

Meanwhile, our attention had been drawn to a group of children and teenagers on the icy square, who were having fun, sliding over and back, shoving one another and carrying out risky manoeuvres on the slippery surface. All of a sudden, the kids scattered in all directions. Apparently they were as startled as ourselves by the appearance of a Sami, who, having just entered the square, had poised for a moment and was turning his head quickly from side to side, as if he was trying to pick up a scent. He had to be a Sami, as he was dressed from head to toe in a traditional costume, which I, incorrectly, due to a lack of knowledge, took for the local garb. His conspicuous lack of height was starkly emphasised by his long frizzy hair, which stood out wildly from his head and gave him the look of a dangerous predator. His clothes, black like his hair, were, in accordance with the local traditions, covered with sown-on patches of different patterns and colours, including blue, red and white. In contrast, however, to the other Sami in their tradi-

tional garb, he didn't wear a cap or a many-pointed hat. His hair probably wouldn't have allowed it.

At any rate, there wasn't much time to examine his appearance, as with haste and determination he had set off again. Over the ice he ran - or rather rolled and slid - as quick as a snowmobile in the direction of the door of the bari. Our eyes were so transfixed by this apparition and its incomparably quick and ominously coherent movements, that it took the sound of footsteps and stools falling over to remind us of where we were - in the cafe.

With a fright we noticed, that the four men, who like ourselves had been in the bari only moments before, had taken flight and were attempting to leave as quickly as possible by the back entrance on the other side of the room. The proprietor, the only other person remaining, had taken cover behind the counter. Before we knew what was happening, the front door burst open and this unusual human bundle of energy stood for a short moment in the middle of the room. With his hair, arms and legs he exuded an undeniable physical-spacial presence. It looked, as if he was trying to get his bearings. And then he turned his face in our direction.

In that moment I was overcome by a terrible shock, because despite all curiosity, effort and intent, I couldn't for the life of me make out his face or his eyes, even though they were the very things I was trying to find with my gaze. Whenever I later tried to remember, what exactly it was, that I had seen, or whenever I struggled to recall the face of this strange person, all that I was left with was the memory of an old, wrinkled and nondescript piece of leather.

Before I knew it, he had advanced eight metres to the counter. There, standing on the footrail, he reached behind the counter, extended his arm like a fishing rod and pulled forth the bar keeper. His movements were so fast, it was like looking at a still image. We looked on, as the little Sami dragged the man, who we knew as the bar keeper, along behind him. The latter, with his whole body trembling and seemingly resigned to his fate, trotted along behind the giant bumblebee.

As if nothing had happened, the three regular guests returned and took up their places in the warm saloon. The bar keeper or whoever he was and the little man didn't reappear. I looked over to the

neighboring table, where the guy, from whom we had previously made enquiries, was sitting, imbibing some kind of hot drink. As he didn't look away, I decided to ask him about what had happened, well knowing that perhaps he wouldn't be able to understand me very well. "So tell us, was that a member of the local heritage group?", I enquired.