

## **Sneak Peek into Book 3**

Lynne stood in the waiting area of New York's Penn Station with her two suitcases and Uncle Leo's stack of luggage.

“Help you miss?” a smiling gray-haired man tipped his blue porter’s cap. He stood no taller and a lot thinner than she as he leaned on a worn pushcart. “Only fifty cents.”

Lynne nodded and watched the man hoist the bags as effortlessly as lifting a small purse. Uncle Leo was right; a porter would see her and come to her aid while he buzzed ahead to call his car service.

“Call you a taxi, Miss?”

“No. I’m being met at the exit for 33rd Street.”

“No problem, Miss. Follow me.”

They moved along wide corridors, passing occasional food shops making Lynne realize how hungry she felt.

“Good thing it’s early, Miss. Otherwise I’d be hard-pressed to get through here quickly. Never as crowded as Grand Central though. That place is impossible.”

Their walk along corridors and their elevator ride to the surface street took several minutes. The porter told Lynne the station covered half a New York City block. Huge by Billings standards, plus here the trains ran underground in many places; not something Billings would ever need.

At the exit, a row of taxis and black limousines idled, picked up passengers and moved away from the curb. When the third limo driver pulled forward, stepped out and opened the passenger door, Lynne saw Uncle Leo seated inside. The driver paid and tipped the porter before loading the mountain of bags into the trunk. In a few seconds they pulled away from the curb and nudged into New York City traffic.

"The hotel isn't far. After you rest a bit we'll go to dinner and plan our brief tour of the Big Apple."

As they idled in traffic, Uncle Leo rattled on and on. "We're staying in the heart of Manhattan. That way we can walk around Times Square and the theatre district so you can get a feel for the place."

The interior of the Manhattan Town Hotel began at its bland, wide entry but changed as they walked up a grand, curved staircase to the reception desk. Chandeliers hung down from the three-story high ceiling; their light ricocheted off the white marble columns and the white tile floor. A half-dozen uniformed bellhops with conductor-like caps bustled about, bringing guest luggage up a service elevator. They stood quietly as guests signed in, then directed them into spacious, shiny gold elevators along the side wall, whisked them to their room floors, and unlocked their doors.

The bellhop that carried in Lynne's luggage, opened her curtains and handed her a large door key with the room number on a gold tag. "You're on the fourteenth floor. If

you stand to the right side of the window, and look through the space between the apartments below, you'll see we're a block off Times Square."

Lynne moved where he indicated to look out, but all she saw were squat apartment buildings with what looked like water towers on their roofs. Strange place for storing water.

"Shall I unpack your bags, Miss?"

"No thank you." No way did she want him handling her unmentionables.

"Is there anything I may bring?"

"No, but thanks."

The bellhop stood inside her room, beside her open door as if waiting for something to happen.

A knock on the door caused the bellhop to turn. Uncle Leo handed him several dollars then stepped into Lynne's room. The young man smiled, tipped his cap and left.

"Do all people who handle my bags expect to be paid?"

"Yes, but send them to me. I'll handle everything. Consider this my part of supporting you on our trip." Leo rubbed his hands together as he looked around the room.

"How's your room? Looks a little small."

"It's fine. All I'll be doing is sleeping anyway. The bellhop showed me my view but all I saw were the neighboring apartments." Lynne sat on the end of her bed, kicked off her shoes and wiggled her toes.

"Come to my room around the corner, room 1410. I have the view. Why don't you unpack and rest a bit before we head downstairs for an early dinner. I'll call over or knock on your door after a bit."

When Leo left her room it was 4:30. Lynne lay back on the bed. "Hello, New York City!" She closed her eyes until knocking woke her. "Just a minute." She stumbled to the door, looked through the peep hole and opened the door to Uncle Leo.

"Looks like you took a nap. Ready for dinner?"

"Sure. Just let me shower."

"No rush." Uncle Leo checked his watch, "It's 6:30 I've reserved an early dinner, eight o'clock. Come over about 7:30. We'll plan tomorrow's touristy day."

Lynne nodded and closed her door. Eight o'clock seemed late for an early dinner.

After she showered, dressed in her favorite summer dress and combed out her hair she still had an hour. She spent her time watching the people on the bit of sidewalk she could see, then she paced the room. Only eight steps one direction and ten the other. The bed was comfy and the small bathroom had a shower in the tub so she was happy.

At 7:30 she knocked on Uncle Leo's door. Once inside, she gawked at his spacious room. She could put her entire apartment in Billings in the space. She stepped to look out his windows. Far below serpentine lines of multi-colored taxi cabs filled the streets interspersed with cars, trucks and buses. Ant-sized people walked along the sidewalks; some lined up under lighted theatre marquees.

"What am I looking at?"

"We're on 8th Avenue and West 45th. Only one block off Times Square." Uncle Leo said. "This is the theatre district. If we had more days in town we could grab a play or two. When we return in October we'll take time to explore. Can't see New York in one week let alone one day."

Lynne prowled his hotel room as they decided on the sights they'd visit tomorrow. Since the weather was warm and sunny they'd visit the Statue of Liberty and Central Park.

"No sense being inside during nice weather," Leo said. "October will be cooler so we can do the inside sights, museums, plays and..."

"I'd love to see the New York City Ballet."

Leo smiled. "I'll put that at the top of the list." He rubbed his hands together and stepped to a long cabinet. "May I offer you a drink? You're of age, right?"

Lynne shook her head. "Not yet."

"Well, that won't matter as much in Europe." Uncle Leo opened a small door that revealed a refrigerator. He picked out a pint bottle of whiskey and held it up. "Sure I can't pour you some?"

"No, thanks."

"Guess I'll need to drink for both of us, huh Linnie?" He filled a glass with ice from a silver ice bucket and sat down on the sofa by his windows. "What else do you want to see?"

"I'd like to visit the fashion district and the site where they're building Lincoln Center, go inside Carnegie Hall, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and take the train to Coney Island." Lynne said. "What's on your list?"

Leo took a swallow of his drink and scrunched up his face thinking. "For me it's Wall Street and the New York Stock Exchange. I love knowing where my money is busy at work." He set down his drink and walked to the window. "I think you'd enjoy

Rockefeller Center. We could see the Rockettes strut their stuff. And, every woman loves to browse in Tiffany's. Yes, we may need more than a week here after Europe."

Lynne nodded but thought about how his ideas were pushing back her time to return to dancing in Billings. Too early to worry about that now.

Dinner in the hotel restaurant was more formal than Lynne planned for, even after Leo sent her back to change into her best outfit: a rose-colored taffeta skirt with a scoop-neck blouse and black flats. From the way Uncle Leo scrunched up his mouth and shrugged, she guessed he thought she still looked under-dressed, but it *was* the best she had to wear.

White table cloths, white napkins, waiters in black tuxedos. The cost of a single menu entree price matched her weekly grocery bill. They even charged for water, which they poured from a quart-sized green bottle. One thing was certain, Uncle Leo had money and he wasn't shy about spending it.

When they rounded the corner on a walk toward Times Square, the bright neon lights turned away the night. Buildings were ablaze with huge, colorful rooftop billboards advertising plays and products. People wandered the streets looking in windows. Some entered shops as others came out with overflowing bags.

"This is amazing. All these people roaming around late in the evening. And, all these lights. I feel an electric energy pulsing around and through me."

Uncle Leo laughed. "It's New York City."

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The same limo driver picked them up the next morning. Their sightseeing began with Uncle Leo changing their plans. "Since we're on our way to catch the ferry to the

Statute of Liberty, we might as well walk down Wall & Broad streets, the financial district."

As they strolled amid the austere, stone buildings with their wide steps, Uncle Leo talked about his investments. Most of what he said she didn't understand, except, that he had numerous stocks, bonds and funds he hoped would make money, "for a cushy retirement in the years ahead," he said.

When they climbed back into the limo, he shared his investment advice. "Always save twenty percent of your earnings and invest everything you can spare, always."

"That might be a good idea, Uncle Leo, but a dancer doesn't have money for anything beyond food, rent and pointe shoes."

"You must save, Lyn-nee. How else will you get ahead?"

That's exactly what Lynne wondered. If she continued to dance how would she ever be able to save money. But, if she quit dancing, what would she do? Her skills were limited. Maybe she'd become a dance instructor like Marta, but where and for whom? She doubted Madame would consider her for the ballet academy. Oh, well. There was nothing she could do about *anything* until she returned home and spent time thinking about her future.

Battery Street was a huge area with newly planted grass and trees. Small ferries tied up to small docks stood ready to carry tourists to Liberty Island, the site of the Statue of Liberty. After Leo paid, they boarded the tiny boats to cross the Hudson River. Lynne turned to look back to the skyscrapers of Manhattan. The morning sunlight cast shadows as well as accentuated the various colors of the tall, stone buildings. How everyday people navigated the sidewalks and traffic without a map intrigued her. Maybe they made

a path to work and home and didn't waver; she'd like the time to find out, to explore more places than her two days allowed.

The ferry passed one island with dilapidated buildings surrounded by weedy areas. The loud speaker came on. "Folks, on your right is Ellis Island, the first stop for many immigrants arriving in the United States between 1890 and 1954. Currently we don't know what will happen to the property but many of us hope it will be saved as a reminder of our immigrant heritage.... We're five minutes from our stop to visit Lady Liberty so gather your belongings and prepare to disembark."

Lynne and Leo stood at the base of the statue, tipping their heads back to see the body of the statue. "How tall do you think she is?"

"I'm guessing over twenty stories. Maybe there'll be information once we get inside." Leo led the way to the stairway through the base that fed into the stairs inside the copper statue. Simple signs gave basic details about the size and building of the statue. It was a gift from France; another connection between her and the dance troupe.

As they climbed the metal steps, they saw the inner steelwork that held the copper exterior in place. Up and up they walked, round and round. The space narrowed and the lines stopped as small groups of people waited their turn to stand in the crown and look out toward the east. The wait was worth it.

Lynne and Leo stayed to the last possible second, enjoying the view. "I'm completely impressed," Lynne said. "It's such a beautiful statue. Everything below us is so tiny and we can see far out to sea." She turned to Leo. "How many times have you come out here?"



Leo looked sheepish. "This is my first visit, but it won't be my last. Thanks for suggesting it, Linnie."

The Statue of Liberty trip lasted well past noon causing them to exchange their carriage ride in Central Park for a quick limo drive around the edges. At one corner where there was a parking place, they stopped for a street vendor lunch: a New York hot dog with mustard and sauerkraut. While they sat on a bench eating, Uncle Leo mentioned, "The meals on the ship are formal. What fancy clothes did you bring?"

Lynne shrugged. "I only have what I wore last night. Will that be okay?"

"No. We'll need to take you shopping."

Leo dismissed the limo for the next hour so he and Lynne could walk along Fifth Avenue. When they entered Bloomingdale's Department Store, Lynne felt small as a flea. The massive building held an amazing variety of clothing merchandise. Uncle Leo insisted she shop in the formal evening wear department.

Lynne's jaw dropped when she saw the price tag on a long black silk skirt paired with a white, scoop necked blouse. "\$200 for one outfit? I can buy an entire wardrobe for that back home. I can't spend this much of your money on two pieces."

"Yes, Linnie, you can. You need an outfit for the ship. In fact, you'll need a second top so you can change your look from night to night. After all, we're *dining* not eating dinner. We'll let you practice your table manners tonight at the Rainbow Room.

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At nine that evening the limo driver dropped them at Rockefeller Center. An elevator whisked them up to the sixty-fifth floor where a decorative sign said, "Welcome to the Rainbow Room Supper Club". In small print an invitation read: *Join us this*

*October as we celebrate our 25th Anniversary. Reserve your table today for our month-long celebrations.*

Within one minute, they were shown to their table on the outer edges of a circular glass dance floor that glowed in rhythm and color to the music the band played. Waiters in white tuxedos held their chairs then brought them menus and took their drink orders.

Lynne surveyed the room. Tall windows let in the city nightscape and reflected light from the gigantic chandelier that hung over the dance floor. The walls held art deco paintings and decorations; nymphs swirled in aqua water, large urns overflowed with glass flowers and fruit replicas.

Every guest was dressed to be seen, especially the women. Of course she wasn't wearing a fur stole, a fancy veiled hat or opera gloves, but thanks to Uncle Leo, she'd worn something suitable so she didn't embarrass herself or him.

The menu surprised her. It contain multiple courses and... "Uncle Leo, there are no prices. How will you know what anything costs?"

Uncle Leo laughed. "I have prices on mine. In many upscale restaurants, only the men get menus with prices. Now, order what you want. This is our big splurge."

Lynne broke dining protocol by skipping an appetizer, requesting only a Caesar salad and a filet mignon with mushrooms. The waiter frowned but obliged. While they ate, she watched the couples dancing, enjoying the luxury of the room. The view made her feel like a princess for the evening. Uncle Leo seemed to mirror her interests, saving his usual overflowing conversation for the ride down the elevator.

Their evening ended at the top of the Empire State Building; another item not on their list for today. The entire city spread below them. Somehow the hurry scurry of the

people and taxis far below made Lynne think of Noel's quiet ranch with its open spaces. He didn't need to climb close to one hundred stories in an elevator to see such distances; he just rode out a few minutes, found a knoll and looked around. She hoped he was thinking about her as much as she was thinking about him.

Lynne used the mounted binoculars to focus on the distant, welcoming torch of the Statue of Liberty. Tomorrow she'd leave behind all she knew and everyone she liked to think about to cross to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Was that tingling in her stomach from excitement or fear?

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The next morning, after breakfast Leo called Lynne's home, collect. She heard him give her mother a lengthy update of where they'd gone and what they'd seen and heard. Had she gone the same places he talked about? Somehow her adventures didn't seem as exciting as the ones Leo shared with her mom.

"Just a minute, sis." Leo said. "Here she is." Leo turned to Lynne who stood looking out Leo's window at the activity in the street far below. "Your mom wants to say good by."

"Hi, mom.... Yes. I'll save post cards for you.... No, I won't forget to thank Leo....Yes, I'll be careful....Love you too....Put them on."

Lynne waited as her brothers grabbed the phone and the kitchen extension.

"Hey! Skinny Linney!" her older brother, Al, said. "How's New York?"

"You should know, Al," Lynne said. "You and Ben come here a lot."

"Did you do anything interesting?" Ben said.

"For me, yes. I haven't been here since I was ten. This time I appreciated everything more. Leo took me cool places like the Statue of Liberty, the Rainbow Room and the Empire State building."

"Must be nice having so much free time." Ben said.

"You should know. Why aren't you helping dad in the hardware store? You haven't found jobs since this past weekend, have you?"

Al responded with, "Look who's talking. Why should *we* be stuck helping when you're heading to Europe to play for the summer."

"I'm not playing, guys. I'll be dancing several times a day for three months."

"I'm crying for you." Al dragged out his comment like a sad-voiced child. "You'll be so-o busy while you see lots of cool places."

"Yeah," Ben agreed and snickered. "Maybe even a few nude beaches. "

" I don't think so," Lynne said.

"Well, it's not as if dancing's a real job," Al said. "I don't see you rushing to work in the hardware store."

"Right." Lynne felt her excitement drain away the longer she spoke with her brothers. "I need to go. Do you want me to bring you anything?"

"Yeah. A hot French chick would be good." Ben said, laughing at his joke.

"Right, like a chick will fit in Skinny Linnie's suitcase," Al said. "Just bring us something we can show off to our friends at the pool hall."

Lynne shook her head as she said good by and hung up. While she watched Leo finish packing, she thought about what they said. She *was* avoiding the hardware store, but for good reason. She had a job this summer while they were free-loading off their

friends and their parents. Her hope was that she'd have a position in Billings once she returned from Europe.