

SCRIPT – “TUNGRODD” (working title)

English translation – Version 12

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00. ICE AGE

When you were out rowing,

if you were to row straight ahead, you had to take a bearing. a ME for instance, when one skerry lined up with another. That was called a ME.

If one point shifted to the side, you were rowing off course. You had to take a ME when you rowed, right.

Then you could row for a long time along that line, until it changed – and then you would have to steer a little that way, and take a new ME.

1. THE KITCHEN

Every morning you woke to the sound of the coffee grinder.

Everything happened in the kitchen. The sitting room was tiny.

So the kitchen was where you did all sorts of things. My grandfather taught me how to tie fishing nets there. Everything took place there, knitting, weaving... a bit of everything.

– Arvid

And bread, they baked bread all the time.

That's just how it was. Yes indeed. (grinning)

People would just drop by, that wasn't anything...

"Coffee ready?"

They would grind coffee whenever guests arrived. And then you couldn't really talk because the grinder made so much noise (grinning).

We just sat there listening, curious about what they were talking about. Often they spoke Sami.

2. THE GIRL

There wasn't much talk about it. Not really. It was sort of...

they didn't do that. It was over, in a way.

It was a strange, extraordinary winter. So extraordinary that I can't fully describe how it has stayed with me. It's something I feel I have experienced, but at the same time it feels like someone else is telling me about things I've lived through. Maybe it's because you don't want to – you want to push things away – you don't want to... (Alida)

2. VERDDE

There weren't really any borders in the north back then..
Then the borders came.

But people kept moving back and forth. Back and forth.

They were always looking for new livelihoods.
There was fish in the fjord,
Abundant opportunities.

Sami, Kven, Norwegians – all of them.
There has always been movement.

Oh yes, Verdde. Vertti. Come on in.

The verdde system was a meeting between mountains, plateaus, fjord and sea.

An old arrangement that created contact between different groups of people. And there was barter.

You could have a discussion – a pretty hard one – but in the end, you had to reach agreement. (grins)

My mother grew up in a verdde household.

3.1 THE LANGUAGE

My father bought a lorry around 1930. It was put to work on the Karasjok plateau. They lived together in barracks – workers from Karasjok and Porsanger, and some from elsewhere.

Whoever opened their mouth first in the morning decided which of the three languages they would speak for the rest of the day.

Norwegian, Kven, or Sami.

My father was Norwegian. My mother was Finnish.

(Sami quote): My mother was Norwegian, and my father was Kven.

At home we mostly spoke Norwegian, but if someone else from the village came visiting, it usually switched to Finnish.

– Grandfather

And if some Sami people came around, they switched again.

And when we children weren't meant to understand what they were saying, they would switch to Kven.

(Kven quote): We didn't talk about the war.

3.2 LEAVING

My grandfather came from Finland.

He was seven years old when he crossed over to the Norwegian side with a group migrating together.

There was famine in Finland – frost even in summer.

You had to try to save your children, right? The parents followed later.

Sami and Kven people had to change their names in order to buy land.

He had to have a Norwegian name.

They probably built a sauna first.

*Then they began building a log house –
using Kven log corner joints.*

4. GUKSI (wooden cup in Sami)

In Skoganvarre people talked a lot about when the ice would carry – that was an important event.

But if he went fishing off Honningsvåg, for example, he could be away for weeks or months.

There were bears, wolverines, wolves...

Down at Buvra Njårga by the shore stands an old pine tree. Seven bear skulls hang from its branches – from the time my great-great-grandfather was a bear hunter.

We spent a lot of time in boats – that was the way you got around when there were no roads.

(Sami quote): It is the river that decides...

*Because if the river is small, you need a small boat. If it's larger, you can use a bigger one.
The river decides what kind of boat you can use.*

5. HARD TIMES

They were very skilled.

I have to praise the women through the generations.

They were so good at weaving.

They produced wool, rugs, mittens, socks.

My mother actually gave birth to twelve children.

She ran everything. She did it all.

That's just how it was.

Mother – she was very calm and composed.

I could never imagine sitting still with my hands in my lap, doing nothing... I'm always looking for work.

They did what they could.

My Aunt Anna, she worked as the village midwife. She helped many children into the world – tying off the cord, fixing things, taking care of it all.

If a midwife wasn't available...

Most of the time, things still turned out fine.

6. FAITH

My mother loved to sing. On Sundays she would sit at the kitchen table singing hymns.

Vourjigaisa and Rastegaisa – they've been beacons for people for thousands of years. Sacred mountains, connected with vast stores of traditional knowledge.

There was only one doctor, travelling between places. He was meant to examine me again. No there was no hope, it was wrong. Something was wrong with my lungs.

My father put me on his lap, and Kaaven sat opposite, with the table corner between us.

"Well then," Kaaven said, fixing his black eyes on me. "Has she been ill?" That's all he said.

Mother had gone to the barn, and I was running to her. Halfway between the house and the barn, I vomited. Just mucus came up.

When the doctor came again to examine me, he said: She's saved. A miracle has happened. From then on things only improved, and I recovered. It must have been Kaaven who did it, he cured many.

7. THE HEAVY CRANK

The talking went on and on. My father had a loud, booming laugh, I used to say the house shook when the two of them told stories. They had experienced so much, but one thing they never spoke about was the war. It took many years before anyone could mention it.

8. THE SUN DAY

9. THE BOARDING SCHOOL (INTERNATET)

I started school when I was seven. I had to live at a boarding school. The boarding school was alright in some ways – I wasn't bullied or anything – but it was awful being away from home. I missed home. I missed my mother, my siblings...

...but that's a chapter of its own.

"Are you Sami?"

No, we're Norwegian.

Yes, but you're wearing traditional dress.

Yes, but we're Norwegian.

Yes, but you speak Finnish.

Yes, but we're Norwegian!"

I remember once, while I was at school. Not everyone understood Norwegian very well among the pupils there. There was a boy my age – he and I were sort of close friends. He needed to sharpen his pencil, so we had to borrow a knife from the teacher. He raised his hand. The teacher took his time answering him.

"Yes, what do you want, Oswald?"

"May I borrow the knife?" the boy said.

"What did you say, Oswald?"

"May I borrow the knife?" He tried to speak louder and louder.

The teacher just answered: "What did you say, Oswald?"

The fourth time he asked, the boy started crying... it...

10. THE WAR

10.1 THE CIVILIAN POPULATION

When we came down to Halden. Up in Tistedalen, we didn't see a single German soldier from November '44 until May '45. So the young boys there, looking for excitement, invited me to go stealing fuel. They instructed me that we each had to run in different directions. (laughter) That was the kind of thrill they had.

...But there was enough tension here. Bombing. Transports. Russian prisoners. There was pressure all the time.

We children were allowed to wander around the prisoners. The Germans didn't really mind. You can still see them in your mind, walking in those ragged clothes, dragging their feet... it's horrible.

Huge cannons. Shrapnel flying everywhere. People had to start building splinter shelters. My father had one built up in the valley. That's where we lived.

There was destruction everywhere. Houses standing on just two walls – I remember that.

I thought it was great to start school.

I remember sitting there drawing something, and then German officers came in and chased us out.

I had no schooling during the war. I had recess for five years.

10.2 IN COMBAT

Altogether, there could be as many as 200,000 German soldiers in Nord-Troms and Finnmark, compared to a population of 75,000.

People walked 400–500 kilometres on skis to enlist – in winter. Through minefields. They were determined to fight.

And not only fighting – people enlisted to transport supplies. With reindeer. With horses. With boats.

It wasn't a question of Kven, Sami or Norwegian. Everyone showed up and made a tremendous effort here in northern Norway.

That part has been overshadowed.

You sort of stir it up again. No – I didn't want to stir it up...

Their occupational backgrounds meant there were skilled people here – skilled marksmen.

They inflicted the first German losses of the Second World War.

You never forget that life.

I have family members who were on the front. I know what they went through.

10.3 THE BURNING

What stays with you the most is when they burned our home.

They smashed in the windows from all sides, sprayed petrol inside and threw in matches.

I lay behind a rock and watched.

For our parents, it must have been utterly horrific – everything they had built up.

Finnmark and Nord-Troms were burned and bombed all the way east to the Lyngen fjord.

They didn't just burn houses – but churches, schools, all infrastructure: quays, telephone poles. Bridges were blown up.

And then they took what remained of the cultural heritage.

They came first and took the cows.

Then they took the men away from the houses and placed them in German camps – so they couldn't flee to the mountains with their families.

10.4 THOSE WHO STAYED (OVERWINTERERS)

Out of the 75,000 people in Nord-Troms and Finnmark, 23,000 stayed behind. They hid in caves, in turf huts they built themselves, in tents and under overturned boats – and stayed through the entire winter.

We fled to the mountains – and I was still young. We went up to Gozaaici.

They survived thanks to their way of using nature – surviving in it.

We simply stuck a pipe up, and that was our chimney.

We shared the milk with everyone there. There was a child only six months old who regularly received milk from us.

No one ever did anything alone. There were always others.

We were at least seventeen children in that barracks. We lived there one winter – and we actually had it quite good.

No, it wasn't much...

*It wasn't ideal conditions to be born in a turf hut, filled with smoke and darkness.
He had his first child up there in the mountains.*

The youngest of us were allowed to play outside, but we had to play silently.

*Later they told us we had wandered around in a minefield.
We survived because there was snow.*

*The sun disappeared at the end of November and didn't return until late January.
That was the dark season.*

10.5 THE JOURNEY SOUTH

We were aboard the ship Karl Arp. They packed us into the cargo hold. Over a thousand people on board. It was awful...

Our parents... you can't imagine how they must have felt. We were spared that.

My father travelled south to Halden. When we arrived, he weighed 46 kilos.

11. THOSE WHO LOST THE PEACE

*She saw the first flag raised on a farm. Then another flag on the neighbouring farm.
Her heart filled – the war was over. And then she thought of her home, which had been burned to the ground.*

When we arrived in Lakselv, the two of them stood up and embraced each other. There was jubilation. It was Norwegian forces. The joy was immense. But I was completely exhausted – I collapsed.

12. REBUILDING

*People wanted to return home as quickly as possible.
To what?*

*Most were incredibly restless.
But they were determined to go north.
Winter would come soon.*

People pushed their way north whenever a boat was available.

I remember when we returned – in blueberry season in 1945.

They found bits of material here and there, and managed to put together provisional houses to live in.

Everyone was in the same situation, so...

There was strong solidarity.

13. THE COFFEE TIN

Everything was heavy – getting to school, getting anywhere at all.

I don't know if it left deep marks...

14. THE LAMP

Many left Finnmark as Sami or Kven, and returned after the war as Norwegians.

That would cast long shadows over our lives.

My mother didn't teach us Sami when we were children. We didn't speak it.

She said: you'll get nowhere with Sami. There's no point learning it. You must learn Norwegian.

I couldn't speak with my own grandmother.

15. FREEZING IN PLACE

It has been overshadowed.

I learned nothing in school.

And when you couldn't attend school, you couldn't...

I didn't understand what the teacher was saying.

I had children of my own, but I couldn't pass anything on to them.

You felt inferior when you tried to move forward in life.

My mother never got to experience recognition of Sami culture...

They didn't believe we had a culture that was valuable enough.

I can't understand that...

The northern regions have survived and produced value for hundreds of years.

Publishing houses were in Oslo. What becomes official history isn't written from within.

So the ninety-year-old asks: who did I fight for in 1940?

Only I can feel it, know it, and begin to stitch it together. And there are many other things.

The snow fell, as usual.

16. SNOW

17. CONTINUING TO ROW

You see how far you've rowed – not how far remains.

“Sydämenkieli” – heart language (Kven).

I'm very grateful that I've reclaimed the Sami language. It feels like a gift. Yes, I speak a little Sami with my grandchildren now...

Our inspiration was to wash everything clean. A thorough cleansing!

I believe people help one another more the less they have.

Here, people were focused on rebuilding.

You need a strong backbone to recognise the value of what is your own.

The dark season – you must go through it.

And you know it will grow lighter... Eventually.

That time taught me a great deal – to take care of what is worth taking care of.

If you were rowing alone, you still had to take a ME.

Even alone in the boat, you needed direction. You needed a ME.

Yes... that's how it is.