

# **THE** **OODLANDERS**



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For  
Catherine  
Peter  
Oliver



# The Oodlanders

Once there was a family with a Northern name who lived near the sea. The family had rooted there by accident.

The man and woman loved traveling together and had walked many miles over rocks and sand, under trees and under the Sun. They called themselves Odd and Frij, their birth names long forgotten. They never felt at ease amongst others so they kept moving their feet, never staying anywhere for long. Until that drizzly day when they met a Woman at the waterfront in the North. She stood there staring in the distance, seemingly looking at nothing but the horizon. The man and woman had only seen her back, when she started talking. Her voice sounded as if she was as old as a west-coast cedar.

“There is a land for you there amidst the water,” she said, still not looking to see who was approaching her from behind. “It’s just beyond the horizon. You can take my boat if you want.”

The Woman then pointed to a wooden boat in the harbor and walked the other way. Frij looked Odd in the eyes and

Odd knew. He knew he had to follow his companion's lead, despite his fear for the endless water.

They took the boat and sailed towards the horizon and soon they saw what the Woman had promised them: a piece of land. It looked different than they had imagined. Nonetheless they got off the boat and it took only a few steps on the red clay for them to know that this would be their home.

The land was inhabited by the Jotonö who were very wary of these two strangers, yet after Odd and Frij helped build the new town hall, they were offered permission to build their own home on the land of the Jotonö. So they did. From then on the Jotonö called them Oodlanders and Odd and Frij accepted that name.

After a few years, their son Pos was born. As a family The Oodlanders did the normal things that the Jotonö did. Going to work, going to school, cooking dinners, showing up for town meetings and taking care of their home. When he was old enough Odd and Frij gave Pos a horse called Stedda so he would have his own companion to explore more of the land.

As years passed on, they got used to keeping their heads down, not to disturb their fragile relationship with the locals. They contributed where they could and never asked for anything in return. Odd loved telling stories about his work and family, but didn't expect to be listened to. Frij was always

busy making beautiful things. Pos did his best in school. They lived their lives, and the Jotonö let them. Until that first sunny day of spring when someone pushed their blue ringed doorbell.

Odd was at his office across the street when he heard the doorbell ring and headed towards his front door. When the visitor saw Odd approaching he turned towards Odd and in the middle of the street they met. It was Peter McAus, chief of the Jotonö. Odd saw how McAus clenched his fists before he spoke.

“We want you and your family to leave. You’re too odd for us. You still haven’t become enough like us,” McAus said and without explaining or giving Odd time to respond he marched away.

Odd stood silently for a while, not noticing the people on the street who were waiting for him to clear the road. Then Frij opened the front door of their home, to meet the visitor who already left. She saw Odd standing in the middle of the street.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

Once inside Odd told Frij what happened. They knew deep in their hearts that this day would come, that all these years living in relative harmony had come to an end. It was time to move on. They heard Stedda’s hoofs in the backyard. Pos had come home from school. Frij called him in and explained what had happened and that they had to leave

their home soon, find a new land to live.

“But I don’t want to leave,” Pos screamed. “This is my home. We colored the walls with memories and we can’t take the walls with us.”

“We are no longer wanted here. We need to find a land where we belong,” Frij explained. “Odd, you have to go. You have to discover new land where we can build a home. A land where we are wanted.”

Odd understood his son all too well. They may have not fit in entirely, but this is their home. Over the years they had colored the walls with wonderful memories and once they left here, those colors would be plastered over and lost forever. And he was scared. Scared of the endless water and the wind that would take him to places unknown. He was scared to find those unknown places. If he and his family were odd ones here, he could only imagine places where he would even be odder.

The next morning the doorbell rang again. From his office Odd could see it was McAus again. He didn’t leave his office this time. To a closed door, but knowing Odd could hear him, McAus roared that they had to leave, immediately. Odd knew he had no other choice but to pack his bags. He gathered clothes, food and practical things.

“Take Pos with you. You need a companion while traveling. I’ll stay here and take care of Stedda,” Frij said to Odd. He paused to look Frij in the eyes, locking her gaze for

two seconds, and nodded.

Later that day, when Pos and Stedda returned from school, Pos got upset when he saw the bags in front of their house.

“Daddy can’t go. All will be gone. All will be lost,” he screamed to Frij.

“I know honey, but life is what it is. Odd needs to go and you need to go with him to guard him. Without you he will be lost,” Frij explained.

“No, mommy! He will be lost without YOU. I’m of no use to him,” Pos shouted.

“Never underestimate your own strength, Pos. You and your father will travel together, and that’s my final word. I will stay here to take care of Stedda. Our old boat will not carry his weight.”

And so Odd and Pos set off together while clouds gathered for another spring storm above Jotonö. Pos looked towards the shore and saw how Frij and Stedda disappeared from view and Jotonö looked more and more like the postcard he got from Frij just before they stepped into the boat. “To remind you of home, whenever you feel scared,” his mother said when she hugged him harder than he liked.

It was a long journey on the endless water. Odd and Pos filled the long nothingness of sailing on the water telling each other stories of the land and its inhabitants they expected to find. They imagined purple-eyed dwarves and green-nosed

fatty blobs. Trees would cast shadows only suitable for ants or change color to forecast the weather.

One rainy afternoon, Pos looked towards the front of the boat and saw a rock in the distance.

“Daddy, daddy, a rock!”

Odd steered the boat towards the rock below the sky. They discovered it was one of many rocks that grew bigger in size towards the horizon.

“Daddy, daddy, we found it. We found new land!” Pos was so excited that Odd forgot about his own worries about what lay beyond those rocks.

Once they landed, they got off their boat and saw people standing on the shore. They looked curious. And curiously enough, they looked very similar to Odd and Pos. No purple eyes, no green noses. Just ordinary noses with two nostrils and eyes that could either be blue or green or brown, depending on the angle of the light reflected by the iris.

One of the curious people stepped towards Pos and reached out with his hand. Pos got scared and hid behind Odd’s back. Odd stepped forward and shook the hand of the curious.

“He...Hello. I’m Odd Oodlander. I’m searching for new land to build a home.”

“Welcome Odd. I’m Norm Norlander. We can show you our Northern Lands and have plenty of space to share with

you. Let me show you and your companion around first. Later we can find a spot where you can build a new home.”

The next few days Odd and Pos got to know Norm, his family and his friends. They showed him the wonderful Northern Lands. Not once did Odd or Pos feel out of place, it was like they belonged here all their lives. Norm even showed them a piece of land where they could build a new home. Odd knew he found what Frij told him to look for. This was the land they could settle for the rest of their lives. The North Landers provided him and Pos with food for the way back, so they could get Frij and their belongings and bring them here.

Knowing where to navigate, it took a lot less time to sail back home, and soon they sailed back into the postcard of Jotonö. It was a strange feeling for Odd, because he felt like he was coming home. Even though he had found a new land where he more easily belonged, this was the shore that had grown roots in his heart. Once off the boat Pos ran home as fast as he could, excited to be able to give his mother a hug.

When Odd finally entered his home, and went straight through to the kitchen where he expected his family to be, he only saw Pos standing frozen in the middle of the room, staring at the floor, his skin morbidly pale. Then he smelled something metallic mixed with the trusted spicy smell that belongs to the kitchen. He looked at the spot on which Pos’s

eyes were fixed and saw what horrified his son. Frij lying next to a pool of black blood. She had her eyes closed, but now, after feeling the floorboards wobble from excited feet, she managed to open one of them for a bit.

“Mummy, why are you on the floor?”

Odd kneeled beside his beloved companion. She managed to whisper in his ear.

“They attacked me. You were gone too long. They wanted me dead, but I’m still here.”

Odd and Pos carried Frij to the bathroom, washed her and dressed her in fresh clothing. Odd felt the anger starting to boil in his stomach.

“I hate them, Frij. I’m going to kill them.”

“No, you won’t Odd. They don’t know any better. Did you find us a new home?”

“Yes, we did Mummy,” Pos said excitedly.

“Good. Then you can move there and build a new home for the three of you.”

“What do you mean, the three of you?” Odd asked.

“You, Pos and Stedda.”

“What? No!” Odd looked scared.

“Look at me Odd. I’m in no condition to travel across the water. I never will be. My spirit may be fine, but my body is broken. I will stay here for the days that are still given to me. I’ll manage on my own.”

Odd would have absolutely none of that.

“No, Frij. I will not leave you here. I need you. Pos needs

you. You will be fine. You'll get better in time. You have to come with us. It's not even that far."

"No," Frij managed to say firmly.

Odd knew his companion long enough to understand that there was no point in trying to convince her otherwise.

Without saying another word he put Frij under the covers of their bed, and held her hand until she fell asleep. Even in her sleep, Frij had trouble breathing. She moaned and wheezed with every breath. The sound of her breath fuelled Odd's anger. He couldn't listen to it any longer. Odd assured himself Frij kept sleeping when he let go of her hand. He then left the room and marched outside. Without noticing, his feet brought him to the house of MacAus. Odd knocked at the door. MacAus opened it and Odd stared at him for a moment or two. Then the steam that built up in his stomach reached pressure point.

"We. Will. Not. Leave." and Odd turned back to the street.

While walking up to MacAus a plan had formed in his head and now he was determined to set it in motion. Without telling Pos what he was up to, he walked to the shore, got in his boat and set off towards the endless water, where the wind would blow him exactly where he needed to go.

With Odd gone, Pos took care of Frij. He tended to her wounds, spooned her soup and held her hand while she was sleeping. They never spoke of it, but they both knew

the other was just as scared of what might have happened to Odd. They kept the door and windows closed, kept the house dark at night so the Jotonö would assume they had left together with Odd.

Two weeks passed and then a boat arrived at the shore of Jotonö. And then another. And another. And even more. MacAus got word of the arrival of alien boats and gathered his people to prepare for battle. When they arrived at the shore, he saw Odd getting off his boat. Odd said to MacAus: 'I'm back and I'm not alone. These are my odd friends.'

One of the odd men stepped forward and stretched out his hand.

"Hello. I'm Norm Norlander. Me and my friends come from the Northern Lands and are looking for a home for my friend."

MacAus kept his arms crossed and stepped back in the safety of his crowd. It was silent for a while. Then a woman stepped forward.

"Hello, I'm Alice MacAus. Welcome Norm Norlander," and she shook his hand.

MacAus got really mad, but didn't dare get into a fight with his wife in front of his friends. Instead he turned around and went home alone.

All the odd people in the boats stepped ashore and more and more Jotonö started to shake hands with these warmhearted guests. The North Landers brought gifts from

home and started to hand them out to the Jotonö who accepted the gifts and then offered them dinner and drinks in return.

During the next few days they all shared food, drinks and stories. The North Landers made coffee for the Jotonö to taste and immediately several of them wanted to learn how to make it themselves. The Jotonö served scotch for the North Landers, and it tasted so good that at the end of the night neither the Jotonö nor the North Landers could walk in a straight line to their cots.

Though still weak from her wounds, Frij was enjoying the company, both from the Jotonö and the North Landers. Alice McAus took over Pos's job and, with the help of a few of her friends, cleaned Frij's wounds, freshened her bandages and made sure she had plenty of fresh food and drinks.

On the morning of the fourth day after the arrival of the alien boats, Odd, Pos and Norm were sitting in the garden chatting about the Northern Lands when MacAus and his wife showed up at their fence.

"Go on. Tell him," Alice said to her husband.

MacAus stared at the ground. Then looked up. Then down again.

He mumbled something which Odd couldn't hear.

"Sorry?" Odd asked.

"You can stay," MacAus said just loud enough this time.

Odd kept still while he looked MacAus in the eye for a

few seconds. Then he nodded. MacAus nodded too. McAus turned around and left. Alice lingered for a bit and looked up. She gave a thumbs up towards the bedroom window. Frij had witnessed it all. She smiled and waved at Alice. Then she looked at her companion and son, sitting and talking in the garden and whispered to herself:

“They will be fine. They are home.”



## About this story

The first version of this story was written during Crafting `{}` a Life, an unconference hosted by Peter, Catherine and Oliver.

Though real life events may have been the inspiration for writing this story, it is of course a work of fiction. Any resemblance of its characters to people known to me is purely accidental. Or not.

I couldn't have written it without the creative inspiration of Rob. Thank you for the lovely hours plotting over coffee, Rob!

Also a million thanks to Luisa who was so kind to reread this story with an editors eye.

Thanks to Peter, Catherine and Oliver for organizing a wonderful event. You pulled it off to touch many people's hearts and connect them to each other. Bravo!

And as always, Ton, thank you for being my first reader and the one who keeps encouraging me to write more.

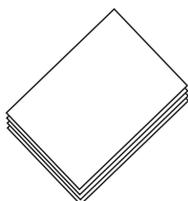
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# Create a booklet

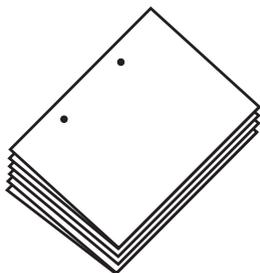
1) print on A4



2) fold in the middle, text outwards



3) stack all pages in correct order and perforate on yellow dots



4) bind pages together



# Suggestions for page binding:

