

Ahti & Ahti: Nokivesi / Soot-water

Libretto in English

[old man]

His stories were quite something but... I guess he wanted to live like that. I don't know how he could *not* go to that island, 'cause he... 'cause he was there all alone and he didn't have a boat or anything and... and, well... he knew everything about those animals that roamed that island... well... well, his stories were one of a kind. His stories were quite something but... I guess he wanted to live like that.

[old woman]

...and you know... he was there on that island for ten years... and... he barely ever went ashore... so... so everyone brought... his nephews brought him... food, I asked what kind of food 'cause he hadn't got a refrigerator or anything like that, so you know... well, matches and crisp bread, that was his... what was brought to him from ashore, and then when during the winter months he didn't have any matches, well... he always stayed awake at night and put wood on the fire and then slept again and then put wood on the fire again and then slept again and... when spring came, well then he lived on gull and crow eggs.

[old man]

I don't know when he... I'm not sure if he fished for a living... ever. I don't know what he lived on there 'cause he didn't... he didn't ever leave that island so... so no wonder that he waded over from there to our side, so he could get some coffee and bread or something... he always waded... from there... when he wanted that... he wanted that soot-water.

[man]

Mhmm? What was that?

[old man]

Coffee. [laughter] ...he wanted soot-water and then he... told those stories about... well, how he operated his... throat.

[old woman]

The decade was nineteen-sixty... five. Onwards. Well, he waded... with his clothes on [laughter] clothes on over... like between these islands and he came to ask... or said that he came to see if it would be possible to get some soot-water here. Ten years he was, then he... he lived there for ten years and... he wouldn't come ashore even though they tried... also the social services tried to make him.

[old man]

...well he... told all these stories that... well he operated his... throat. He cut out his...

[man]

...tonsil?

[old man]

...yeah, his tonsil on that... fish-cutting board, well... well, he just... he acted as a doctor would, so he... cut it to pieces and said that... that no... that there wasn't anything to it... that it was just like... like... [laughter]... fish... or no not fish... no it was just like... it wasn't

anything particular, he just examined it thoroughly, but I don't know whether he ever went to... show his self-operated throat to anyone.

[man]

Well, have you got any idea why he went there in the first place... to the island, alone?

[old man]

Nobody has ever told me anything about that.

[man]

And you never asked? Him? You didn't dare to ask, or what?

[old man]

No, it was just taken for granted by everyone that he was there. He sometimes had a boat. Pretty often he was without a boat... and... I'm under the impression that he... from this very particular island... lived on the animals that he caught in his traps.

[man]

Oh, he was sort of hunting like that?

[old man]

He... he ate fish, yeah...and, and... game. He usually talked about those animals that lived on that island. Well, I guess he... he knew exactly what was on that island... what kind of animals there were. And well... no fishing gear was ever seen on that beach.

[old man]

The Surgeon... Yeah, there were rocks... there were rocks and... there were also adders. Pretty big ones too. One was really big and...

[old woman]

He was the kind of person who knew exactly... even from the sun, well... for example what time it is. Well, he really kind of... knew how to live like... by the sun, is that how you say it?

[old man]

...well, for example that always when we came there, to our cabin across from him, well... almost every time he... after fifteen minutes he waded over, well... to our side.... noooooo, just soot-water, ehm, he just... wanted soot-water. The island was quite... quite full of different beasts, so... so these were probably quite easy to shoot... He was really the kind of person that... uhuhhh... was that too much?

[old man]

Yeah, there were rocks... there were rocks and... there were also adders. Pretty big ones too. One was really big and...