

# The Legend of Tapio

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## A Hypnotherapy Script

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Decisions didn't come easy for Tapio. He had heard rumors of men and women from Karstula making their fortunes in America. He heard of streets paved with gold. What if he traveled to this magical foreign land and failed? What if he left the security of his homeland and never discovered a rich new life? He sat pondering the trip in his small one-room home night after night, rubbing his thick, cracked and frozen hands together over a meager fire.

I've had enough of the dark winters, he thought. I'm tired of living in fear that the Russians will come through the forest again and take my land. Can I leave my brothers and sisters and the town where I was raised? I only know a handful of English words. How will I make my way? They will laugh at my Finnish accent.

He rose gingerly, stretching his tired, cramped muscles, and moved toward a trunk at the far end of his tiny room. Reverently, he opened the trunk and looked over the belongings he had been collecting over the last few months in anticipation of a journey to America. Lying on top of the quilts and patched clothes was a worn piece of paper. The flimsy note looked brittle in his rough hands, as he walked back to the warmth of the fire.

Dearest Brother,

I have been in New York City three months now, working as a chamber maid to pay off my passage. I have heard that there are opportunities further west, and many Finns have ventured to Ohio, where the land is green and fertile for farming.

Oh, Tapio, if you were here with me, I would have the courage to do the same. I am not happy here in New York City. It is dirty and loud, and I fear I will live out the rest of my days scrubbing other women's floors.

Please come to New York, and we will travel together to Ohio and build a beautiful farm where our families will be safe and healthy and happy.

I miss you terribly and pray for word that you are on your way.

Your sister,

Ina

Icy tears rolled down his rough cheeks. I must go! She needs my help. He gulped down his fear and began to make plans for the long trip across the ocean.

Tapio did journey to the United States that summer and met his sister in New York City. Together they traveled to Pennsylvania, where their money ran out. Tapio toiled long hours in the coal mines, dreaming of his farm in Ohio, but money was always tight, and he felt as though he never made any progress toward his dream.

His sister, Ina, married an honest and humorous coal miner named Wally – also a Finn. They, too, etched out a meager but happy living in the Pennsylvania mining town.

Tapio, felt very alone. Most of his family was back in Karstula, and he missed his homeland terribly. He enjoyed very little happiness, as the long hours in the mines began to dim the spark of his dream for a better life. The work was dangerous, and he had seen many friends die. All of them looked older than their years. He longed for the clean, cold air of Finland, the sparkling lakes and dark green pines.

In the fall of 1939, Tapio decided to travel back to Finland to visit the family he so deeply missed. Tapio's trip to Karstula was filled with tears of joy and remorse. He had nothing to show for his years in the United States – no gold, no riches, no beautiful farm in Ohio.

The trip was cut short by word from a neighboring town that Russians were indeed coming through the forest again and invading their homeland. Tapio fled north through Lapland and out of the country so quickly that he left behind his cherished travel trunk and returned to America empty handed.

Back at his job in the Pennsylvania mines, Tapio's sweat mixed with tears of fear for his family in Finland. World War II put his dreams completely on hold, and his evenings were spent managing ration coupons to plan the meals for each week. Tapio knew his family back in Finland was most likely suffering more than he, and he took aside a portion of his coupons each week to buy coffee to send to Finland. Once a month, he mailed a care package of American coffee to his brothers and sisters in Karstula with the hopes that they would soon be reunited.

The next years passed slowly in the mines, until one horrible day when Tapio heard a faint rumble and then the telltale sign of dust falling from the low dirt ceiling. Before he had time to run or even shout to his fellow miners, he was crushed by black earth. It took rescue crews six hours to dig four of them out. Tapio and Sean, a tough Irish immigrant barely half his height, survived, but the other two men were not as lucky. His two friends died in the blink of an eye. Tapio crushed several vertebrae and would be unable to return to the mines ever again. He lay in his hospital bed shaking his head in loss and regret. Where will I go? How will I live? What will happen to the families of the other two men? I don't know what to do anymore. His sister, Ina, took his hand gently.

"You will live with us," she said in a soft, soothing voice.

Thirty years later, a young family of four excitedly locked up their farmhouse in Ashtabula, Ohio and piled into their Ford pickup for the hour trip to Cleveland and the much longer flight to Helsinki. They

were soon to meet relatives they only knew of through letters, mostly in a language they did not understand and had to have translated.

Two days later, this young family of four stood in a clean, simple home in Karstula, face to face with their cousins. Warm Finnish pastries, a heaping bowl of raspberries and rich, dark coffee were spread out ceremoniously on a lace tablecloth. Broken sentences and broad smiles filled the room and mingled with the sweet smells.

Suddenly, cousin Tarja took the hand of the young mother and reverently led her up a small stairway to a tiny attic bedroom. At the far end of the room was a beautiful polished wood trunk. This trunk was adorned with an intricate lace runner on top of which was placed an old black and white photo in a pewter frame. The photo showed a tall, muscular man, a slight smile playing on his lips as he sheepishly looked into the camera lens.

"Is Tapio," said Tarja in her limited English. "You know of Tapio, yes?"

"Tapio? Oh my, yes!" gasped the young mother. "He's my great uncle!"

She looked closely at the photo. It was him. The quiet, tired, crooked man she knew in her childhood was barely recognizable in this tall, muscular Finn, but the shy smile was the same.

"Tapio is very good man," explained Tarja. "Very famous man in Karstula."

Tarja noticed the quizzical look on the young mother's face.

"Tapio not famous in America?" she asked.

"What? Um, no. Not really. He was a good man, though. A very quiet man."

"Tapio is legend in Karstula."

A legend? The young mother sat at the edge of the bed next to her cousin and heard of how of how a quiet, strong man made such a difference to the little town of Karstula during World War II. They had been using roots and boiled water to simulate their beloved coffee, when a surprise package from the United States arrived...and then another...and another. Throughout that dark, long war, as they experienced death and hunger and loss, they were encouraged by the packages from Tapio that arrived without fail each month. Someone in the United States, their brother, cared for them and thought to send that special gift. It gave them hope and the courage to continue to fight for their independence. In the end, they maintained independence from the Soviet Union.

The young mother was stunned that this seemingly insignificant act would have such a great effect on a family and a town. She never knew that her elderly, frail great uncle was a real hero. Tears gathered in the corners of her eyes, as she longed to have the chance to let him know what a difference he made to the people of Karstula.

Tapio thought he had been a failure, living out his final days in the guest room of his niece's farm in Ohio. In fact, he had a significant and lasting impact on the lives of people on both sides of the Atlantic. Small acts of kindness, days of toil and sweat were not in vain. They laid the groundwork for change and hope and strengthened the ties of a family that stretched across countries and oceans.

The legend of Tapio lives on in the smiles of future generations of Finns and Americans.

