

MARY CASANOVA

The Kliptfish Code



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藏书章

Mary Casanova



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Summary: Sent with her younger brother to Godøy Island to live with her aunt and grandfather after Germans bomb Norway in 1940, ten-year-old Merit longs to join her parents in the Resistance and when her aunt, a teacher, is taken away two years later, she resents even more the Nazis' presence and her grandfather's refusal to oppose them. Includes historical facts and glossary.

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*The
Klipfish Code*

*For my friend Johanne Moe,
who grew up in Norway
during World War II*



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Finally, a heart full of thanks to Eric and Charlie for traveling with me to Norway to find Marit's story.

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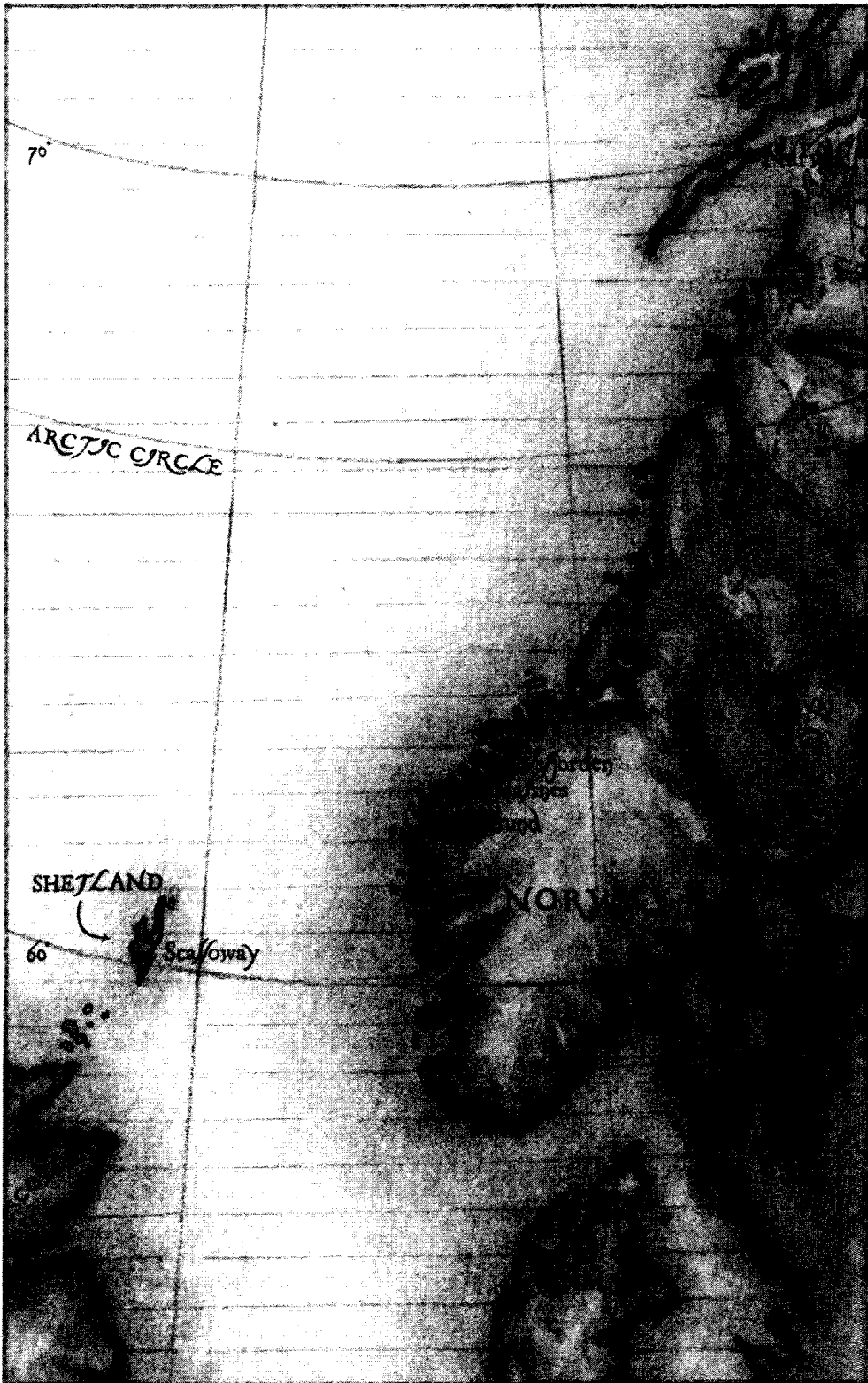
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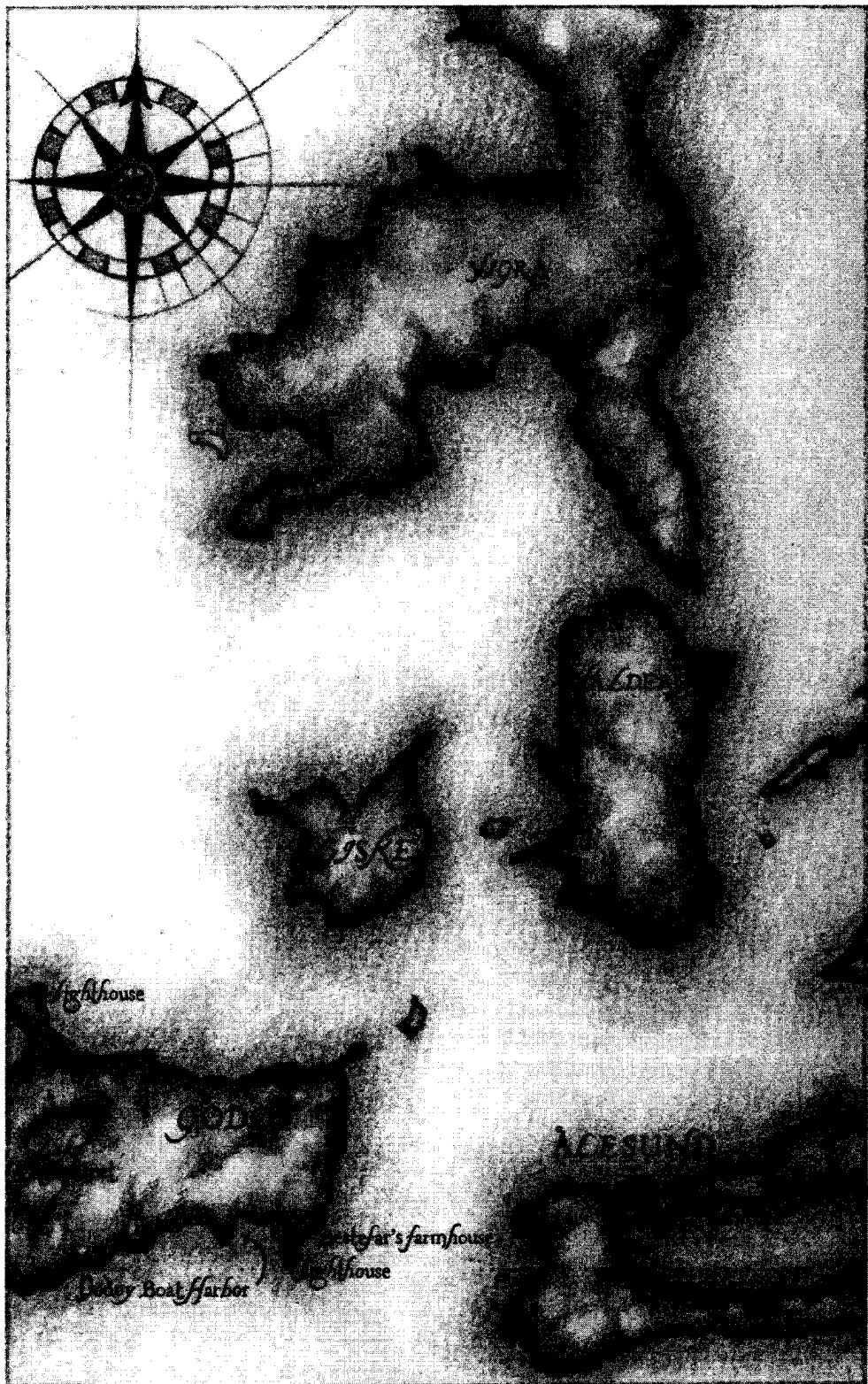
SHEZLAND

60°

Sca/voway

NORV





LIGNA

LINDA

LINDA

Lighthouse

LINDA

LINDA

LINDA's farmhouse

Boat Harbor

Lighthouse

D

FOREWORD

This story is based on events that followed the sudden German invasion of Norway in the early morning hours of April 9, 1940. Living under Nazi occupation, countless ordinary Norwegian people—students, teachers, pastors, fishermen—risked everything to keep the hope of freedom alive.



CHAPTER ONE

April 1940



In her dream, Marit raced Papa on her new wooden skis, farther and farther away from their *hytte*—their mountain cabin—and this time she was winning. Across the blinding whiteness, she pushed on, defying the mountains, said to be trolls turned to stone. She herringboned to the next peak, her thighs burning with the effort, then pushed off with her poles, and swooshed down through knee-deep powder.

An explosion wrenched Marit Gundersen from her sleep and shook her to her rib cage.

Wide-eyed, she bolted upright. Her skin prickled with fear. In near darkness, Marit flung back her feather-filled *dyne* and swung her legs over the bed's icy edge. What

had startled her? Her mind darted back and forth. An early thunderstorm in the mountains? The train from Oslo—had it crashed? Had the steamer exploded in Romsdal Fjord?

Mama burst into Marit's room. "Marit!" she cried. "Get downstairs!"

"Mama, what's going on?" Surely there was an explanation and no need to panic.

But Mama's flannel nightgown swirled at her ankles as she turned to the hallway. "Come, Lars—you must wake up!"

Marit yanked a sweater over her nightgown, shoved her toes into her sheepskin slippers, and then stumbled from her room—right into Papa, his unlaced boots hitched over his pajama bottoms.

Marit squared her fists to her waist. "Papa, tell me what's going on—"

"Downstairs to the cellar!" he said, his hand firm on her shoulder as he guided her toward the stairs. "Questions later."

Mama dragged Lars through his bedroom doorway, but he pulled back against her hand and dropped in a heap on the floor.

"I don't want to," he moaned.

"Lars—wake up. I can't carry you!"

Shrill and piercing sounds whistled overhead, followed by a thunderous *boom-boom-boom!* Papa turned and

scooped Lars over his shoulder—as if he had just turned three, not seven—and down the stairs they all flew.

The living room walls shuddered. Dishes rattled in the hutch, and the mantel clock and lamps crashed to the floor. Before Marit and her family had crossed the room, another explosion hit nearby—*boom!*—and the living room window shattered. Marit grabbed Papa’s arm. “Papa, look.” Beyond the empty frame, and under the questioning gaze of snow-topped mountains, strange planes wheeled through the dusky sky. The pounding continued.

“No time! Under the table!” Papa shouted.

They dived for shelter as an ear-ringing roar passed over them. Marit cowered. What in the world was happening? Though she was in grade four, old enough to brave many things—she was a fast skier, always the first of her friends to jump into the icy fjord waters in spring, the one who wanted to hike to the topmost peaks in the summer—now she barely knew herself. She clutched Mama’s waist like a frightened toddler. With each explosion that shook the house, waves of fear rolled through her. Finally, a troubling quiet fell.

The house groaned with brokenness.

No one spoke until the last plane droned away.

Mama’s blue eyes were set in an ash-darkened face, her normally blond hair now blackened with soot. “Marit, are you all right?”

How was she to answer? Nothing seemed real. Only yesterday they'd returned from skiing on their spring holiday. Only yesterday she'd left their grass-roofed *hytte* in the mountains. Only yesterday she'd laughed until her cheeks hurt. With a sunburned nose, she'd arrived home, ready to return to school. *Today*. She should be getting ready for school.

"Marit?" her mother repeated. "Can you hear me?"

Marit blinked dust from her eyes. "*Ja*, Mama. I'm all right."

Lars buried his face in the folds of Mama's nightgown and cried. "I'm scared!"

Her voice shaky, Mama comforted him. "We're fine," she said, smoothing his hair with the palm of her hand. "No one is hurt."

For several minutes they huddled beneath the table, as if the warmth of their bodies could protect them from what had happened. Marit pressed her head against Papa's chest. He wrapped his arm around her, his heart thudding against her ear. "We'll get through this," he said. Then he crawled out from their shelter and his boots crunched across glass to the broken window. He picked up his double-stringed fiddle from its fallen stand and shook out shards of glass. Holding it to his chest, he stared out the window. "Dear God—not Norway, too."

"Erik!" Mama said. "Get back—please."

He didn't move.

"But they might return any second."

"*Nei*, I think the Germans have done their damage . . . for the moment."

Marit's pulse thudded in her head and her stomach churned, but she finally found her voice. "Germans, Papa? Are you sure?"

"I'm sure. I saw the planes. Who else would invade us?"

"Invade," Marit ventured, "as in Austria and Poland?" Her parents had discussed the latest events throughout Europe every evening at the dinner table.

He was quiet for a long moment. "Marit, I don't know anything for sure yet. We need to find out who else was hit—what kind of damage has been done."

Limbs trembling, uncertain her legs would hold her, Marit crawled out from under the table. The hutch had hopped an arm's length from the corner, and Mama's teapot and porcelain plates lay in splinters. The potbellied cookstove tilted through the kitchen wall, leaving a gaping ragged hole.

Marit stepped closer and looked out. Dirt, boards, a bicycle wheel, and pieces of twisted metal littered the yard. Only yesterday four pairs of skis stood in fresh snow against the shed, but now they were scattered and broken matchsticks. More than once, her grandparents had boasted how Norway had avoided war for over a

hundred years. They said Norway was a peaceful country that got along with its neighbors. This shouldn't be happening!

Village dogs began barking. Smoke rose above the trees and drifted in through the holes in her house's walls and windows. The wail of a woman came from somewhere beyond. Marit's hands fell to her sides and a vague numbness settled over her. Talk around the village had made her feel safe: "Norway stayed out of the Great War of 1914," someone had said. "We'll stay out of this one, too. Our king will see that we stay neutral." Everyone spoke with certainty that the Nazis would never invade Norway.

But now, it seemed, they had.

CHAPTER TWO

Leaving



Over the next few days, Marit refused to cry. Instead, she tried to be as helpful as possible—sweeping up glass, wiping down walls, scrubbing out cupboards, and restacking the woodpile. “Far better to stay busy,” Mama said, “than to sit around worrying while we wait for news from friends and relatives.”

When her best friend, Liv, who lived three houses away, had said she must go with her family to stay at a faraway farm, Marit asked, “But why? You can’t leave. Can’t you talk your parents into staying?”

“I’ll show you why,” Liv said, leading the way with a limp. After the bombing, the doctor had removed a splinter as big as a finger from her leg. It had flown

through the air like an arrow and embedded itself in Liv's leg, leaving an angry red bruise behind. She picked a path through debris to where it looked like her dog had been digging a trench. "Here."

On hands and knees they peered beside the trench and looked under the foundation. A giant black bullet was wedged beneath the floor.

"It's a bomb," Liv said. "That's why we have to leave—just as soon as Mama's ready. Really, we shouldn't even be this close, but I wanted to show you—so you'd understand why I can't stay."

Marit cautiously eased away.

When it was time to say goodbye, the girls put their hands up and touched fingertips—a farewell they'd invented years earlier. "We'll see each other soon," Marit said, forcing a smile, though she doubted her own words. She didn't have an address to the farm where Liv was going. "It's a distant relative," Liv had explained. "My parents don't even know if he's alive. Haven't seen him in fifteen years—but we're going anyway." Once war started, how would Marit find her?

One day at dinner, Papa folded and refolded his hands, a certain sign he had something serious to say. "Marit and Lars," he began, "we contacted your aunt and grandfather and decided you'll be safer with them on the island."

Marit's forkful of potatoes stopped midway between