

Dartmouth, England. 1609: A small, damaged ship named the Halve Maen, enters the harbor under the darkness of night. Once moored, the ship is overrun with English soldiers who have rushed aboard. The ship's captain, Henry Hudson, is arrested on deck by the officer-in-charge. In a dramatic exchange, Hudson makes it clear to all within earshot that he has made a trip to the New World and that he has important information for the King related to his discovery of a new region in English New Virginia. The arrest and exchange are part of a larger pact Hudson has struck with the English, but the crew, including a spy from the VOC are unaware that what they were witnesses to a performance staged to distract them from the truth. As Hudson is taken away, the spy enters the captain's cabin and begins searching for information. In a secret compartment within Hudson's desk, he discovers the map and log that chart the route to the New World. At the moment of discovery, English soldiers enter the cabin. The spy is shot. He drops the log, but escapes with the map. Wounded and bleeding, he manages to escape his pursuers winding through the narrow streets of Dartmouth.

Shaking with fever, the spy makes a hellish journey to London. Arriving in the middle of the night, powered by adrenaline, he rings the bell of a stately London mansion. He hands the map over to Van Meteren, ambassador of The Netherlands in London. He deliriously describes the New World: a broad river, intensely colored natives, and an abundance of furs. Van Meteren is furious. Hudson has deliberately deceived the

VOC who hired him to find a northern route to the East. The map was worthless. There was no route through the New World, just as Plancius had predicted.

**Tweenhuyzen and the Pelgrom brothers, all from the south, discretely share Hudson's map with an experienced captain, Hendrik Christiaensen, and his arrogant navigator/supercargo, Adrian Block. The traders had purchased the map on the black market and were eager to find men to



help them turn knowledge into money. According to Van Tweenhuyzen, the map represented a golden opportunity – a route to the fur paradise of the New World. There was only one drawback: The VOC and Prince Maurits had forbidden ships to sail to the New World per the terms of the treaty with Spain and England to keep the peace and protect the valuable eastern trade routes. For Van Tweenhuyzen, the opportunity to shake a fist at the powerful VOC, who had made life miserable for other traders, was irresistible. Keep quiet. No one outside of their table needed to know about their plan. A deal is brokered. Christiaensen agrees to captain Van Tweenhuysen's ship with one condition: he can bring his own navigator. Block is insulted, but wisely chooses to keep his mouth shut. Van Tweenhuyzen grins and pulls a German Shepherd puppy from a sack and gives it to Christiaensen. He has heard that these dogs scare the natives stiff. With that, Christiaensen and Van Tweenhuysen toast to their future success.

Christiaensen visits his dear friend and navigator, Hendrik Eelkens, eager to tell him of the opportunity. Eelkens, sadly, is unable to seize the moment – he is slowly dying from stomach typhoid and will leave his family burdened with sizable debts. Christiaensen is stunned. He does not know how to handle the situation. Jacob, the skinny, inexperienced son of Hendrik offers to take his father's place. Christiaensen is incensed – he has no use for a daydreamer who has seen nothing of the world beyond the printed pages of books. Despite his reservations, Christiaensen agrees to take Jacob on and return him to the family a rich man who can provide for the family.

North Sea, 1611: The German Shepherd had grown big and barks into the wind, standing on the deck of their ship, the Fortuyn. Jacob Eelkens looks to the horizon. With the wind rustling his hair, Eelkens smiles. To keep the journey to the New World a secret, Christiaensen and Block lied to their crew. The crew believe they are on a herring transport ship sailing North. Once at full sea, Block sends Christiaensen to the deck to tell them of the trip's actual route. Christiaensen shows the men Hudson's map. The crew is outraged and demand a new contract be negotiated.

One by one, the crew meet with Block below deck. He is a tough negotiator and comes to terms with each individual as Eelkens watches closely, taking notes. One of the crew realizes that he has made a poor deal. He attempts to rouse his fellow shipmates into mutiny, but is immediately and severely penalized by Block. There will be no mutiny on this ship.

Once calm has been restored, Christiaensen begins to plan for the ship's departure from the herring fleet and onward to the New World. Looking through binoculars, he can see the ship of his rivals, Captain Mossel and his partner, Hontom, sailing on the horizon. Standing on the deck of the ship is Jan Rodriguez. Rodriguez is a second-generation slave from the Dominican Republic who is half-native, half-African and a very talented translator. In a bold move, Christiaensen moves his ship alongside Mossels and tries to persuade Rodriguez to join his crew. He offers a better salary. Negotiations go back and forth between the decks. Mossel and Hontom are furious. There is shouting and cursing. When Christiaensen and

Rodriguez have reached an agreement, Rodriguez jumps overboard. He is pulled from the dark waters of the North Sea by Christiaensen's crew and the Fortuyn breaks from the fleet, heading west for the New World. It does not take long for Eelkens and Rodriguez to become friends. Eelkens is impressed by Rodriguez's knowledge of languages. Rodriguez shares his knowledge with Eelkens, teaching his eager pupil French, Spanish, and English during their journey west.

After a crossing full of hardships (vermin, lice, storms, and disease), Christiaensen guides the ship to the mouth of the mighty Montaignes (Hudson) River. At night, Eelkens hears the rolling drums of an invisible civilization. As day breaks, they see that they are sailing through the heart of a lively settlement. Natives paddle canoes loaded with fish, fruit, and furs up and down the river. They natives keep their distance. Eelkens is fascinated by what he sees and is eager to make contact. Christiaensen controls the naïve urges of his young charge and reminds him that they have but one chance to make a first impression. He teaches him a valuable lesson: If they meet the natives in the company of their wives, they are not hostile. If they have left the women at home, they need to be careful.

Eelkens observes the natives and writes his findings in a diary. He notes that the colored beads with which they trade, wampum, are extremely valuable. Christiaensen and Block begin planning a mission. They sail up the river until they come across a waterfall. With a small group they row to the river's shore. There, they make contact with the Mohawk.

The Mohawk approach aggressively. They are in a long battle with the Algonquin who are settled on the other side of the river and are supported by the French. Eelkens steps in and exhibits a talent for diplomacy. He convinces the suspicious Mohawk of their good intentions. They sail under the Dutch flag, not the French. He shows interest in their beaver furs. He exchanges copper kettles, ax heads, and small mirrors for their furs. Rodriguez proves invaluable as his aptitude for language means he is soon able to communicate with the Mohawk who have not previously negotiated with foreign traders and whose furs are first-rate. Block, hungry for money, realizes that if they can solidify their alliance with the Mohawk, they have access to a goldmine. In addition, the battle with the Algonquin may open another avenue for trade: weapons.

Eager to establish an exclusive deal with the Mohawk, Block decides to visit their camp and negotiate directly with the chief. While waiting outside the camp, Block overhears tribal discussions taking place inside the Longhouse around the fire. One of the tribal elders urges they chase the white delegation away, using force if necessary. However, the chief sees the situation differently. He has seen the arrival of the white man as predicted in his dreams come true. He knows the Algonquin, with the help of the French, will cross the river. Aligning with the Dutch could bring balance to their position. They must understand the power and intentions of the Dutch traders. They agree to let the delegation enter their camp.

In the camp, Eelkens, Block, Christiaensen, and Rodriguez are intimidated by the mighty Mohawk warriors. They take their places around the fire.

The son of the Mohawk's chief is sent forward. In his hands is a very valuable ceremonial wampum belt as a gift to the leader of the Dutch delegation. Seeing the gift, Block improvises and tells the tribe that he has come in the name of the chief of The Netherlands, Prince Maurits. Eelkens is stunned by this outright lie, but keeps his emotions to himself and his mouth firmly shut. Impressed, the Mohawk chief decides to send his son with the traders on their return trip to present the belt to Prince Maurits in person. Block agrees, but as they prepare to leave, it becomes clear that the Mohawk want collateral. As Christiaensen's fear rises, Eelkens is seized. He has promised his best friend that his son would be returned to him. He reaches for his weapon, but Block pulls rank and agrees to the swap. They cannot afford to waste this opportunity and they are severely outnumbered. Block strikes a deal with the Mohawk. Before Block, Christiaensen, and Rodriguez depart for their ship, Eelkens writes a quick letter to be delivered to his father. Christiaensen takes the letter and swears to return as quickly as possible with a boat full of wampum. They depart and Eelkens remains with the Mohawk.

Back on board the ship, Christiaensen orders Rodriguez and one of the sailors to stay behind and guard Eelkens in a primitive camp on the shore of the Montaigne while the Fortuyn sails back to The Netherlands.

As Christiaensen and Block sail down river, they are followed by a number of Mohicans. The Mohicans have heard that the Mohawks are negotiating with the Dutch. They want a piece of the pie and decide to send a son of their chief across the sea. Block is happy to take on this additional

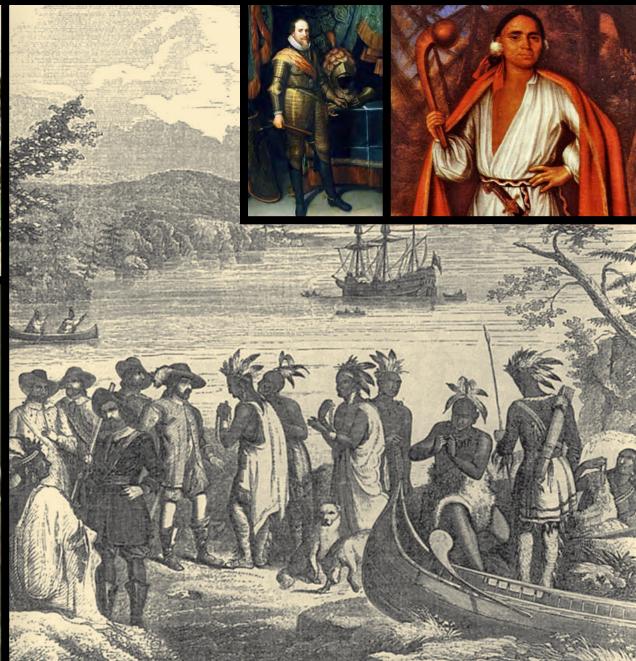
passenger. He soon realizes that the Mohawk and Mohicans are rivals. If they play the situation correctly, they can use this friction to sell weapons to both tribes. Christiaensen disagrees. They must keep their word and negotiate with the Mohawk first and then decide whether or not they can expand their operations. It is Block's turn to disagree. He paid for the expedition. He will decide how they proceed.

During their journey, Block gives the chiefs' sons western names drawn from a play that makes a mockery of their roles: the Mohawk son is Orson, "the native," and the Mohican becomes Valentine, "the noble Prince." Orson promises that given the chance, he will cut the throat of Valentine. Their deal with the Dutch is an exclusive with the Mohawk. Block mediates the situation. He wants to keep both parties happy and ensure there are no accidents that put these relationships in peril. Christiaensen remains focused on Orson, who has been "exchanged" for Eelkens, working to protect his friend's son by any means possible.

Eelkens is allowed to join Rodriguez and the sailor in their camp. The winter is harsh and the three struggle against the elements in their improvised shelter. The extreme cold soon begins to take a physical toll as the three have very little direct contact with the Mohawk. Eelkens spends his days reading his collection of books and journals. He writes in his diary to kill his boredom. But as the rations run out and the men grow weaker, the Mohawk begin to show themselves more frequently. During an ice-cold night, three Mohawk women appear to help keep







them warm. Eelkens and Rodriguez are careful around the women, but the sailor shows no restraint. He drinks too much and presses one of the women. When she resists, he rapes her. He has failed an important test. He is captured by a group of warriors, tied to a tree, and tortured with fire until he dies. Eelkens and Rodriguez are forced to watch. After the incident, the Mohawk show their trust of the two who resisted temptation and allow the men in their camp.

In the camp, Eelkens again shows his natural flair for diplomacy. He demonstrates how using an iron drill makes it much faster to create beads from the wampum shells. The Mohawks are impressed. Eelkens gives the drill to the chief, who gratefully accepts this miraculous gift. From that moment forward, Eelkens and Rodriguez are treated as valued guests. Attracted to their style of living, Eelkens spends the most of his time with the tribe. Their life is fairly comfortable: they have fish, vegetables, fruit, and meat in abundance. Corn is cultivated and the hunting grounds are full of deer. They regularly burn these areas which helps keep the soil rich. Eelkens notes it all in his diary and observes his friend Rodriguez seems to grow more in tune with this "nativeness" with every passing day. He appears liberated from the stresses of European life as he plays with and learns from the children in the tribe. Felkens builds an intellectual bond with the chief as Rodriguez falls for a native girl. As Rodriguez falls in love, Eelkens learns to speak the language of the Mohawk and gains a deeper understanding of the deep and mystical bond the tribe has with nature and their forefathers. It is a way that at first seems a strong odds to his Catholic upbringing, but similarities emerge as he learns more. Rodriguez is united with the young woman in a beautiful ceremony. In observing a spirit of freedom and absolute happiness in his friend, Eelkens' own fears and prejudices are replaced by a feeling of great solidarity and respect.

Back in Amsterdam, Christiaensen visits the home of Hendrik Eelkens. With a heavy heart, he explains to his friend that his son Jacob has been left behind. Hendrik wants to see his son one more time before he dies. He hands his friend Jacob's letter. Hendrik's wife curses Christiaensen for leaving their son with godless savages. He explains that they have the Mohawk chief's son as collateral and that Jacob will return as a rich man as promised. His promises are not enough and he leaves the family demoralized. Block and Christiaensen begin to plan their return trip in direct defiance of Prince Maurits and the newly formed States General. Their actions are

undetected until Block's arrogance gets the best of him and his bragging at the Stock Exchange includes details about their plans for success. The news spreads like wildfire and reaches their rivals, Mossel and Hontom. The air is thick with the smell of money and they have not forgotten the ship-to-ship negotiations that robbed them of Rodriguez. They have a score to settle with Christiaensen.

But Block, Christiaensen, and Van Tweenhuyzen have more than a rival ship to worry about: Prince Maurits has caught wind of their dealings. He is furious. Their actions have put the delicate peace with their European rivals in desperate jeopardy. Dutch trade routes are threatened. Their

defiance must be punished. In the midst of heightened debate, Van Tweenhuyzen asks Maurits how he sees the future of the republic. Does it not make sense for him to look for a rich colony where they could establish a new kingdom? Van Tweenhuyzen goes further, suggesting they name the river after King Maurits. Block joins Van Tweenhuyzen and presents Orson, Valentine, and a number of beautiful beaver furs. He asks the Prince to guess how much they paid for the valuable furs. A couple of shells. Maurits' mood begins to change. They need to approach the situation carefully. They need to follow the guidelines of the recent English law and be first to establish a trading post in the area before they can claim it as a colony. It is the safest means of keeping this trade exclusive to The Netherlands and keeping it legal. Van Tweenhuyzen says he will need financing for the enterprise. Orson, assuming he is in front of the chief of The Netherlands, presents the ceremonial wampum belt to Maurits on behalf of his tribe. Maurits plays his part and presents Orson with his chain. After Orson and Valentine have left the room, Block lets Maurits know that there may be additional opportunities in the trade of weapons as the men represent tribes who are at war with one another. The support of the Prince is secured.

During a banquet to honor the collaboration between the Dutch and the two tribes, Orson and Valentine chat. Valentine is very impressed with the apparent richness and power of the Prince Republic and sees the collaboration as a path to a mountain of gold for his people. Orson has a different view. The meeting with the Prince left him with bad feeling. He

senses that this civilization and its appetite for expansion could easily overwhelm both the Mohawk and the Mohican tribes if they do not stand together. He pleads with Valentine that they put their differences aside and unite all tribes against the Dutch. Valentine does not agree. He sees a powerful future for his tribe when allies with the Dutch. This difference in opinion is carefully observed by Hontom.

Hontom sees Valentine standing alone and approaches him. The native son is charmed. A beautiful coach approaches, and Valentine steps in and is taken out to a hunting party where Hontom introduces him to a powerful new friend: the musket rifle.

Holding the official charter signed by Prince Maurits, Christiaensen had hoped that his rivals Mossel and Hontom would cut their losses and return to the herring trade. Nothing could have been further from the truth. Mossel readies two ships and hires the protection of the city guard's cannon. Christiaensen and Block also arrange a second ship, the Tiger, armed with six cannons, to join them in their return. The two parties encounter one another in the harbor and the rival crews are engaged in a large fist to fist fight. Christiaensen, worried about Eelkens wellbeing, gathers his men and sets sail.

Meanwhile, Eelkens diplomatic skills are put to the test. The atmosphere of the Mohawk camp changes when the Algonquin, accompanied by French soldiers, cross the river and seize a piece of Mohawk territory.

The Mohawk prepare for a bloody showdown. Eelkens and Rodriguez join the warriors as they advance on the shore. While the two tribes prepare to face off by performing their rituals of war, Eelkens attempts to negotiate with the French. The French remain unconvinced. An arrow is accidentally released and all hell breaks loose. In the midst of hand to hand combat, Eelkens kills a French soldier with his musket. The Mohawk succeed and push the Algonquin back to their shore and reclaim their territory while Eelkens narrowly escapes death.

Back in the camp, as the incident is discussed around the fire, Eelkens is invited to join the elders. The chief raises his concerns about the future of his people. He asks Eelkens if the Dutch would be willing to fight with the Mohawk against the Algonquin. Eelkens lays his cards on the table. He confesses that the Dutch are not as they have presented themselves. They have entered into the agreement with the Mohawk for the trade, not out of respect for the tribe. The chief is angered by the deception, but Eelkens is undeterred. He speaks passionately about uniting the region's tribes, using the promise of a lucrative trade agreement with The Netherlands as the lubricant to ease long-standing tensions. United, the tribes are strong. He uses the uniting of The Netherlands seventeen provinces as an example of small groups with disparate goals coming together to stand up to against the might of the Spanish. He explains that is their only hope to resist the powerful European kingdoms who will surely begin arriving on their shores. Eelkens has a new wampum belt made and sets out on a long journey to neighboring tribes to entreat them to unite.

Block and his ship join Christiaensen in the New Island Sound (now Block Island). Christiaensen has acquired a large holding of wampum by trading with the Narragansett tribe settled on the island. They soon discover that Mossel has followed Block to the area, sailing under a French flag. Emotions are heated as Mossel moors in Narragansett. These tensions come to a boil on the beach as the men and their crews clash. Christiaensen beats Mossel with a knife while Mossel lies helpless on the ground. Angered and injured, Mossel vows to avenge the beating. Under the dark of night, Mossel's men approach and set Block's ship, the Tiger, on fire. Block and his men are forced to abandon their vessel. Make camp on the island's shore, and build a new ship.**** Christiaensen takes Orson and Valentine and sets sail to find Eelkens. The journey had taken longer than expected and he fears the worst for his friend.

Eelkens and Rodriguez, accompanied by a group of Mohawk men, travel from tribe to tribe to discuss peace with each chief. They make trade agreements at each stop and Eelkens notes the number of furs held by each tribe in his book.

Christiaensen's arduous journey does not get easier. As they enter the river, they encounter heavy ice. The ship's rudder is splintered and they are trapped in an estuary far from the Mohawk who are upriver. Undeterred, Christiaensen goes ashore in Mohican territory and is welcomed by the tribe to engage in trade.

Reunited with his father, Valentine tells of the power and riches he witnessed in Amsterdam. Valentine seems infected by the allure of power and presses his father to trade their valuable furs for the European's weapons to make them the most powerful tribe in the region and make the other tribes their subordinates. His father remains unimpressed. He does not want weapons. He wants wampum and he puts his impetuous son in his place.

His pride hurt, Valentine strikes a secret deal with Mossel who has cast his anchor in a small bay. Mossel delivers weapons to the wide-eyed Valentine in exchange for beaver furs with one condition: Valentine must kill Christiaensen and his crew.



While his ship's rudder is being repaired, Christiaensen works tirelessly to establish a primitive trading post and establish a legal foothold in the new territory. Under the cover of darkness, Valentine leads a group of armed Mohicans in an attack on the trading post. At the height of battle, Christiaensen releases Orson to return to the Mohawk. He begs him to make sure Eelkens is returned alive to his family in Amsterdam. Orson gives Christiaensen his word and departs. Valentine and a handful of his best men follow the Mohawk into the forest.

Fleeing for his life, Orson runs straight into the arms of Eelkens trade delegation which was en route to the Mohicans to discuss peace. Valentine and his men arrive and a heated battle ensues. Orson has Valentine on the ground, but lets him live. The remaining Mohicans surrender. Orson takes Eelkens and his men to the fort where the battle continues. Eelkens and his men throw themselves into the defense of the fort where Christiaensen and his men are outnumbered. Christiaensen and Eelkens are at long last together and share an emotional reunion.

It seems that all is lost as a large army of Mohicans arrive. To their surprise, the Mohican chief disarms Valentine's men. Eelkens uses his diplomatic skill to make peace between the Mohican and the Mohawk. Valentine is excluded. As Eelkens brokers, Christiaensen stands in awe. He barely recognizes the young man he was forced to leave behind. Eelkens succeeds in negotiating a trading treaty between The Netherlands, the Mohawk, and the Mohicans. The deal is cemented with the Two



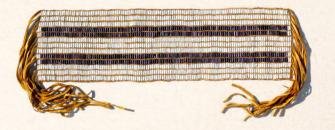
Way Wampum Belt. The valuable belt represents an eternal trade treaty under which the two tribes and Dutch representatives, bound by a respect for individual cultures and traditions, will engage in trade. The belt's two parallel blue bands represent two cultures trading on waters of the mighty river. Four thousand beaver furs are exchanged for a large amount of wampum. Christiaensen is proud of the man Eelkens has become.

Under the command of Christiaensen and Eelkens, their men along with the Mohawk and Mohicans attack Mossel's ship. Badly injured, Mossel manages to escape, setting sail with his men down river without trade.

Eelkens and his men are present at a Mohican gathering to honor their fallen tribesmen. They honor the fallen Dutchmen as well, sending canoes carrying the men's bodies and their possessions down river, parallel to one another, to find their final resting place.

Chilogue: The success of these early merchants and traders, skippers, sailors, and diplomats and the relationship fostered with the native tribes of the region made the eventual provincial history of New Netherland possible. The area of trade grew into a colony as larger and larger forts were built and more settlers set sail for a new land and new opportunity. Fort Nassau, as built by Christiaensen, was replaced with Fort Orange. Fort Orange drew settlers who built New Amsterdam. These humble beginnings were the result of the efforts by the traders

who made the most of Hudson's discovery, not Hudson himself. They are at the point of origin of the unique relationship that still exists between The Netherlands and the United States, a great source of pride for both countries, and the events that set the scene for Russel Shorto's well-known book The Island at the Center of the World that explores the birth of New York City.



This synopsis is based on the book New Netherland Beginnings 1609-1624 written by Hubert de Leeuw.

