

Nils-Aslak Valkeapaa

My home is in my heart

My home is in my heart
it migrates with me

The yoik is alive in my home
the happiness of children sounds there
herd-bells ring
dogs bark
the lasso hums
In my home
the fluttering edges of gaktis
the leggings of the Sami girls
warm smiles

My home is in my heart
it migrates with me

You know it brother
you understand sister
but what do I say to strangers
who spread out everywhere
how shall I answer their questions
that come from a different world

How can I explain
that I can not live in just one place
and still live
when I live
among all these tundras
You are standing in my bed
my privy is behind the bushes

the sun is my lamp
the lake my wash bowl

How can I explain
that it moves with me
How can I explain
that others live there too
my brothers and sisters

What shall I say brother
what shall I say sister

They come
and ask where is your home
they come with papers
and say
this belongs to nobody
this is government land
everything belongs to the State
They bring out dingy fat books
and say
this is the law
it applies to you too

What shall I say sister
what shall I say brother

You know brother
you understand sister

But when they ask where is your home
do you answer them all this
On Skuolfedievva we pitched our lavvo
during the spring migration
Cappavuopmi is where we built our goahti during rut
Our summer camp is at Ittunjarga
and during the winter our reindeer are in Dalvadas

You know it sister
you understand brother

Our ancestors kept fires on Allaorda
on Stuorajeaggis's tufts
in Viiddescearru
Grandfather drowned in the fjord while fishing
Grandmother cut her shoe grass in Selgesrohtu
Father was born in Finjubakti in burning cold

And still they ask
where is your home

They come to me
and show law books
Law books
that they have written themselves
This is the law and it applies to you too
See here

But I do not see brother
I do not see sister
I cannot
I say nothing
I only show them the tundra

I see your fjelds
the places we live
and hear my heart beat
all this is my home
and I carry it
within me
in my heart

I can hear it
when I close my eyes
I can hear it

I hear somewhere
deep within me
I hear the ground thunder
from thousands of hooves
I hear the reindeer herd running
or is it the noaidi drum
and the sacrificial stone
I discover
somewhere within me
I hear sound whisper shout call
with the thunder still echoing
from rib to rib

And I can hear it
even when I open my eyes
I hear it

Somewhere deep within me
I can hear it
a voice calling
and the blood's yoik I hear
In the depths
from the dawn of life
to the dusk of life

All of this is my home
these fjords rivers lakes
the cold the sunlight the storms
The night and day of the fjelds
happiness and sorrow
sisters and brothers
All of this is my home
and I carry it in my heart

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Translated by Ralph Salisbury, Lars Nordström, and Harold Gaski.