

## The Funny Socks (Extract)<sup>6</sup>

After the meal Maret climbs up the stairs of the residential school with the other girls. She can hear behind her two girls, Hannele and Ulla, pointing at other children's clothes; someone's pants don't fit, they are hanging in a loose and ugly fashion. Somebody else has a sweater with fuzballs that is too old and bulky.

They also mock and make fun of Maret's new socks because they have bottoms made of leather. The two girls also take note of the fact that the socks have been sewn with home-spun yarn. Their discoveries make others laugh, as well. Maret runs away to her room, sits down on her bed and cries: - And I was so glad when mother knitted these good socks with leather bottoms. But here they get laughed at...

But she does not have time to dwell on her grief for a bunch of girls rush in and fill the room. Others, too, have wanted to see the funny socks and two girls in particular want to find even more things to laugh at. The flock of girls starts digging in Maret's closets. They spread socks, mittens, a *gákti*<sup>7</sup> and *goikkehut*<sup>8</sup> on the floor.

- You have forgotten your lasso and the hay for your shoes! Hannele cackles mockingly.

- And where do you think you are headed when you throw this *gákti* on? Ulla giggles.

- Maybe you're going to dress up fancy so the teachers from down South can also see a real Sami girl, Tuulikki says who also starts to pester her.

- That will make our school real fancy, we will become a real tourist attraction! There is a Sami girl in this school who is so authentic that even her clothes still smell of smoke! The girls start laughing in unison.

- You probably don't even have a real house as your home. When your father brought you here with reindeer bulls, which mountain *goahni*<sup>9</sup> did your mother stay behind in?

There is no end to the teasing. Maret cannot get a word out of her mouth. The girls mock everything that they may have heard and seen about the Sami. And if this isn't enough, they invent a mass of lies about Maret, which

6. Team translation from *Cappari Čardhut*, Chapter Four (Vaasa: Davvi Girji o.s. 1994: 25-27).

7. The Sami outfit or costume.

8. Shoes made of reindeer fur.

9. Traditional Sami dwelling similar to Indian tipis.

she doesn't even understand. She cannot get a word in edgewise to defend herself.

The band of girls howls, roars, giggles, bawls and laughs to their fullest. They unite their forces to harass her, put her down, to mock her. Maret totally loses her nerves, her tears have already dried up long before.

- Get out of my room, Maret starts, but the mocking merely intensifies: - In fact this isn't even your room! It belongs to the municipality.

Hannele corrects.

- She thinks the municipality has given her this room to keep forever! Ulla cackles.

- The Sami are so crazy! They think that they deserve all kinds of handouts and benefits although they don't even pay taxes, Tuulikki spits out in anger.

Maret springs up from her bed and plans to run away. The girls block her way. They grab her and won't let her go anywhere. Maret struggles to get loose. But the more she tries the more the girls form a pack around her. She cries, but one of the girls silences her by covering her mouth with her hand. Maret starts to panic completely, she feels like she is about to choke now.

- Don't you try to escape! You're going to run and tell on us. Remember that if you only dare do that, you will get beaten up so bad you will remember it ten years from now, Hannele threatens. The others make even worse threats to top it off.

At last the bell starts to ring. It is time for home work. Everybody has to return to their rooms. The pack of girls disappears before DB.<sup>10</sup> Only Tuulikki stays, and sitting down at her desk, she sets out to do her homework without uttering a word.

Sobbing Maret begins to arrange her clothes back in the closet. When she is finished, she takes a book and sits down by her desk. But she can't read. She just stares at the book with an empty look, sniffing and thinking of other things.

10. The children's code warning that the principal of the residential school is on her way.