



Skipping Stones: a story of finding home

Gloria Koll

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Skipping Stones by Gloria Koll Kari takes three strides to the edge of the fjord. Like a slingshot, her arm whips forward, and she releases the flat stone. It skims the water's surface as she counts: en, to, tre, fire, fem, seks, sju. Seven, that lucky number in America. Vowing to make herself lucky, Kari travels alone by ship and train from the mountains of Norway to the flat plains of 1880s Dakota. With a man who intrigues her, Kari shapes a prairie life, encountering grasshoppers, blizzards, bankers who steal, and sons who love baseball. A different sort is neighbor Gustav. From his flinty Swedish homesteading mother and his fourth-grade education, he learns to figure profit and loss. He chooses his wife for her ability to milk a cow and trains his children to ceaseless farm work. Unavoidably in this tight community, the two mismatched families become entangled. Scandinavian mass migration, influenza, the Great Depression, dust bowl, and the home front of World Wars I and II create a wide-angle sweep across South Dakota and Montana. The camera lens tightens for tender moments: women helping women, older siblings caring for younger, and energetic families making it through happy and hard times.

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