

**Mogens Klitgaard**

**God Tempers  
the Wind to the  
Shorn Lamb**

Translated and  
with an Introduction and Notes  
by Marc Linder

With the Assistance of  
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The cover image is one of the friezes adorning the lobby of the Danish Parliament, which were painted by Rasmus Larsen between 1918 and 1921. Courtesy of Folketinget.

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## Seventh Chapter

### 1

I became a smuggler by accident. It began completely innocently, one of the many small opportunities that lie along a person's path, one of the many insignificant breaches of the law that produced a little money and a little excitement. And maybe a little romanticism. I mean, it's been established once and for all that it's romantic to be a smuggler, and you really do feel the romanticism during the operation, maybe because you identify with the heroes in the smuggler tales you were brought up on. Why it should actually be more romantic to be a smuggler than to perform any other job whatsoever on this earth is something you begin to ponder when smuggling's not new any more, but a job that has to be done like anything else. There's a risk in smuggling as with anything else, and there's drudgery and damned toil as with anything else.

I'd gotten as far up as Kiruna.\* It's Sweden's northernmost town, a miners' town, where there were always a dozen vagabonds, since it was, after all, a kind of last stop, and it's hard for people to make up their minds to turn around and return to the towns they just left.

It wasn't a big town—a collection of wooden houses and barracks, a few cafes, a billiard parlor. There were many Finns and Estonians among the miners, and on the streets you'd see Laplanders who came down from the mountains\* to shop; day and night you heard the din of blasting and ore transports from the mountain *Kirunavaara*;\* and in the railway switchyards long lines of full dump cars and long lines of empty dump cars were standing; behind them was a lake with huge swarms of mosquitoes and millions of croaking frogs. I loafed around most of the day, lying up on the mountain and dawdling or sitting and hanging around the billiard parlor; in the evening I went out and begged a little food and money. At the billiard parlor sometimes I was able to earn a beer by picking up billiard pins.\* Once in a

while a vagabond came from Narvik\* with his pockets filled with Norwegian cigarettes called *Teddy*\* that were in demand because a decent cigarette in Sweden cost a fortune on account of the tobacco monopoly.\* *Teddy* cost 25 øre in Norway, and with the exchange rate the way it was back then, that was the equivalent of 15 Swedish øre. And you gladly gave 50 øre for a pack of *Teddy*. That's why it was a rule that everyone who came to Kiruna from Narvik took along whatever cigarettes they were able to have in their pockets.

Of course I couldn't stay in Kiruna the rest of my life and I didn't much feel like heading back south. So I had to go to Narvik. There were only two directions from Kiruna, north to Narvik and south to Gällivare.\* I mean, the whole country was nothing but mountains and tundra. And since I didn't have any money, I had to walk. I could follow the rail line north; presumably I'd be able to scrounge up food and lodging with the railway officials who lived along the line. I couldn't stow away—the big dump cars, which were the size of an ordinary Danish freight car, were loaded to the top with iron ore.

I don't remember how long I was en route; I think it was a trip of 125 miles. Many places the roadway was covered to protect against snowdrifts or went through long tunnels. At these places it was smartest to go across the mountain, even though it was a long and arduous detour: the tunnels were narrow and the iron ore trains, which were electric, built up a tremendous head of steam. It would happen that some reindeer would be run over and the iron ore company would have to pay compensation to the Laplanders. The railway crews said that the Laplanders themselves chased the reindeer onto the track to get compensation.

Across the Norwegian border the mountain landscape turned wilder, the mountains were higher, the gorges deeper, steeper, and more rugged, and there were countless tunnels. Several places the track ran along the edge of a mountain with a dizzying chasm underneath, and when a train went past, I had to press myself up against the rock wall of the cliff. In a tunnel I'd dared to go into, I had to jump down into a ditch with ice-cold water, which reached up to my stomach; it was impossible to hear the

trains before they were on top of you. Along the way I saw both eagles and bears, but I've been told so often that that was a tall story that I've now begun to doubt whether I'm remembering correctly.

When I reached Narvik it was so hot that people did nothing but walk around in bathing suits and eat *rømmekolle*.<sup>\*</sup> Apart from the ones who were forced to be doing something. After I'd taken a look at the town and collected my thoughts, I began considering whether I should bum my way south through Norway or sail as a stowaway on an iron ore carrier to Antwerp. One might be just as good as the other: it's not so much a matter of where you are as how you feel. And damn it, people are alike wherever you go—they want to get you work and the police want to catch you and send you home; I mean, after all, you'd think that people'd be allowed to figure out for themselves what they want to do—there's nobody who asked to be put in the world.

After I'd been out snooping in the single-family residential neighborhood to find a suitable place to eat lunch, I ran into a man who said that a Danish engineer lived in a single-family house a little further up—I'd be able to recognize it by an ornamental balcony and by the fact that there was a girl always pottering about the garden. He added that these days she was going around in a bathing suit and that she was really a scrumptious girl with great breasts.

In my early days as a vagabond, whenever I was going to get supplies, I always went into the first place that came along. And in the beginning I always followed the advice I got. Now I was more careful. To begin with, of course, you'd like to get something decent to eat; second, you often have bad experiences when you follow the advice people give you. Third, countrymen are rarely the best people to go to.

When I found the villa with the ornamental balcony, I tried to figure out whether it was a good eating place. Maybe you wouldn't believe that it's possible to see by looking at a house whether those are people who live well and are high and mighty, but it is. This one here didn't look so reassuring. People with ornamental balconies are generally snobbish and snobbish people

are rarely generous. But maybe he'd bought the house and been too high and mighty to bother about redoing it. The garden was well-kept without being meticulous. Meticulous people are often petty. On the other hand there was a dog and I can't stand dogs.

Despite the fact that the man was a Dane and had a dog and ornamental balcony, I went in. Behind the house I ran into the girl in the swimming suit. She was lovely.

## 2

I can't stand manual labor. It's the kind of work that's paid the worst and for that reason despised the most. If you can see by a man's hands and clothes that he's never touched a tool, he's treated respectfully and politely. The more a man's appearance is marked by physical labor, the less consideration he's shown. I can't stand that people think they're doing a good deed when they get you a job doing manual labor. And I can't stand having to pretend to be glad about having gotten it. That's what I had to do with the engineer when he said that I could dig in his garden for a week.

If it hadn't been because it was so difficult to get away from Narvik, and if the girl in the swimming suit hadn't been there, I wouldn't have taken it.

In the following days I dug till the sweat was pouring out of me. The sun beat down and there wasn't a breath of air. I didn't do any more than was absolutely necessary, and still the sweat streamed down my body. I'd have preferred to have lain down in the shade under a bush and smoked a cigarette, but every evening the engineer inspected the area that'd been dug, and in contrast to so many other jobs, with digging it's impossible to give the impression that you've done more than you have. Of course, you can stress the difficulties the work involves, rocks in the ground, the heat, quack-grass roots, and so on—of course, not in such a way that you complain, God forbid, but as interesting circumstances associated with the work. I gave the engineer to understand that the difficulties with the work stimulated me,

that adversity gave me energy.

The girl in the swimming suit was a relative he had in the house; unfortunately I didn't see much of her, just a glimpse now and then. I wanted to make an impression on her and began to get a little vain, I constantly found pretexts for going up to the house, washed myself and combed myself, cleaned my nails, and let my glasses stay in their case. In that heat it would've been natural to have only a pair of pants on, but since I'm narrow-shouldered and have long, thin arms, I endured the torture of working with a shirt on.

I used every occasion to get to talk to her, and since she was smiling and friendly on these occasions, I was certain that I'd surely conquer her if I just had enough time to do it. I intimated to her that I was no ordinary vagabond—the urge for adventure and manly exploits had driven me out; my father was a pastor and all doors were open to me if I just wanted to return home.

3

One evening when the engineer was at a meeting, she agreed to go for a walk with me. We walked a ways outside of town and sat down on a rocky knoll. At night the sun stood like a dim globe on the horizon; a pale light lay across the landscape and the sea\* lay out behind the town. It was pleasantly cool and on my forearm I could sense the warmth from her body. When I put my arm around her shoulder, the fact that she was naked underneath her dress rushed through me like a fire. I forced her down and kissed her, her lips were shut tight, and she stiffened in my arms. As I was unbuttoning her dress at the neck and slipped it down over her shoulder, down over one breast, she freed herself and jumped to her feet.

I jumped to my feet too, but my heart was beating so fast I couldn't say a peep. She buttoned herself up at the neck, smoothed out her dress, and began to leave. When I caught up with her, I saw that she was smiling. A summer night like this is really a wondrous thing, she said. And added a bit later: But

I mean that's no reason why you can't behave yourself.

So she wasn't angry. But then what was she? Maybe she just wanted to make a fool of me. I considered whether I should get melancholy—sometimes that has a marvelous effect on women—but it came more naturally to me to be offended. That's why I didn't answer her, I didn't say a word at all on the way home, and when we reached the villa, I curtly said good night and went up to my room.

The next day I had come to the view that I could just as well give her up—there was something of a vampire in her—and I didn't feel like being a plaything. That day was tremendously long; I dug like a dog and didn't get up to the house a single time; I dug a huge area and didn't care whether it occurred to the engineer that I could easily have done somewhat more the previous days; I wanted to be done, get my money, and leave town. Maybe I'd buy Teddy-cigarettes with all the money and take them to Kiruna. Then later you could always see what you might come up with.

In the evening we sat out in the garden and drank coffee. The engineer told tall tales about back when he'd built a railroad in Persia\* and I could sense that the girl was sitting and trying to figure out what I was thinking about; she probably wanted to try and manage to arrange for us to wind up talking to each other. But she wasn't going to vamp me; I said to the engineer that, of course, soon I'd really be done and that I'd thought about going to Spitsbergen\* and getting a job there—did he know when a boat was leaving.

Nobody called me the next morning and after I'd washed and went down, no breakfast had been set out for me in the kitchen, as it usually was. Furious, I went through the living and dining rooms to ask her what she meant by that. I found her in the engineer's bedroom; his bed was still unmade and she was standing in a swimming suit at the window with a newspaper in her hand. I could see by the hair by her ears that she'd taken a bath and I asked her whether I was going to get breakfast. Make it yourself, she answered and began reading the newspaper. If it'd been her intention to make me mad, she succeeded: I took her roughly

by the wrist and tore the newspaper away from her. She bent over to pick it up and, in order to prevent her from doing that, I brutally shoved her down onto the bed. Each time she tried to get up, I shoved her down again. When she finally made a violent attempt to get up, I twisted her wrist so she wound up lying down and I asked her whether she intended to make coffee for me or not. Suddenly I noticed that her muscles were limp; I loosened my grip on her wrist and saw she was crying. She turned her face away and burrowed it into the pillow; I stuck my hand under the back of her head, turned her face upward, and dried her tears with a corner of the sheet. The corners of her mouth quivered and when I bent down and kissed her, I got a salty taste on my lips from her tears. This time her mouth wasn't pursed, but soft and limp. When I pulled the swimming suit off her, she didn't resist.

4

The girl's name was Gurli and she was very sun-tanned, but where the swimming suit had been she was white; it looked so vivid as if she had socks on. We swore each other eternal faithfulness, and when I got my money three days later from the engineer and was going to leave, we agreed that every night precisely at the stroke of twelve we'd think of each other. Every night at twelve o'clock she'd say that a summer night was a wondrous thing, but that was no reason I couldn't behave myself, and every night at twelve o'clock I'd ask whether it was her intention to give me breakfast or not. Every night at twelve for the rest of our lives we'd think of each other, and if I got married, I'd think of her when I kissed my wife. And I said to her that I'd never be able to forget that it had looked as if she'd had on socks that morning on the engineer's bed.

Her name was Gurli and she answered my first letter with four pages of glowing love, my next one she answered with a postcard, and my third she didn't answer at all. And the first week I thought of her every night at twelve o'clock.

I spent all the money on Teddy-cigarettes and jumped on an ore-train that was going south at three in the morning. From Narvik to Kiruna the ore-cars run empty and the cars are so big that you can stand up in them without being seen. I was sitting with my big package between my knees thinking about the stories I'd heard about vagabonds who'd been killed riding in empty ore cars, because it happens that the floor of the car opens beneath you if the closing mechanism isn't handled right. The sun was standing like a dim globe on the horizon and the empty ore cars were making a hell of a racket. In addition I killed time figuring out how much money the cigarettes would bring in and how I was going to invest my capital afterward.

And when we'd gotten across the Norwegian border, the landscape changed: there were once again tundra and low mountains, and when I got up and looked over the top, once in a while I could see a glimpse of places I recalled from my walking trip. In addition, I was thinking about Gurli and was a little nervous, a little jealous about her living alone in the villa with the ornamental balcony with the engineer, who was her relative, but, after all, was surely only a human being.

When we got to Kiruna, I cleaned my glasses with one of the engineer's handkerchiefs and hopped down from the car with my big package.

And when I was lying in my good hotel bed in the little hotel by the railroad station, I happened to think about the girl I'd once known at a gardener's whose name was Guse and lived outside Hamburg. That was before I got glasses and she'd been white not only where her swimming suit is, but had been white all over her body. And just then I heard a clock strike twelve and I hurried up and thought of Gurli, who according to the schedule was now supposed to be lying in her bed up in Narvik thinking

of me and saying that that was no reason why I couldn't behave myself. And right after that I once again happened to think of the girl in Hamburg who cried in such a way that the tears ran down into her ears, and maybe that night Guse's girl was thinking about me and maybe the girl in Narvik had forgotten the agreement about twelve o'clock. The film directors didn't know life: when a girl's lying in bed crying, the tears didn't run down along the root of her nose, but down into her ears. In *Porjus* I'd seen a Finn stabbed with a knife, and in the movies where people back then were knifed for next to nothing, I'd never seen a man knifed that way. *Porjus* is a little town west of Gällivare, where there's a big power station\* and lots of raftsmen who get drunk every evening on Estonian moonshine, which is a yellowish, cloudy liquid and tastes like crap. There was a Finn who came into a little cafe down by the mountain stream and wanted to sell daggers with sheaths made of reindeer bone, and he hadn't been there but two minutes when a drunken rafter took offense at the way he was acting; they stood at the door saying nice words to each other and all of a sudden the Finn doubled over and fell on his knees like a Muhammadan praying to God. He said nothing but a long drawn-out oh and there was no one who'd seen a knife. The whole thing went quite peacefully and quietly; there was almost no one in the cafe who noticed it and the drunken rafter just went on his way. In the movies there's always a big stir the moment a person's going to be stabbed with a knife: the murderer waves the weapon about and the victim screams and when he finally gets the knife, it happens with a tremendous swing of the arm. In reality, something like that takes place so quickly and imperceptibly that it's not until long afterward that it dawns on you what happened. But when people go to the movies and pay to see a person stabbed with a knife, it's only fair that they want something for their money and if they don't get a close-up of the dagger in the man's stomach, they go home and say that it was a bad film. But that business with the tears in any case is wrong and girls who lie in bed and cry presumably don't do it any differently in Hollywood than anywhere else on the globe.

Without actually thinking about it, I became a wholesale smuggler.\* After I'd sold the cigarettes, I had so much money that I was able to travel to Narvik as a passenger for a bigger shipment. I put the big package in an empty ore car and I myself rode on a ticket in the only passenger car that was part of that train. It went smoothly and every time I'd sold out, it was natural for me to set off for a new shipment. By virtue of my constantly bigger purchases I obtained a more advantageous price, and when I was in Narvik for the fourth time, I had a long conversation with my supplier in a little cafe, where we drank twelve bottles of bock beer and managed to make an arrangement, according to which an acquaintance of the tobacco dealer was supposed to put a consignment of cigarettes in an empty ore car whenever I made an order by letter. We were thorough, got ourselves a train schedule of the ore trains' departure, and agreed that he'd put a little cross on each side of the car he put the package in. That way I'd get out of travelling to Narvik every other minute, and, besides, sooner or later it'd attract attention if I was continuously shuttling between Kiruna and Narvik. Naturally I had to pay the tobacco dealer's acquaintance something for his trouble, but on the other hand I saved time and travel expenses and could leave it at making one nightly visit a week to Kiruna's rail yards and picking up my package in the ore car that had a little cross on the side. According to the train schedule, I knew exactly on the dot when our train was going to arrive and could stand by.

It went smoothly, and in fact just as arranging the transportation had gone automatically, organizing the sales went automatically too. There was a Norwegian seaman bumming around the cafes in Kiruna named Anton. He was smart enough that you didn't need to be afraid that he'd make blunders and he wasn't smart enough that you needed to be afraid that he'd stab you in the back and pull a fast one. He got a percentage of every package he sold and little by little he took over all the selling. The only thing I had to do was pick up the package at the rail yards,

send the money to Narvik, and make sure to keep Anton supplied with merchandise. It went amazingly easily; I was the one who had it easiest and I was the one who earned the most.

Naturally it quickly became apparent that I had to undertake an expansion: I could import as much as was necessary, but there was a limit to what could be sold in Kiruna. That's why I went to Gällivare and found a man who could be in charge of sales there on the same terms as Anton: I'd send him the merchandise from Kiruna C.O.D.; that way I didn't need to be afraid that he'd pull some trick or cheat me out of the money. When I'd gotten dealers in Porjus and Malmberget\* too, I decided to give Anton a fixed salary to pick up the packages at the rail yards whenever I informed him that a shipment would be coming. That way I had a freer hand to travel and managed to avoid the risk that was naturally involved in picking up the packages.

After I'd expanded my market to include Luleå and Piteå,\* too, it turned out that there were problems involving the organization that I had to take a position on and solve. If my dealers earned too much, I might be running the risk that they'd start up on their own, and if they earned too little, they'd be dissatisfied. Since the sales possibilities weren't exactly the same in the various towns, I had to let their earnings vary, and since they presumably wouldn't care to hear that other people had better terms than they themselves did, I had to prevent them from getting to know one another. In some towns I had to appoint two dealers in order to keep their earnings down so they didn't get to be too strong for me and maybe take it into their heads to want to dictate to me the prices they wanted to offer. In addition, I had to take care of my own security, take care to keep in the background and be known by the fewest possible people.

I earned piles of money, outfitted myself from head to toe in Narvik, and always had a fat wallet on me. I bought new glasses with horn rims and an ornamental handkerchief with my initials.

My headquarters were in Kiruna, where I had a permanent room at the hotel near the train station, but as time went on I was constantly travelling in order to organize sales in the various towns.

And at that point in time I think I was happy. I didn't have much time to think this question over; I had my hands full and when I went to bed at night, I wanted it to be morning quickly so I could get cracking again. I was constantly expanding my territory and after a while cigarettes were being shipped from Narvik every day. I realized that with the extent the organization had acquired and the large number of people who were implicated after a while, sooner or later a clash with the authorities had to occur, and all my attention was directed at this danger. Sooner or later a dealer would be arrested—the point was to prevent this from leading to the exposure of the whole organization; in part by threats, in part by promises, I had to succeed in getting an arrested dealer to keep his mouth shut. In case of arrest I promised to pay the fines and take care of the person concerned when he got out again. On the other hand, I hinted that the organization was nationwide and that a betrayal wouldn't be amusing for whoever committed it. In spite of all the cautiousness, I had problems a couple of times and had to intervene quickly and brutally to cope with the situation. This intervention was so intensely distasteful to me—it didn't fit my nature at all—and I had to be constantly putting on an act, be brutal and hard, and conceal what a twirp I actually was. My glasses were constantly in the way: they gave me a piously academic appearance that wasn't suited to making me respected. That's why more and more I switched to using Anton; he was my right-hand man and accompanied me everywhere; I gave him an ample salary and his physique took care of many difficulties. I mean, like, for example, back then with Lundquist from Umeå.\*

Lundquist was intelligent and for that reason unreliable. Umeå was a good market and he quickly built up a trade, employed sub-dealers on his own, and one fine day wanted to set his own purchase prices. He knew I got the goods from Narvik and informed me in a stuck-up way that he was going to go up there and get himself his own supplier.

I didn't doubt that he was going to do it and Anton and I

went up there to give him a nice reception. We ran into him down at the harbor and joined up with him. He became obviously nervous about Anton's physique and tried to bluff us, said that he'd given up the whole thing and had only gone to Narvik to find a ship—of course, it couldn't keep up forever anyway and you know where you stand with work, and so on. I said that the way things were, it wasn't easy to find a ship in Narvik and suggested that he take one of the ore boats to Antwerp, where you could find lots of ships. Lundquist looked at Anton who was smirking, and then said that maybe he'd better do that. To keep him company we offered to go over with him and buy the ticket—there was a boat sailing that very evening. In a chummy way Anton linked arms with him and I said something to the effect that of course we were going to miss him.

On the way he changed his mind and asked whether it wouldn't be better if we talked bluntly about things—he wanted to go back to Umeå and continue; after all he'd just wanted to earn a little more and surely no one could object to that. After all, we'd also like to earn as much as possible. Precisely, I replied. That's why we really feel you should go off and sail—you know where you stand with work and so on. Besides, the ocean air is good for your health and there was already a new dealer employed in Umeå. That made him totally furious and Anton had to slap him a little before he calmed down again.

It was a splendid moment when he bought the ticket to Antwerp at the office with his own money. Afterward we took him along to a cafe to get some food and we promised to go with him to the boat and wave goodbye to him. You could've died laughing looking at him standing there at the railing scowling back at us as the boat glided out of the harbor. Anton felt we should've given him a little beating first.

Several days later the dealer in Malmberget was arrested, but since nothing more came of it, we figured that he'd kept his trap

shut. Since I was running the risk that one fine day the Narvik-connection might go down the drain, I got another import connection arranged through Östersund,\* and when everything was peaceful and quiet and was going the way it was supposed to, I travelled to Stockholm to organize sales there. From the time I lived on Dannemora Street I knew an unemployed baker who was a good guy who hated regular work and was a little romantically inclined. I made him the main dealer for Stockholm; he was a good buddy and deserved that lottery prize, and I could be certain that he'd never reveal where the cigarettes came from. From there I went to Gothenburg where on the same occasion I made a connection with a stoker on the boat to Oslo; that way I was getting merchandise by three routes and could keep running the business even if something happened.

Naturally there were other people besides us who were smuggling Norwegian cigarettes into Sweden, but I don't believe on that scale and not as systematically. Incidentally, whenever the opportunity arose, I wanted to take a little closer look at that situation and find ways to manage to put a stop to that nuisance, either by informing on them or by getting their suppliers to cut them off.

10

I haven't tried to make you believe that I was a hero. And I've said to you that I can't stand heroes. I'm a person of small caliber, who, if my upbringing hadn't been so harsh that I had to run away from it, would've become a prison guard or welfare office head clerk or something like that. With my knack for making up tall tales maybe I could also have become a kind of third-rate author. If I'd had the opportunity to go to university, I'd probably have become a lawyer. You see, I don't make myself look better than I am: I'm a weak character, a little untruthful, a little unreliable, a little bit of a twirp, who's always dreamed of lying on his back on the side of the road with yellow dandelions and staring up at the clouds, and hasn't even been

able to pull that off. I think it's my upbringing that's to blame for that.

If I'd had a different upbringing, presumably I could've led the smuggling operation forward into a big and flourishing business. For hours on end I've pondered why things didn't wind up going that way, why I didn't continue now that I'd gotten off the ground so well. Or in any case didn't wind it down in a reasonable way. To be perfectly blunt, I think I got scared. Not scared of the police, but scared because I was a success and the business was flourishing and was operating on a larger and larger scale. It's as if I were made for defeat and adversity—that's my element; I simply wasn't able to stand the success, which knocked the ground out from under my feet. It frightened me that the money was pouring into my pockets; I became troubled by suddenly having power over other human beings, by being able to give orders, in fact, having to give orders. The whole thing had come about so naturally and I was sitting in the middle of it when it dawned on me what had happened. In fact, I became frightened, I became nervous, couldn't sleep at night, wished that I was walking on a road in Switzerland or some other place way the hell out, just far away, a place where nobody knew me, without responsibility, without obligations, just go straight down the road, beg for a packet of food, sleep in a barn, sit and look at the sunset over the mountains.

I tried to make myself believe that the whole balloon was going to burst one day anyway. That, of course, it couldn't keep going forever. That it was smart to pull out of it in time.

Even though I knew perfectly well that that was a lie. The enterprise was solid, it could keep going for years, and I could've earned myself a fortune. A couple of arrests wouldn't have been able to destroy it—I'd covered myself in every which way.

I'd also honestly tried to stick it out, said to myself that I'd keep it going. In any case for a while. In any case until I could get out with the money I'd earned. The way things were now, the bulk of it was sunk in goods, which were lying in one place or another. Or were en route. I had to slow down the imports, sell out, and see to it that I got away.