

Uncle Veikko

Help me.

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There was one thought in Uncle Veikko's mind, and he was thinking it over and over that day in his Finnish soldier uniform in 1916. I don't know exactly how I heard him in 2017.



Whatever the camera was seeing, his head was full of his future. I don't think he intended this thought specifically for me, but it was everywhere in his mind and somehow I heard it. He was thinking a kind of selfie. Some philosophers think the whole world is a selfie; a construct. I don't know. He is not even my uncle, he is my mother's uncle; her step-uncle at that.

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Maybe in just that moment he was also thinking of his step-sister Hilma who ran away from Finland to Toronto to San Francisco then north to become my grandmother. I can say this was the ultimate idea since all my direct relatives are gone. Someone could draw a horizontal line under my name. Kathryn.

Here is a selfie of an only child, explained in a way by my grandmother to my mother and later to me.



My grandmother pronounced *Seattle* in a way that made a foreign country of it and of me, the chief resident.

My construct of Uncle Veikko is as a good man. I usually think people are good, something that requires an adventurer's mind as one must go some distance to think so. I believe he was a good man with a good, probably tall and fine-boned wife wearing round wire-rimmed glasses. With later one, then another, good child.

Whatever Uncle Veikko had to say to me he said in his selfie.

No one is an island, but we all may be an archipelago.

I would like to ask Uncle Veikko how that worked for him as a family. I wonder what is the minimum and the upward limit of an archipelago; if an archipelago is only one thing; could any one part belong to another.



My grandfather ran away from Finland to New York to San Francisco. Then he and Hilma moved north where they became no longer foreign.



(a newspaper image of North)

My mother, of course, was the point. I don't mean to gloss over that. But she is gone now and when I am gone too there will be no point whatsoever.

This is a selfie of an adventurer:



I don't know if I am what my mother had in mind, though I am certainly her construct. She was an only child, or so she thought. There are a lot of secrets in an archipelago.

She became an actress and, in her sixth decade, a tap dancer.

My day has been taken up with mailing packages from my place to other places. The day before that—yesterday—I wrote out

address labels for the packages. I am not an adventurer.



My mother gave me a first name which is a lot like the name of her grandmother in the old Finnish family; and somewhat, though lesser so, like someone's name on the non-Finnish side. There is a lot of vague distance in it.

But the family name she was born with seems to mark not just her but also my location in the archipelago, so I use it as my own.

Uncle Veikko had an altogether different last name.

I wonder if it would help him to hear I ran away from Edmonds to Astoria to Finland then back to Edmonds. That I did this in my head. I wonder if he would mind that I have appropriated so much, if he would mind being my uncle.