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OMBOMANNEN, STRANDDALSGUBBEN & SMØRSLAGJO

I meet Joar outside of my grandmothers apartment in Stavanger. Its the middle of the summer and we go to the bar «Bøker and Børst» for some beers. The plan is to take the boat to an island called Ombo. We get there late in the evening and see if we can find some cheese or other food in the dumpster behind the only store on the island. There is nothing there. The reason we chose this island is because there is a rock formation called «Ombomannen». After pedaling up some hills we see the «Ombomannen», who is also known as Adam. Legend says that he lived on one side of the island and walked to the other side of the island for work. This was before there were any roads there. One day he didn't show up for work and he hasn't been seen since. When the road opened in 1970 they saw Adam again as a rock formation. I don't know what Adam looks like in real life, but we both agree that it looks like a man with a big nose. I take some photographs with the sun going down in the background. It starts to rain. We find a place to camp and hurry to pitch our tents, but I manage to rip mine. Luckily, I also brought a tarp. It would be a bummer to share a one-man tent with Joar; the tallest guy I know. I fall asleep listening to the raindrops hitting the tarp.

We have camped just next to Adam. I take some new photographs, but the light and color was way better yesterday. We cycle down to the other side of the island and I throw my ripped tent in the trash. We take the ferry and start to follow the road next to the fjord. There is a lot of fish farming in this area. As a vegetarian I do not approve. But who am I to judge? I judge all the time, but luckily Joar feels the same way, although he is a pescatarian. As we start to climb from the fjord to the mountain, I can feel the nuts and berries I ate for breakfast won't be enough. Higher up the mountain we Adam take a construction road that goes towards a dam. After we park our bikes and eat some more, a guy comes by and asks us how long we are cycling and where we are going but none of us are really in the mood to talk. We politely end the conversation and tell him we are going to Stranddalen. There will be some really steep hills to hike to get to there. Why Stranddalen you ask? There is of course another rock formation up there. I found out about the rock formation called «Stranddalsgubben» when my grandfather died and I found a photo album from my grandmother and grandfathers wedding trip in the early sixties. They walked through here nearly sixty years ago. I hope they ate more then nuts and berries for breakfast because now Joar also says that he is very hungry. We document the rock formation that looks like a guy smoking



Ombomannen

a small cigarette. Adam looked weirder and funnier. There is a DNT-hut nearby and luckily for us we are just in time for a three course dinner. We both feel like zombies. The owner of the cabin is an old military guy. Or at least that's what Joar thinks. Neither of us has been in the military. The dinner and dessert gives us new strength and we walk another route back to our bicycles. On the way there there is another famous rock called «Smørslagjo». Don´t ask me to pronounce it. We walk down to our bikes and find a place to camp. I sleep under the tarp again on some ruts and have a bad night sleep. The next day we both agree to book a cabin for the night.

We have camped in the mountains and there are some rolling hills up and down before we get to the fjord. It rains the whole day. When we get to the fjord there are more rolling hills and fish farms. I book a camping hut in Sauda which is the nearest town. Or at least that's what I thought. When we get there we find out that I booked the hut for tomorrow. It's still raining. We find a hotel and book one room with two beds. When we get to the room there is two beds next to each other that you can't take apart and a big flame from an oil refinery just outside the window. We buy pizza from a nearby shop and I am so tired that I ask for «drømmedressing» instead of «rømmedressing». Joar will mention this for the rest of the trip. Our hopes are that there is maybe a good movie to watch in the hotel room, but there is only the Norwegian equivalent to Cops. We fall asleep listening to the eternal flame from the oil refinery outside our room in our double bed.

We start from Sauda which is a city near the fjord and are climbing up to 1000 meters, only to go down 400 meters and up to 1000 meters again. It's still raining. There is a monument along the way about a postman who got caught by an avalanche and dug himself out using the post horn. The last part of the road from Røldal to Odda is a road that is only open in the summer and known for being really scenic, but thanks to the rain we don't really see much, also my hands and legs are freezing. I only want todays part of the trip to be over with. I know of an old abandoned factory we can camp at in Odda. Odda, like Sauda, is an old factory town and is equally as ugly as Sauda, maybe more. At least we'd have a roof over our heads. We get to the building and Joar is very skeptical. I convince him that this is the best solution. There is graffiti everywhere. Joar says he see asbestos all around us. I eat my Real Turmat and I am happy that I have the feeling back in my hands and legs. Joar´s sleeping mat gets punctured during the night so he has to sleep right on the concrete floor. We wake up to a tourist walking around inside of the building. He must



Strandalsgubben

think we are bums. We are not bums, we are bike packers. The rain has stopped and we are happy that we get to ride in the sun. Joar lets me know that my bicycle shorts are so worn out that they are now see-through. I don't envy the sight. We cycle along the fjord and look up to the glacier Folgefonna on our left. Joar has carried a spray can the whole trip and he finally gets to use it. He writes Friatlet, which translate to «Free-athlete». That is the name of our loosely based pack of friends that tour together. We stop by the first folkmuseum for today to look at old restored buildings and bunads. Some kilometers later we stop by the next folk museum to look at even more buildings and bunads. This is one of the best days of the trip. I forget that I'm walking around the museums with a see-through cycling bib. We take the ferry, cycle some more and get to Voss where Joar´s girlfriend Tora lives. After a shower we make dinner and feel like people that live in a society again. We watch The Deerhunter and practice to say «Mau!». Thats what the Vietnamese general say to Robert de Niro when he force him to put the gun to his head when they play Russian roulette in the prisoner camp. I take the night train back to Oslo.

NIPGUBBEN

I am taking the train towards Trondheim. My stop is a small village south of the city. I have checked the route a bunch of times. I follow a small road next to a river to meet Joar who has already set up camp. We have been on tour many times before. I am lucky that Joar also likes to cycle and has an eye for noticing weird things. I have a new tent that I haven't set up before. When I arrive to camp Joar makes fun of me for not being able to pitch the tent myself. I eat my Real Turmat asian curry with some extra chilli flakes and salt. The large amount of mosquitos force us to get in our tent and call it a night.

The day after we follow the road next to the river. The route I made has an option to do a detour to a valley called «Hessdalen» which is famous for having a bunch of ufo sightings. There is faded graffiti next to the road that reads «Hessdalen». It looks like it has been made in the nineties. The detour starts with a climb, so we decide to skip the detour all along. We later stop at a gas station and eat a sloppy veggie burger. After around 100 km we arrive at a lake in the mountains with a beach. We set up camp and wait for our other friend Henning who is also joining. It is summer but it feels like fall. Henning arrives and pitches his one-man-tent. He has the most expensive and lightest tent of the group. We joke that it almost looks like a



Smørslagjo

sarcophagus. I am able to pitch my tent, but it doesn't quite look right. It will do for this night. When we cross the border to Sweden its starts to rain. I am starting to fantasize about this small asian restaurant that I have found on google maps. The rain gets more intense. There is no place to sit inside the restaurant, so I order some kind of curry that I'm allowed to bring it in to a grill where Joar and Henning are eating. Henning has bought a Tunbrødrulle which is two hotdogs with lettuce and mashed potatoes inside a roll. I think it looks like a Swedish version of a kebab without the spices. We cycle through woods and more woods and finally find a place to camp. There is this a small lake next to it but Henning is worried that the water isn't clean. I make fun of him. We all drink the water. I end up throwing up outside my tent. Joar does the same. Henning is fine.

I wake up feeling like shit, but at least Joar is also feeling the same. Henning is just waiting to get sick, but that never happens. We are around 60 km from the goal of the trip, which is a small statue on top of a mountain. We all decide that we can't climb in this condition. There is a camping hut around 50 km from our camp. We book a cabin. The 50 km is one of the worst trip I have ever had on a bike. I have to stop and throw up a couple of times and I am not able to eat. We get to the store and I buy bananas, chocolate milk and a couple of Coca Colas. We are boycotting Coca Cola because they support Israel in the genocide against the Palestinians, but today I break my moral compass. A friend of mine calls Coke Netanyahu-soda. Henning is still not sick. This, kinda annoys me.

In the morning we feel a bit better and decide to cycle to Nip-mountain to document the statue. I already know how I am going to photograph it. Joar says he wants to go home, so he cycles a different route and takes the train home. Henning and I climb slowly and I feel ok. The statue looks even better in real life. We make fun of what we do for «fun» but are also grateful that we made it to the top. There are also some tourist that have drove their car up here. They haven't earned it like us. We cycle down the same road that we went up and cycle for a few more hours into this small town where we have been before. The food shops in Sweden are much nicer than in Norway. We have our lunch next to a old wooden church. I still feel ok. Cycling from the small town we get passed by a couple of trailers transporting logs. Next to the road there is graffiti which read «The logging industry are terrorists». I haven't eating enough and start to feel bad again. When we find a camp I end up throwing up. My mom says she can pick me up when we get back to the Norwegian border. I accept.



Nipgubben

The last day I have a zoom call with my doctor in the tent. He says that I look pale and gives me general advice for what to do when having food poisoning. Henning is still fine. We cycle slow through the Swedish countryside and stop by a monument for a guy who supposedly met a bear there. Its a wooden sculpture, but its not really that interesting. I still take a photo of it. After a while we get to this shopping mall just next to the Norwegian border, where many Norwegians go to buy loads of Pepsi Max, bacon and alcohol. Henning and me look at them in disgust. I start to feel better and then we meet my mom. Henning who never got sick wants to take a shorter route and take the train home. I make him a route that I have cycled before. Its a gravel road and I tell him to look for the weird wooden sculpture that I have documented a year earlier. He later sends me a photo of it. My mom and I stop at Hamburger King and I am no longer sick. We listen to a podcast about the Norwegian serial killer Arnfinn Nesset. My mom says our aunt bought flowers from him when he was working outside the jail in a flower shop during the last year of his sentence. We can't decide if he is guilty or not.

ROAD HOUSE

Tor Arne and I arrive at Otta. Its the middle of the summer. Andrew's girlfriend has a cabin nearby so he is cycling from there. We meet Andrew and cycle towards Lom which has a famous bakery and pizzeria. I have cycled this road a bunch of times before. We have a saying that we don't cycle on roads that have a yellow line, because they are often too crowded. Thats not completely true, but we do our best to cycle on roads with less traffic. These small roads have a lot more elevation than the main roads. But at least we don't fear for our lives. The road goes up and down all the way to Lom. We get to the pizzeria which is crowded with tourists and order a beer and pizza. The pizza lives up the hype. The goal for today is to cycle to where the road ends in Breheimen. This road is new to me. We end up in a valley and set up camp next to a river. After we have set up camp a bunch of cows come to the same spot. Apparently this is their spot. We end up being chased around by cows carrying our tents. It seems like this young black cow is their leader. We find a place on the other side of the river. Tomorrow we are doing this long piece of hike-a-bike that we are all looking forward to. The day starts with beautiful weather and Andrew takes a swim in the river. Tuva from Valkyrien Allstars (A Norwegian rock band) comes out from one of the nearby cabins and takes a swim in the same spot as Andrew did. We start to walk our bikes on



The old man of the Nip

the trail and are wondering if any other people have done this before. Its supposed to be 8 km. How long can it take? Andrew is wearing Birkenstocks while Tor and me have sandals and hiking shoes. It gets steeper and steeper. Andrew has to modify his Birkenstocks with straps so they don't fall of. I am really grateful that I don't have to do this alone. The reason we are doing this hike-a-bike is because I have done the road over Sognefjellet a couple of times before, and we like to cycle new roads right? We get to the top and begin walking in snow. We can see where the road starts all they way down on the other side. I am glad that I am not hiking in Birkenstocks with straps and that I don't have as heavy bike as Andrew. Now we are carrying our bikes over huge boulders and have to find our way down to the road without a clear path. We make it down and get a few kilometers on the road before we have to call it a day and set up camp.

We are all happy that we get to ride our bikes instead of walking or carrying them. I hear a small noise when I am going downhill but don't think much of it. When I stop to investigate the noise I see a big tear in my back tire. Apparently a small stone got wedged between my fender and tire and has ripped part of my tire. Lucky that it didn't explode when I was going downhill. Andrew has a tire boot that I can attach to the inside of the tire and that makes my bike rideable. Now I have a big hump every time my wheel makes a rotation. We are now in the middle of Jostedalen where there are big glaciers. We stop next to one to take a break. I call a shop in Sogndal and ask if they have a tire. They do. We cycle some more and are now in Sognefjorden. There is a skate park next to the road. Tor Arne, who was really into freestyle BMX immediately rides over there to a small jump in the park without checking the landing and crashes. Andrew and me look at each other and Andrew says: «That's not good». This is the first ride with Tor Arnes new bike. Tor Arne jumps up like a small kid and pretends he is not hurt. The bike is fine. The handlebar is a little bit bent, but no harm done. We make fun of Tor Arne. In the future we always asks if he sees any skatepark when we are cycling.

Next stop is a sport store in Sogndal. I buy a new tire that is a little bit too narrow, but it will do. We are tired of cycling so we find a spot just next to a popular place where people are walking and cycling. Tor Arne writes «Just blaze it» on the guard rail next to our camp with a spray can and says it reverse psychology because people won't think we are that stupid that we will do graffiti right next to where we camp. Today we are climbing up Gaularfjell which is a mountain pass with a lot of hairpins. But before that we are riding



The logging industry are terrorists

next to Sognefjorden. Its a little bit too much traffic for my taste, but what can you do. We take a ferry and ride a small detour to this small town called Balestrand which I cycled through the year before and ate really good puttanesca. Or maybe I was just really tired and the food tasted way better than usual. We stop next to a swim spot and see a weird looking tree called Apeskrekk in Norwegian or Monkey Puzzle in English. When I google it I find out that this is the oldest and tallest example of this tree species in Norway. It was planted in 1863 and is 22 meters tall. The place with the hyped up puttanesca in Balestrand is closed so we end up eating something else that I can't remember. We cycle towards Gaularfjellet and it starts to rain. When we get to the viewpoint on top Tor Arne is really cold and wants to find a camping hut. After a while he Apreskrekk in Balestrand Reverse psychology gets his way. We are all glad that we don't have to sleep in our tents. We end up watching «Road House» on tv. How have I not heard about this eighties gem before? Not to be confused with the new remake with Jake Gyllenhaal. The next day we cycle 70 km to take a boat to the other side of the fjord. The thing that awaits us there is a homemade miniature stave church. The 45 minute boat ride over is only 30 kr each and we are amazed how cheap it is. Andrew pays for us. I have been to this stave church before, but I want to go again and take some new pictures for this solo exhibition I am having later this year. I haven´t made a work with the stave church before. I talk a little bit with the owner who is an old man with a hunched back. There is also a lot of wooden sculptures around. I wonder if I should say that I want to make a jaquardweave version of his miniature church but I tell myself that it is to hard to explain so I don't. I should prepare myself for what to say better the next time I am in this situation. We are now on the other side of Sognefjorden with a really small road and almost zero cars. Yesterdays rain is forgotten and we find a nice place to pitch our tents.

Andrew is heading in another direction to cycle to Voss to take the train home. I know which route he is taking because I did the same a couple of years before. Its over the mountain and through a long completely dark tunnel. After this tour, Andrew builds a new wheel with a dynamo so he can always have light in the front an the rear. Going through tunnels on a bike is a bit scary. Tor Arne and I continue on the small road and stop by a museum. This is a private museum with taxidermy animals. The owner shows us around and jokes that he hasn't killed these animals himself. They are donated he says. We both feel like a part



Birkenstocks with straps



Hike-a-bike



Jostedalen



Monkey Puzzle



Reverse Psychology

of the tv-show «Norge Rundt». After the museum the roads gets a bit bigger and the dramatic scenery of Sognefjorden starts to fade. We find a gapahuk to spend the night. We both feel really dirty and are happy that tomorrow will be our last day. We spend the next day riding towards Bergen with not really that much to rest our eyes on. We stop by a big oil refinery called «Mongstad» where there is of course a big ugly troll. I document it with my camera and think of the contrast from what I saw yesterday and the day before. I don't do anything with the photograph. We end up drinking some beers in Bergen before we take the train home. I feel lucky that I have these weird friends that want to do these tours with me.



Homemade miniature stave church