

## Excerpts from *Farlig Ung Man* [*Dangerous Young Man*] by Anitra (Åslaug Hannestad Jevanord)

### Dancing Alone is Better!

*Farlig Ung Man is a kjærlighetsroman (romance novel) set in 1930s Hedmark, when the great estate families of that region were struggling to maintain their respectability despite disastrous economic hard times.*

*Our heroine, Tonje Skaugaard, is trying to figure out how to make a living after her family has lost its estate to bankruptcy. Seeking a remunerative career choice, she hangs out with Hamar's artsy young people. They party together nearly every day at the bohemian-flavoured estate "Lindgård", and now the friends are encouraging Tonje to reinvent herself as a dance-mistress. After all, she has nice legs, the guys all agree.*

*Of course love throws a monkey wrench in the works! Sjur Djevestad, a self-important journalist with cynical disdain for Hedmark's rustic gentility, finds himself in love with Tonje. However, she firmly rejected his advances one evening in Lindgård's garden. Now Sjur identifies a rival for her affection – Lasse, a young sculptor.*

*At a soiree, over a plate of cakes, Sjur taunts Lasse –*

"Everyone laughed when they read in the newspaper that you claimed that Hamar was crowded with girls who would like to model for you. And now, when they hear that no one wants to model, they are laughing even more."

"I can readily believe that," answered Lasse in a superior tone, "but I'm not bothered about it. I have found a model."

"A life model?" Sjur gaped in surprise.

"Definitely alive. That much I'll tell you."

Sjur didn't dare to ask who she was. But he saw the glance that Tonje and Lasse exchanged, full to the brim with understanding. He felt that his palms were damp and sweat broke out on his forehead. The fresh, golden-yellow slices of cake arrayed on a silver plate, which he had just a minute ago regarded with such a powerful hunger, didn't tempt him any more. He'd lost his appetite. Lasse's smile wrinkled the corners of his eyes until they looked like attractive little bouquets. Tonje's mouth made itself into a bow, red, steady, and full of sweetness, captivatingly delightful and impish.

"Miss Ilse," Sjur said a bit roughly to Lindgård's chatelaine, "would you like to go with me for a walk in the garden?"

Ilse seemed to ponder a bit, as though she was considering a minor temptation. But she overcame it.

"Don't *you* want to go?" she asked Tonje.

"No, I'm going to dance."

"Right in the middle of this bright afternoon? What would you dance, then?"

"Swing and waltz and slow and tango, Miss Ilse."

"And with whom?"

"With myself! Then there is no one to step on my toes."

"But then there is no one to put his arm around your waist, either!" said Sjur.

And Tonje remembered how he had held her, the evening she could not forget...

## Mind Your Manners!

*A few months later, now a trained dance instructor, Tonje presides over dance classes at Lindgård. The classes are popular – even Sjur attends. But as always, he shows up with "attitude".*

"Sjur Dvevestad, don't you intend to dance at all?" Tonje asked.

It sounded like challenge, which it indeed was. This was the fifth evening he had been here at the dance lesson in the festive salon without lifting a finger, much less a leg, to dedicate himself to the goal of moving properly on the dance floor.

The fully-subscribed evening class stood arranged couple by couple around the salon in a big circle. The pianist waited for a sign from the dance-mistress to launch into the first bars of a tango. The students stood feeling a little frisson of anticipation - they were like horses on a racetrack, ready to start, but the signal didn't come. Tonje walked across the salon right over to the young man who stood and leaned against a pillar with both hands buried in his trouser pockets, a highly discourteous posture in a classroom for dancing and good manners. Right next to him stood the one lady who didn't have a partner. Tonje urged Sjur to invite her to dance, but he didn't move. He didn't even look once at the lady. If he had done so, it would surely have occurred to him that this, exactly this, is how a deeply disappointed woman must look.

"Won't you...?" said Tonje, astonished.

"It's just as you said yourself – I have absolutely no intention of dancing."

"But why not? And why on earth did you come here as a student?"

"Can't I just stand here – or is that a bother?"

"Yes, it is – we don't want to have an audience. Especially not your type."

"What do you mean by that?"

"You know perfectly well. My students won't appreciate being made a laughingstock in the morning paper, in your own special column."

She stood and looked at him. He had an insolent, boyish expression around his mouth, and she remembered, for a dizzying second, how the roses had smelled so absurdly exciting in Ilse's garden, when she had wished that he would kiss her. He had not done so, but just teased her with his talk about his fondness for other girls, and at the same time had shown her his cold heart. The whole thing had been a game for him. But Tonje didn't understand it. She felt herself carried away, she didn't know out from in, and she felt angry with herself because she was anxious to be just the opposite. She would have given anything never to have felt his arms around her, or seen his gray eyes become warm and dark.

"You are ruining the class discipline for me," she said firmly. "Either you dance, or disappear."

"I wonder where you get your self-assurance," he declared. "If your students knew that you have been a life model for a sculptor, you'd have no more class discipline than the man in the moon. That's a fact!"

She felt that she went pale, that all the blood had flowed into her heart. It was an unexpected attack, and it seemed at the moment like a stab in the back. She had not known that he was so contemptible, truly mean. That he stood here and insulted her, there was no excuse for that, and it had nothing to do with his work for the newspaper. She went right up to him – she wanted to see whether he smelled of alcohol. He had indeed been drinking. There was no mistake about that.

Then she turned away and put her arm around the waist of the lady who didn't have a partner. The piano sounded out, everyone had been waiting too long, and the students were getting impatient. Just as Tonje turned and took hold of her partner, she slipped, twisted her ankle, and fell.

Sjur rushed forward to help her up, but she just lay there and moaned loudly. He took her in his arms and carried her out into the entryway. Then he ran to call a doctor. He could have spared himself the trouble. When he returned, she was already being taken away – there had been two doctors in the room. In despair, he stood back on the stairs while they carried her down. He had the feeling that the whole accident had been his fault. ...

## **Barn Dance Abduction!**

*Tonje is a paragon of virtue, despite suspicions about her modeling sessions with Lasse the sculptor. The novel, of course, needs a "bad girl" too. Heddi Darre is a headstrong young lady from another struggling estate family. She dislikes her stepfather intensely and has just reported to a group of her friends that she has taken revenge on him by pushing him out of the hayloft, luckily (for him) onto to a pile of hay. But attempted murder is nothing compared to her next desperate and depraved act!*

*Once again, the Hamar young folks are hanging out together...*

Heddi excused herself; she had to change clothes. She was heading off.

"I'm going to the dance at Loberg's barn," she said. Her red fingernails gleamed as they lay on the steering wheel of her little yellow two-seater. She had a cigarette dangling between her lips when she started, and nodded shortly to the others standing back by the house.

Ilse was not so easy to shock normally. But now she looked a little dismayed. Siri just shrugged her shoulders. She looked at Sjur. He figured he couldn't help it if Miss Darre went to a barn dance, and he washed his hands of it if she should go so badly astray, as far as he was concerned. ...

*...But later, after more of their crowd had assembled for a late supper, the full realization of Heddi's drastic action came upon them...*

Heddi was at a barn dance! Silence fell over the gathered friends as they digested this depressing news. Anders, who always had been so protective and gallant with concern for his friend, didn't neglect to take the problem to heart. He found it inexcusable that she had driven alone to the party. That ruined her reputation.

"We'll go and fetch her," said Anders. And Sjur had nothing against studying folklife closely. So it was decided that those two should drive up to Loberg...

Anders drove faster than usual, and they were soon at Loberg, where accordion tunes drifted out of every opening in the drafty old barn, and there was the tramp of feet on the dance floor. There were quite a few young men and women who hung around on the roads and farmyard, but most were in the barn. Anders did not like to be seen here! It would be clear to everyone that he was looking for someone; he just hoped no one could figure out who. Sjur sauntered indifferently after him with hands in his trouser pockets. Nobody knew him. A boy hurled some words after him, and those who loitered around laughed long and roughly. Sjur didn't give a damn what they had said. He looked around for Heddi, trying, if possible, to figure out what she was doing in such a place. But Heddi was not to be seen.

A farmhand, whom they knew, stood by the fencepost. Anders stopped and asked him very quietly whether he had seen anyone *he* knew there. The boy thought a little: "The little Darre car went north a while ago," he said with his mouth turned crooked.

North? Well, they could head the same way. Anders drove fast.

...

Finally they smelled a sour smoke odour coming toward them and saw the blue smoke rising up from deep in the forest... Anders stopped the car, and they both got out. A dog barked –there was a camp in the clearing. And there stood Heddi's little car by the side of the road. So the trail was easy to follow. ...A tent was set up in the middle of the clearing, and before it was a bonfire. In the tent doorway sat a young woman, and neither of them recognized her at first. She had a red kerchief knotted around her hair and long silver earrings in her ears, and jewelry around her neck and wrists. Close in beside her sat a handsome young man. He was reading her palm, and she let him do it. Anders stood as though fastened to the ground. This was worse than he could have believed. He didn't need to call to her. She rose and stood in the tent door, as proud as a country road queen.

"Very dramatic", said Sjur. "Good show, Heddi!"

She pretended not to see him. ... She laughed and tossed her head. "I'm staying here," she declared gaily. "Maybe I'll go travelling with this group – with *him*," as she pointed to the attractive man next to her.

"Have you gone completely bats?" said Anders. "Take off those geegaws and come—"

...

*And here we leave the rest of the story to your imagination. Clearly, a Hedmark barn dance is the first step on the long road to perdition!*

*Translation by Judith Anderson*