

# THE OULUNSALO GALLERY

Jani Ojala



The story behind every titlecard, overview and recap of every chapter of the Oulunsalo Fiction-trilogy

"If you understood everything I said, you'd be me."

—Miles Davis

## **Alright, first of all:**

I still don't think of myself as much of a photographer, or an artist. Just wanted to repeat myself a little bit before going over to this book.

The idea to take titlecard-photos for each chapter of all three *Oulunsalo Fiction*-books, came to me in 2018, when I started preparing for the process of releasing all the stories in the coming year on my *wordpress*-site. There needed to be a thumbnail, and I thought, *why not?* These stories - about every character, about every conflict, and just the larger story altogether - provoke mental images in my mind all day long. Would be nice to express that, along with reaching a wider audience for my writings, with the idea of releasing every chapter for free. Also, to return to that point about *mental images*, this story takes place in - and is largely inspired *by* - my hometown, Oulunsalo, where I spent the first 22 years of my life.

In 2019, after *Helicopters* was released and as I made the executive decision to release the entire trilogy within one set of covers... I decided it'd be a good idea to utilize all these pictures - manifestations of mental images I have from the goings-on of every part of the big story. It did make it a little more expensive to get the book printed, but it had page count up the wazoo as it was - thickest book I've ever had printed, by the way, *fun fact*. So I figured, what the hell? May as well make it a more visual experience. Now that I could. Already had all the photos up there.

And now the photos are here.

Ice Road starts on page →,  
Talisman on page →,  
and Helicopters on page →.

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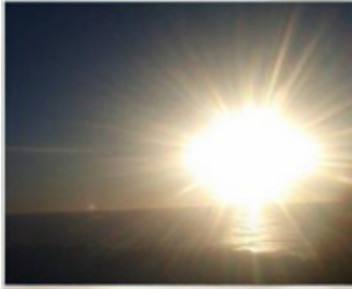
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**Ice Road starts here.**



# JÄÄTIE



Jani Ojala



# Chapter 1

*The Cabinet Door, Pt. 1*



Alright, fun fact to start. I wrote this chapter in the summer of 2014, which was half a year before I actually started to come up with the main story, and writing down all the major plot-points that it would take. I still remember the day I wrote down all these things that would happen to Tapani, Miska and Samuli. It was a particularly white December's morning, and these three were the only characters in this *story-to-be* that I knew would play a part in it, back when writing this chapter. The story didn't have a name back when *The Cabinet Door, Pt. 1* was being written (neither did the chapter, actually). I just knew that this Miska guy was going to be trouble, these two middle-aged men would end up as corpse-disposers, and a protégé of Tapani's, by the name of Samuli, would enter the fold very soon after the first chapter.

Also a noteworthy fact is that in the newspaper Tapani reads, there's a headline about a Soisalo-family. This is the first of *two* callbacks in the trilogy to **Ylipurema (Overbite)**, the book I wrote and released before Ice Road. The second one is in the last chapter of **Helicopters**, where Samuli goes back to his cell and exchanges a couple words with his cellmate, Sami, who is his brother and *also* a main character from **Overbite**.

But, to the picture! (Don't worry, the rest of the preambles aren't gonna be *this long* [for the most part]). This one's just about... *the name*. The title of the chapter. It's a cabinet door, it's the closest cabinet door to me at the moment of taking Ice Road's pictures. I was living at my parents' house, and this picture is taken from that very house.

All kinds of ideas I come up with~.

Thought-bubble: "Business as us'" (a line from the Blu & Exile song Maybe One Day; comes after Tapani advises Miska, in a subtle way, to commit murder if the unknown problem-causer he talks about, gets to be too much to handle; reflects the characters' everyday-like attitude about crime)

## Chapter 2

*The Head*



The second chapter, *The Head*, quite simply revolves around Tapani coming over to Miska's place on his demand. The image, I wanted to be of the first thing he sees. But I was short on severed human heads at the moment, so instead went for something a little more... symbolic.

I was really into *The Doors of Perception* at the time, and figured this could be a *doors of perception*-type of thing. An image of a door being opened, and Tapani being *illuminated* on the seriousness of this matter. The outside is dim - not quite pitch-black, as our protagonist has been around the block and has a conception of what he's about to face. But it is contrasted, by the indoors of the carage looking so bright that you can barely see the details of it.

This chapter introduces **Samuli Leinonen**, main character to all three books.

Thought-bubble: "There's a feeling I get / When I look to the west" (a line from the Led Zeppelin song Stairway to Heaven; comes when Miska's experiencing minor anxiety whilst (off-narration) cutting the corpse in his house, in the moments leading to his argument with Tapani; expresses that unknown feeling people call panic, and also the one people try to regain when in-panic - the more mysterious one, peace.)

# Chapter 3

*The Island of Hailuoto*



For a few years after *Ice Road* was written, I made it a yearly tradition to visit Hailuoto once a summer. On my 2017-trip, I had three friends with; one of whom knew the people driving the ferry. We got to visit the restricted-to-staff upper floor on our way, and a natural inclination was to take pictures of the sea. The sight was quite beautiful, we saw another ferry going the other way, which we couldn't have seen from the bottom deck.

Any picture from anywhere else wouldn't have done the chapter justice, since it really is about introducing the location - whose forests are really the only place visited, but *there's a lot of forests out there* so it's justified. But, even more than that, this chapter is about *travel*. The anticipation, the excitement (or anxiety in Tapani's case) that it evokes.

— Thought-bubble: "To be born again" (a line from Van Morrison's *Astral Weeks*; comes right after the argument at the ferry-port settles down; reflects on the excitement bubbling in all three characters' stomach simultaneously, about seeing this place again, for the first time in a long time)

## Chapter 4

*The Windscreen*





Okay, the section this chapter has become known for, amongst my readers, is the one where Tapani's driving home after a body-disposal gig Miska pressured him and Samuli into. In it, has this seven-page long inner monologue inside his head. It's not all in *italics*, which in these books means that it's just internal thoughts. This's meant to express that Tapani speaks part of the words, thinks part of them, and is in too much of a daze to even focus on whether the words are leaving his lips or not.

This image over here is taken from the exact setting I imagined unfolding before his eyes. It's taken from inside a car, and intentionally shown through a car's windscreen. If you're familiar with the 1976 Scorsese film *Taxi Driver*, and its' symbolism, this is meant to express a visually similar thing. Our protagonist doesn't see it all, when he's in the driver's seat in his life. Just what a windscreen allows him to see. It's a not-so-subtle allusion to the fact that Tapani's depression is slowly but surely taking over his entire being.

The monologue was wholly improvised, back when I was writing this. I sat on a computer in Oulunsalo's library, one day, while hanging out there with a couple of friends, and just wrote. The black dots preceding these thoughts, mean to express a *depressed thought-process*. Thoughts that spawn purely *from* depression. And although this was the hardest chapter to make in terms of formatting - the dots became closer to the right edge, as Tapani got deeper into a state of depressed daze while speaking to himself - that section's text wasn't edited at all. Back in 2015 my writing style was really just, *blurt it all out*. And while a lot of material for *Ice Road* had to be cut from along the way, nothing was cut from these seven pages, where he goes on

about this topic and the next for an extended amount of time. It goes on for so long that he *himself* wonders in the end, whether he'd driven over a person because he was so out of this world for so long.

— Thought-bubble: "You live and you learn" (when Samuli's prepping his friends for the night's disposal, advising them to relax and take it a step at a time)

## Chapter 5

*The* 🤖



*My brave test-of-luck*, this image is a screenshot taken from *The Sopranos*' first-season episode, *Isabella*.

My self-expression has always been an important part of me writing. Y'know, if I couldn't express some profound thing from within me, some idea that I think is really important... or something that has deeply inspired me, this would all be futile. This chapter features excerpts from the episode's scenes that resonate with Samuli, whose life has just been turned upside down in a rather major way, and now has to figure out a lot of things about himself for the rest of the book. The first few chapters of a book are always a part of the story, where things are *being established*. It was fitting I showed my love to *The Sopranos* - a show that has brought out a writer in me on many a occasion, serving as an influence from the very first book I wrote. It's been my favorite show for years, and continues to be.

Even the song *Tiny Tears* by Tindersticks, which plays in the chapter, only does because Samuli's watching a *Sopranos*-episode where it plays. It turns out to be a quite significant song for the book, though, becoming the first of five songs for its *Facing the Music*-segments.

— Thought-bubble: "Nothin' matters / No one cares" (at the height of Samuli's self-pity; when he's done writing the first, notably more grim response-note for Veera, who's never coming back)

# Chapter 6

*The Feet*

