

1.

Finally, Mats Almsäter had returned to the landscape of his childhood. He pushed his spectacles up on his nose and scratched his hair while he gazed over the previous grounds of his family. Here the farming had never been able to dominate the forestry. Stone, stone and stone again combined with the broken ground and the clay soil had prevented the area from becoming Swedens granary.

His lanky body wore shirt and jeans. A shirt without fashion, but still a shirt from town. The Ecco shoes on his feet and the choice select jacket made him feel out of place. He remembered his grandpa and all the other neighbouring farmers. They had almost always worn overalls.

Mats had climbed the social ladder, in the same way as his father once had climbed his social ladder when he left the farm for studies in upper secondary engineering. Mats was Master of Engineering, but he had always been careful to talk about it when his father was around.

But nowadays they never saw each other and so it had been for ten years.

Mats Almsäter stretched his body. The stony landscape was his history, and it was not long time ago his grandpa quarried stones, harrowed fields, milked his three cows and fed the hens with care mixed with the struggle for the daily living. With the exception of a few merry days at the harness racings he was always working in the stony cussed landscape. A toil that made his aorta rupture when he was sixtyseven. At that time Mats was only ten years old, but his grandpa had anyway had time to grow to his great role model.

This is my history, Mats thought. Father, why have you stolen my history?

He had a look at the farm. So typically Swedish with its Falun red cowshed, adherent outhouse and a red living house with white corners. The machines were assembled in the barn together with the red Volvo-BM tractor with its pet name Buster. He remembered when he had been together with his grandpa and cultivated the ground.

Both the farm and the adjacent summer house were nowadays in disrepair and the landscape was overgrown to forgotten-ness.

Ten years ago the farm was sold. The father had sold it without asking Mats and that had felt bitter. As a mistake that Mats had refused to acknowledge. Left in the family had afterwards just been the summer house.

He unfolded a letter. It was typewritten with big font, as if it aimed for filling up much paper in order to exhibit its power:

*To Mats, Eva and Karin,*

*The large grounds at our summer house has its history. Did you know that the small arbour where you once were playing, was called "Kronrättars"? The mound of stones inside the lilac hedge were in ruins for years when mom and me started to build the summer house. Everything because you, our children, should be given an as comfortable summer and harmonious childhood as possible. And all this was made possible when your great grandpa, my beloved father, carved out Kronrättars from his own farm and furthermore gave timber to the building. Grandpa, Olle and Lill-Harald worked for almost nothing to make it all possible. And then, one day, the house stood there! The summer house that would be your childhood favourite spot.*

Mats had got touched when he had read it the first time. Been a bit surprised that the father expressed himself so romantically about their place in the country.

He went on reading, and the memories billowed out over him as the father continued to scoop heavy family history from the previously living countryside. Things that Mats had not had a clue about before suddenly appeared, and he wondered why they all came now, a long time after the house was no longer theirs. He read as fascinated as the first time he had seen the letter and exactly as then he

stopped close to the end:

*Mats expressed an interest for the summer house when you visited us this christmas. We agreed that I should keep you informed. We will let you know when the house is sold.*

*Dad*

Mats smiled slightly this time, but it was thrown into the shade sorrow for the loss.

WE WILL LET YOU KNOW WHEN THE HOUSE IS SOLD. That was a slap in the belly. First his father talked about their happy childhood at their romantic summer house and then: WE WILL LET YOU KNOW WHEN THE HOUSE IS SOLD.

He remembered how he in front of Eva and her whole family had asked the father:

"You have said that you are going to sell the cottage? When you do it, please let us hear, because we may be interested in buying it." Stig Almsäter had nodded without further ado. It had gone against the grain to ask his father, because it meant the same as asking for trouble, but finally he had anyway decided to do it, partly because his sister Eva also was interested, partly because he actually wanted to test his father. He couldn't think of a more clear signal that they wanted the cottage. To get it for free would be an utopian, but Stig couldn't lose anything by selling it to his own children, could he? Stig's own childhood environment and his whole family history was hidden in the area around the cottage. The summer house had been the last link. Why did he want to cut away his own children from that?

No doubt, Mats was disappointed, but deep inside himself a feeling of satisfaction still dominated, a feeling of finally having understood something that during most of his life had been incomprehensible. It was like when Copernicus had calculated that Earth rotated around the Sun and not the opposite. Something in the conception of the world was entirely wrong, and when he understood that the basis itself for the reflection had been incorrect, he had understood that Earth wasn't the centre of the world, and everything fell into place.

You have to contemplate Earth from outside.

When Mats gazed the grounds overgrown with weeds, he thought that he had solved his own Copernicus problem.

When he asked his father if he could buy the house, he thought that he had been straight, more straight than ever before. The insight that the father was not reliable was both a reward and a sorrow, but much more precious than the lost summer house. Now he understood the harmony of his own world and he was spared the whole confusion of his childhood.

With definite steps he left the playground of his childhood, though with a sorrow glance on the garden full of brushwood.

*Translation: Klas Berggren (not yet reviewed by professional translators)*