

The Golden Circle from Endorvárri

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Eeoooooh-oooo-eeeeooooh! The whirlwind whistles around their ears. You can't tell where it's coming from or where it's going.

It's December and it's pitch black outside. Only the house lights illuminate the yard. A snow-white reindeer stands in front of the sledge. It has very large antlers, like a crown on its head. The wind snatches Great-grandfather's star-hat¹ and ruffles his hair. Great-grandmother runs runs after the hat, hands outstretched. The hat sails over the trees before plopping down in front of her feet. Great-grandmother traps the hat beneath her foot and laughs at the wind. The wind can't best her!

“Yesterday the North Star was shining so clearly, and now the wind is grabbing people's clothes,” Great-grandmother complains.

¹ The *nástegahpir* (star-hat) is a hat in traditional Sámi menswear with four points on top, resembling a star.

Miá and Minná come outside, sleepy-eyed. They have on coats of snow-white reindeer fur. On their heads are tight fitting, goat-fur caps decorated with patches of red, blue, and green fabric. Wool scarves are wound around their caps and tied beneath their chins. They cover their entire faces, with only a small opening for the eyes. On their hands are fur gloves.

“You two need to hop onto the sledge, darlings,” Great-grandmother directs them with a gentle voice. She is so good to Miá and Minná that she would do nearly anything for them.

Finally, Great-grandfather and Great-grandmother themselves climb into the sledge. Great-grandfather stands at the end of the sledge, the reins in his hand like a king. The ends of his star-hat point east, north, south and west.

“Go, go, to Endorvárri ... te lo lale looo ... te lo lale looo ... te loo,” Great-grandfather joiks.

“To Endorvárri? Doesn’t “endor” mean in precisely the wrong direction?” says Miá, startled, scaring Minná as well. Would it be best to jump out of the sledge and flee? Miá wonders.

Miá and Minná almost bounce out of the sledge when the snow-white reindeer drags the sledge into motion. It dodges stones, boulders, and crooked bushes as if it has traveled these paths before.

When they reach Juoksatvárri, the North Star appears again. It shines brightly like the sun. Great-grandfather stops the reindeer next to a gigantic cliff.

“This is the sieidi of Juoksatvárri,” Great-grandfather informs them, gesturing towards the cliff.

“Sieidi? What does that mean,” mumbles Minná, and gives her sister a wide-eyed look.

Great-grandfather wades through the snow up to the stooping cliff with a burlap sack across his shoulder. He turns back and nods for Miá and Minná to come along. Miá and Minná climb out of the sledge and follow him. They don't know what else to do. They struggle to follow Great-grandfather's footsteps so they don't have to wade through the untrodden snow.

“Wow, there's quite a hollow here,” says Minná in astonishment.



The hollow is like a stállu's² mouth, ready to swallow the two children down its maw! Minná takes a few steps back is about to run back to the old woman, but Miá is completely stuck and Minná cannot get past her.

“Here is a reindeer bone for the two of you. You two must put it into the hollow,” explains Great-grandfather and motions Miá and Minná to come stand beside him.

Minná flings the bone into the hollow so that it bounces from wall to wall.

Shhheoooooooooh! Shoooooh! Shhheoooooooooh!

² The stállu is a violent ogre in Sámi folklore.

Lights radiate all kinds of colors around Miá and Minná. The entire world trembles and crackles.

“Beyond three mountains, beyond,” says a voice in the hollow, and the walls echo: “... beyond ... beyond!”

The light disappears suddenly as if it had never been there. It becomes terribly quiet. Great-grandfather kneels at the edge of the hollow and the two girls hear him murmuring something. Miá and Minná begin to decipher what Great-grandfather is saying, but just then the wind whips a whirl of snow into their faces so that they neither hear nor see a thing more. When Great-grandfather turns around, Miá and Minná have disappeared.

Miá and Minná are sitting beneath the fur blanket next to Great-grandmother as if they had never moved from the sledge. Great-grandfather wades back to the sledge and wipes the snow from his overcoat. He lights his pipe and looks around silently in every direction.

“Beyond three mountains, beyond three mountains, beyond,” repeats Great-grandfather.

Then he jumps into the sledge and joihs:

“Te loille le loo, te loille de loo, beyond three mountains, te loille de loo ...”

Miá and Minná tug the fur over their faces to avoid getting buried in the flurry of snow.

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*“Welcome to Endorvárri ... Endorvárri ... Endorvárri
... Endorvárri!”*

The voice comes from the sky, the earth, the trees, and the rocks. Everywhere their heads turn. As if it is resounding in the rocks. The echo is almost frightening.

It is an extremely beautiful spring day. The sun is shining warmly. It is almost summer already! It is so hot that Great-grandmother is starting to sweat. *Have we been traveling through winter, spring, and summer?* wonders Miá sitting, mouth agape, in the sledge.

An elderly man, stooped over, comes out of an incredibly large goahti³. He is wearing a gákti⁴ of faded, gray cloth. He greets Great-grandfather and Great-grandmother warmly. They seem to know one another.

“Well, what a surprise, we thought you two had gone back,” says the elderly man with a quavering voice.

“Back where? Uhhh,” whispers Minná and looks at Miá.

The old man gets startled and rubs his eyes when he notices the children in the sledge.

“Whose children do you have with you?” asks the bent-over old man.

Great-grandmother bristles at the question and explains:

“They are our great-grandchildren!”

³ The goahti is a traditional Sámi dwelling with a round shape and an internal frame that supports an exterior of turf or fabric. A hole for smoke is maintained in the ceiling of the dwelling above the central hearth.

⁴ The gákti is a traditional Sámi tunic.

“One must not take children to Endorvárri!” asserts the old man.

Great-grandmother goes to the elderly man and leans over so she can whisper into his ear. He seems to calm down.

“Let’s get out of here,” says Miá and begins to cry.

“Don’t cry, my dear Miá. There’s no danger,” says Great-grandmother reassuringly.

Next to the elderly man stands a gray-haired old woman wearing a gákti of brown fabric. A small, yellowish scarf, just barely long enough to tie under her chin, lends a touch of color to her outfit.

“Go over to that small goahti, all of you,” says the old man weakly.

Miá and Minná are terribly tired from the journey through the seasons. They follow Great-grandmother inside and flop down on the right side of the goahti. Great-grandmother lies down on the left side.⁵

⁵ The sleeping areas in the goahti lie on either side of the central hearth, to the right and left as one enters the door.

Bevg go bevg go bevg go bevg! Sounds fill the entire goahti.

A few ptarmigans suddenly gush in through the smoke hole. They flap around here and there before disappearing back outside through the smoke hole.

Great-grandmother exclaims:

“The Sáivu⁶ birds have accompanied us all the way here! Thank you for the help!”



⁶ Sáivu is an otherworldly paradise in Sámi cosmology, often understood as existing underneath our world.

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A young girl and a slightly older boy are running and laughing near the large goahti.

“What? Children aren’t allowed here!” says Minná, surprised.

Suddenly the girl is standing next to Miá and Minná! When did she pop up over here? She was just over by the large goahti.

“Who are you,” Miá asks the young girl eagerly.

The girl runs here and there, fluttering the decorated hem of her summer gákti. She stares at Miá and giggles:

“Hee-hee-hee-hee-heeh!”

The young girl darts off behind a birch and peeks out at the two of them from there. She gives a gentle push to the cradle hanging from a branch of the birch tree. Miá runs over to her and tries to look in the cradle, but the girl grabs her hand to stop her.



She is acting like a gufhtar⁷. She's not saying anything, Minná thinks to herself.

In the end, however, the girl lifts the lid of the cradle and indicates with her eyes that Minná can look inside. There's a happy little baby in the cradle. Her eyes are glimmering and she has a smile like the sun. The baby babbles at them. A sparkling round, silver ornament hangs above the baby in the cradle.

⁷ The gufhtars are people who live underground in Sámi cosmology and whose lifestyles mirror those of Sámi people.

“My mom has a pendant like that,” Minná exclaims.

“Ši ... ši ..., do you remember what it’s called?”

“Šiella! It protects the baby!” answers Mía excitedly. She does remember!

“It protects a person!”

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“Miiiiá and Minnááááá, where are you,” Grandma shouts, running out into the yard. “Come eat!”

Worryingly, Miá and Minná don’t answer here, no matter how much she shouts. It’s as if the earth has swallowed them.

Grandma looks for them inside, out back, beyond the fence, in the stable, and in the barn. She looks everywhere. The whole household comes out to help look. They are completely distressed.

Minná wakes up to the voices and yawns.

“Oaah! Mm-mmm!”

She takes a minute to stretch out. Suddenly her hand brushes something in the darkness. She nudges it and nearly runs away. Then she remembers everything.

“Miá, Miá, get up, now,” Minná shouts, but Miá doesn’t move.

“Move! Move,” Minná screams.

Finally, Miá bolts upright, not understanding where they are.

“Quickly, out of the loft,” Minná orders, and rushes to get out herself.

“Where’s the rainbow,” the two of them exclaim when they reach the window.

The sun is shining and there’s not a cloud in the sky. How’s that the case?

Shhheoooooooooh! Shooooooooh!
Shhheoooooooooh!

Lights radiate all kinds of colors around Miá and Minná. The entire world trembles and crackles.



Suddenly, a rainbow appears between the window and the earth. Oh, great!

“Let’s slide down before the rainbow disappears,” Minná shouts. She pushes Miá onto the rainbow. Miá glides down and makes a hollow in the mound of sand where she lands.

“Out of the way,” Minná shouts on the way down. She nearly slams right into Miá when it’s her turn to slide down.

When the two of them turn back around, the rainbow has disappeared. Miá and Minná run into the house. They wonder where Grandma and Grandpa have gone when there’s nobody inside.

Just then, they begin to hear shouting and commotion from outside. Grandma and Grandpa appear in the yard along with everybody else. They seem to be in a terrible state. Grandma is wiping away tears with the end of her scarf and waving her hands in despair.

“What’s up with them,” exclaims Minná and rushes outside, Miá after her.

“Hey!” people shout when they notice Miá and Minná.

“What hey?” echo Miá and Minná.

“Where have you two been,” Grandma demands an answer. She is more scared than angry.

“Outside,” explains Minná, thinking at the same time what she’ll have to answer to the next question.

Miá begins to explain:

“We were looking for ...”

Minná goes red and finishes Miá’s sentence before she can tell the whole story:

“Treasure at the shore! We were looking for treasure at the shore!”

Grandma wipes a tear from her cheek and explains:

“We’ve been looking for you everywhere, for hours! And you were at the shore!”

For hours? Miá and Minná don’t understand at all.

“We thought the gufihtars had taken you,” Grandma wails. “You two don’t get to go to the shore anymore!” she adds.

She is so happy that the children are home again. Miá and Minná disappear inside.