"

"That's what President Wilson hopes." Her mother sighed. "That's what we all hope." She looked at Adelle, gray eyes sad.

She's thinking of Karl. Mother almost never spoke about him, but Adelle knew he was on her mind all the time. It seemed like Mother had aged since the war began. Karl's last letter had arrived in March, but it was June now so they didn't know where he was. All he'd said was that his division was heading toward the Front. The Front. The word had an ominous tone, like some huge wave that would swallow them all.

Mother had been dead set against Karl going off to fight her homeland, but Adelle's father said that she shouldn't

look at it that way. He was fighting the Kaiser—and wasn't that why their parents had left Germany not so long ago? To get away from the Kaiser's unfair laws?

Mother agreed, but she was still against the war. She didn't say much outside the family, though. A law had just been passed that said you couldn't talk against the war. Daddy said the whole country had jingo fever.

When Adelle had asked what that meant, he replied, "It's when people get overly patriotic. They do everything to prove their loyalty to America – including mean, unfair, things. They become suspicious of people they think are not like them. Right now, German-Americans are suspect simply because they or their relatives came from Germany at some time in the past

He shook his head. "It's ridiculous."

Remembering the conversation made her miss Father all the more. He always had time for her questions and explained things so clearly. Mother didn't want to talk about the war, or, it seemed, anything else these days. War, war, war . . . and the different ways people reacted to it. It was all so confusing for Adelle. But she knew one thing: she was afraid for Karl. The image of him being shot returned.

She squeezed her eyes shut and forced herself to think of something pleasant. Anything. *Ice cream*. That would taste good right now. She was still warm from running.

"How's Uncle Mike?" she asked, eager to change the subject.

"About the same."

"I still don't see why he can't just move to Milwaukee, and we could all stay together there."

"Now, Adelle, we've been all through that. This is Mike's home. He'd be miserable in a big city."

"Well, I'm miserable here," Adelle burst out.

Mother looked stung. "Don't you use that tone with me, young lady. Go clean yourself up."

Adelle stalked off to the room she shared with her mother. She closed the door and took off her dress. There was mud on the hem and a few splashes here and there, but her petticoat and stockings had taken the worst of it. *Stupid boys*. If only she had the nerve to stand up to them.

Her thoughts were interrupted by a knock on the door. "Adelle?"

"Just a minute." She slipped a clean petticoat and dress over her head. No stockings—she was still too hot.

Mother stood in the doorway. "I'm going to town for a few things. You keep an eye on Uncle Mike. Get him anything he needs."

"What are you going to town for? I was just there." "You forgot the can of beans."

Adelle looked away. In her mind's eye she saw that boy kicking the can, hard, just as she was about to pick it up.

“Oh, sorry.”

She followed her mother into the small room that served as kitchen and sitting area. She watched her leave, and noticed that her mother did not immediately head toward town. Instead, Adelle’s mother walked to the lakefront and just stood there, looking out at the waters as the small waves quietly rippled onto the sandy shore. Standing there, so close to the lake, Adelle suddenly thought her mother looked vulnerable, as if the mighty lake might sweep her away.

“She sure does love that lake.”

Adelle whirled around, startled by her uncle’s voice. “Uncle Mike, I thought you were sleeping.”

“A man can only stand so much sleep, Addy.”

Uncle Mike had called her Addy for as long as she could remember. Now, it reminded her of happier times shared with him, when there wasn’t so much to worry about.

She pulled out a kitchen chair. “Here, Uncle, sit down and I’ll make you some tea.” She filled the kettle, put it on the stove, and spooned out the tea into the infuser. She placed it carefully into her uncle’s old, chipped teapot and set a china cup and saucer in front of him.

“You’re growing up to be quite the lady.” Uncle Mike smiled at her.

Adelle couldn’t help but notice how much older he looked this year. He’d taken sick over the winter. That was why she and her mother planned to spend the whole summer up here, instead of their usual month.

“Thank you, Uncle Mike.”

“So, how are you enjoying your first week in the wilds of the north?”

“Well,” Adelle sat down across from him, not sure how to tell him that this year, more than ever, she missed Milwaukee.

He smiled knowingly. “I know, you’re a city girl. Of course, for these parts, Ashland is considered a city.” He laughed.

Adelle had to chuckle, too. “A very tiny little city.”

There were not enough big buildings, and too many trees everywhere for her taste. She frowned, just thinking about how dark it was here at night. *Why did it bother her so much? It never had before.*

“Don’t look so glum, child. There’s things to do here. Not as many as in Milwaukee, I suppose. Tell me, what would you be doing if you were home now?”

“Well, summer vacation just started, so I’d be helping Father in the grocery store.” Adelle loved that store, where a creaky ceiling fan swirled the mixed scents of fresh vegetables, pipe tobacco and new cloth all around her. Here in Ashland, there was nothing but woods and lake and the ever-present smell of fish.

“You’re day-dreaming.”

“Sorry.” *How long had she been staring into space?* “I was just thinking about Father and the store.”

“I am sorry you got stuck coming up here to take care of your ailing bachelor uncle. That influenza sure did take its toll.” His eyes grew sad. Adelle knew Uncle Mike’s fishing partner, a fellow named Steven Byers, had died earlier that year of the bad flu that had spread quickly and taken the whole country in its grip. “I’m sorry, Uncle Mike.”

“Thank you, child. It was a bad spring.” Suddenly, he was overtaken by a spasm of coughing.

The kettle answered with a steady shriek.

Adelle jumped up. “Just in time. This will settle your lungs.” She poured the boiling water over the tea infuser.

“What’s left of my lungs,” he said, as his shaky hand reached for the teapot.

“Let it steep a few minutes.” Adelle gazed out the big window at Lake Superior. She didn’t want him to talk too much, afraid that would bring on another spasm. Uncle Mike’s flu had turned into pneumonia. He was on the mend now, but he almost died.

“So,” Uncle Mike began, his voice as rough as tree bark, “you’re not as fond of our great lake up north as your mother is.”

The first night, just a week ago when Adelle and her mother had arrived in Ashland, Mother had taken her daughter out to “enjoy the view.” This was her family’s tradition. Every year when they first arrived, they would run right to the edge of the lake. Adelle hadn’t minded in the past, but this year, it seemed bigger and blacker somehow. Almost threatening.

“I don’t know, Uncle Mike. There’s something . . . scary about it.”

Uncle Mike nodded as he sipped his hot tea. “Well, there can be. That’s for sure. Every fisherman learns not to take this lake for granted. It can yield up a wealth of fish, or it can swallow you whole in a storm quicker than you can say jack rabbit. It’s not particular and shows no favorites. You have to respect it.”

“I guess. I just think . . . Lake Michigan in Milwaukee is different.”

“How so?”

“Well, this time of year, it’s a place to swim and have picnics with friends. There’s even a place to get ice cream across from our favorite beach.”

She thought of last summer, before her brother Karl went away. They went to the beach with some friends and splashed in Lake Michigan. Karl dunked her but didn’t hold her down long; he knew when to stop teasing. Soon they were covered with goose bumps and, after warming up on the hot sand, they got ice cream from the vendor and ate it until their lips turned blue.

“Well, now, child,” said Uncle Mike, “we have picnics here too. But if you think Lake Michigan is any safer than Superior, you are mistaken. These Great Lakes are all fickle maidens. Kind to you one minute, savage the next.”

Fishing sounded to Adelle like a dangerous job. “How come you like it up here so much then?”

He lifted the teapot and filled his cup. “It’s like the sea, child. So like the sea.”

“Lake Superior?”

“Yes.”

“Have you actually been on the ocean?”

“Oh, yes. I was nine years old when we came to America. I remember the crossing like it was yesterday.” “Really? Was it fun?”

“For me, yes. Not sure all the other passengers in steerage would agree with me though.” He laughed, and the laugh made his cough start up again.

Adelle patted him on the back. “What’s steerage?” She shouldn’t have asked. Talking was hard for her uncle. “Never mind. You should be still.” She poured him more tea.

“I’m fine. Don’t fuss.” He cleared his throat. “Steerage is how most of us came to America. No fancy cabins. Everybody all together in the belly of the ship. The women, it was hardest on them. They’d put up curtains around the small area their family claimed, to get some privacy. Oh, how they complained of the stench!”

“You mean the ship smelled bad?”

“Oh, *Liebchen*, did it ever. There were a lot of people crowded together, eating, getting sea-sick . . . you get the idea.”

“Yuck.” Adelle didn’t want to even imagine it.

“But for a boy of nine, it was an adventure. I didn’t mind the rocking of the boat. Took to it like an old sailor. For two months, I was in my glory.”

Uncle Mike was looking out at the lake, but Adelle suspected he was seeing the Atlantic.

“Standing on deck, sea spray in my face, I vowed I’d be a sailor on the Seven Seas when I grew up.”

“Were you ever?”

“The Almighty had a different plan for me. But I found the next best thing to sailing the ocean. Living here, fishing this Great Lake.”

Adelle didn’t know these things about her uncle. He’d always been busy out fishing the other years they’d visited. He didn’t have a lot of time to sit and tell stories.

“Your mother was twelve when we crossed the Atlantic,” he continued. “She loved the homeland dearly and didn’t want to leave her girl friends in Germany. She was angry, those first years in Milwaukee. Once our folks got settled and had a little money to spare, your grandparents brought us kids up here on holiday one year. She must have been about sixteen.”

He chuckled softly. “She met a boyfriend here that summer. Your father. I think that’s why she’s always loved the lake—it reminds her of that special time when she first met your dad. Since then, it’s always cheered her to come up here. She never even minded the chill of the lake.”

So, there was a time when her mother was angry to have to leave her friends too. But leaving them behind in Germany—she must have known she’d never see them again. Adelle felt guilty for feeling sorry for herself, stuck up here without her friends but just for a short time. At least she would be going back to Milwaukee eventually.

And eventually, Mother had learned to love this part of the world. It was hard for Adelle to picture her mother a young girl, in love. She knew Mother and Father had met here and that Father eventually moved to Milwaukee where there were more opportunities. That was about all Adelle had known. Until now.

Still, she was an outsider here in Ashland. Would she ever learn to love this place like her mother did? “I just wish . . .” How could she explain to Uncle Mike that she felt like an alien here? Someone who just didn’t belong.

Uncle Mike was silent for a long time. Then he took a sip of tea. “It’s the times, Addy. After the war people will get their senses back.”

So, he must have heard her telling Mother about those stupid boys. His eyes looked sad, and a wave of empathy rippled through her. Uncle Mike had not only lost his friend, but his business partner as well. And from conversations Adelle had overheard between her parents, it was clear Uncle Mike was having money problems. Now with his poor health he couldn’t even go fishing—the thing he loved most, and his livelihood. She spotted her mother coming up the walk. Time passed quickly for Adelle when she was talking with her uncle. If he would only move back to Milwaukee, she could hear more of his stories.

“So, how’s the patient doing?” Mother hurried in with one small package. Adelle had almost forgotten about the incident with the beans.

“I’m just fine, big sister. Having an enjoyable conversation with this lovely young lady.”

Adelle smiled at him appreciatively but got up to leave. Now that Mother was home she thought she’d sneak away to the bedroom and pick up where she’d left off in the novel she was reading, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Professor Aronnax had just fallen into the sea when she’d last put the book down.

Mother looked from Uncle Mike to Adelle. “She is growing up, isn’t she?” There was that sadness in her voice again.

Then she cleared her throat and put on her stoic front once again. “I see you made some tea. Is it helping, Mike?”

“It’s helping just fine. She’s a good girl, Emma.”

Adelle felt her face flush as she excused herself and headed for the bedroom.

“Oh, Adelle, wait. While I was in town I noticed a flyer advertising an ice cream social on Sunday. I thought you might like to go.”

Sunday was tomorrow.

“Who would I go with?” The one friend she had seen up here every year before this one, Clara, had moved away. To Minnesota, they said, to be with family. Adelle and Clara had been childhood “holiday friends” since they were little. And surely Mother would have to stay here with Uncle Mike.

“I think we should all go,” said Mother, to Adelle’s surprise. “The fresh air would do Mike good.”

“That it would,” Mike agreed.

Adelle’s stomach tightened. What if they went and people shunned them because they were German? What if those awful boys were there?

“I don’t think I want to go.” Adelle quickly stepped from the main room and hurried into the sanctuary of the bedroom, shutting the door behind her.

“*Liebchen?*” Mother was at the door.

“Come in,” Adelle sighed.

Her mother slipped in, closing the door behind her. “I know how you love ice cream.”

Adelle didn’t answer.

“Uncle Mike’s friend, Steven . . . his family are up here. We can go to the social with them. I’m sure they’re decent people.”

Adelle had never met them. The family of Uncle Mike’s lost fishing partner had always been gone on holiday the other years Adelle had been here. Steven’s sister, Adelle had heard, was married to a doctor, with enough money to allow the family to spend summers out East.

“I don’t know, Mother. The people up here – this year, they don’t like Germans.” Adelle tried not to talk back, even though she felt like arguing.

“That’s just a few silly, ignorant boys. It’s time you made some friends, since we’re going to be up here all summer.” Her mother’s voice held that tone that meant the discussion was over. She left the room.

Adelle bit her lower lip. If it were just a few silly boys that didn’t like Germans, why did so many people stare at them when they went to town? She’d even heard a woman whisper at the general store about “those Germans.” How could she ever make friends here again?

Adelle flopped down on the bed. *Ugh*, she wanted to cry out. This was turning into the worst summer ever.

She should be in Milwaukee with her friends instead of stuck here in the middle of nowhere, being picked on by stupid boys and smelling fish all the day and night. And now this.

But she knew there was no getting out of it. Her mother's mind was made up. They were going to the ice cream social.