

Short Story



"The Lady"

By Janet R. Sady

The Lady

Benjamin Sadosky spotted “the lady” with her lamp lifted high above the horizon. Hope filled his heart. A new beginning was about to happen for him. America! No one would know he had escaped from prison.

His clothes reeked of sweat and grime from having slept on the lower deck with two dozen others who couldn’t afford a berth. Rats had crawled around the grain barrels and woke him in the night as they raced across his feet. He breathed in the fresh, salty air and sighed.

So much for making an impression on his cousin Michael who was supposed to meet him when the ship docked. Benjamin hoped that he did not bring his snooty wife Sarah with him. She had never liked him when they lived in Poland. She always avoided greeting him at family gatherings. That was alright with him; there was no love lost there.

Benjamin smoothed his balding head and cursed the gene from his father’s family which caused thinning and baldness even in his teens. Now, in his late twenties, he had very little hair left except on the sides. How would he ever find a wife? Maybe through his singing and accordion playing, he could attract someone.

He strained to see the lady better, and Ellis Island. They had told him that he would need to register at Ellis. Perhaps he should change his name. Yes. “Sady” would be better. The name meant “green park” in Polish. It would be easier to write and say—and less easy to track if the authorities came looking. He doubted they would bother for the petty burglary charge for which he had been locked up. Poland would be glad to be rid of him. He would not be a drain on their prison any more.

The ship docked and he grabbed the tarp containing his accordion, his extra change of clothing and a few miscellaneous personal items. He threw it over his shoulder and got ready to

go. Ship personnel directed the first class passengers off the ship first and then the lower deck people were permitted to disembark. All the passengers were taken into the facility on the Island for health screenings. Benjamin knew that the sick and diseased were many times sent back. He felt fine, and didn't think he had anything about which to worry.

Registration took all day, and many of the passengers fell asleep from exhaustion. It was finally his turn. A number of translators stood nearby, and when Benjamin said, "Polish," a man stepped forward and took his information for the registration. That was when he became, Benjamin Michael Sady. A smaller ship took those who had completed the requirements to the New York shore. How would he ever find his cousin? Apprehension and fear filtered into his brain. Fortunately for him, his cousin knew the procedure and was waiting for him—without Sarah! He breathed a huge sigh of relief.

"Michael!" He shouted in Polish.

His cousin embraced him, and then stepped back and said, "Whew, you need a bath really bad. I can't take you home like this. Sarah will have a conniption. Come on, I know a place. I also brought some clean clothes for you. Are you hungry? We can get something from one of the vendors on the street. They are all over the place."

He grabbed Benjamin's arm and pulled him along through the crowds. They stopped at a vendor cart and Michael purchased four bratwurst sandwiches on buns, and a greasy paper filled with potato chunks. Nothing had ever looked or smelled so good to him. After eating, they found the public bath, and Benjamin discarded his filthy clothes and got a hot bath and shave. He felt like a new man. The future was looking up. What would the next few days look like? Would he be able to find a job? How would he and Sarah get along? He said a silent prayer that luck would smile on him and his new life—in America—the home of "the lady!"