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Norways gets LOTS of snow! This picture, taken by SSGT Rodney K. Prouty on the 5th of March in 1982, depicts LEOPARD I battle tanks being used in a NATO military exercise in Målselv, Norway. Image online via the U.S. Department of Defense.

When his name is revealed to the Nazis in Norway, Erling must immediately flee the country. He is at risk of being charged with a long list of offenses for which the German occupiers would surely inflict serious punishment.

Fleeing to Sweden, on skis, is no easy task—even for an expert skier. Erling has no guarantee that he'll be able to travel hundreds of kilometers, reaching the Swedish border, in five days. And ... who is to say that he will be able to trust his five separate guides?

Before beginning his journey, though, Erling has a few things to do. First ... in case his sister breaks ... he has to leave his girlfriend's home:

With Kiri [Erling's neighbor] and friend well in front, to give me a chance to split if any patrols came along, we walked through the dark streets. We headed for a path through the woods but before Kiri and friend left me we burned the compromising documents that I had received that day... (See [Erling's story](#) using his own words.)

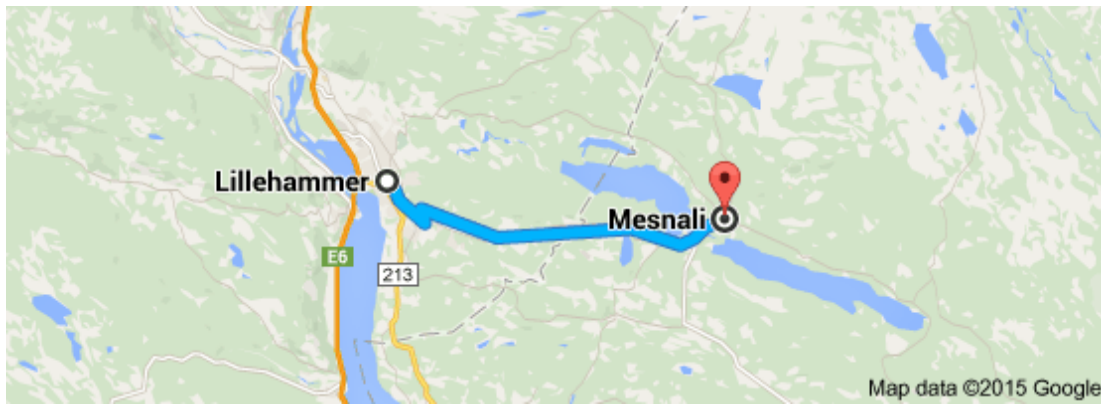
Not knowing what has happened to his family, Erling spends the night in the barn of another trusted friend. The next morning, he gets a pair of boots and news from Aase-Brit (his girlfriend):

Aase-Berit and Milorg friend Steinar arrived next morning with my walking boots and a report on the situation. Father had been arrested [and went to Grini prison, near Oslo] but otherwise it seemed as though the search for me was an isolated episode resulting from the arrest of the two Labour Service boys. After a couple of meetings we agreed that, because of my courier activities, I had become too great a risk to remain in the district. All my official equipment was handed over to my successor. (See [Erling's story](#) using his own words.)

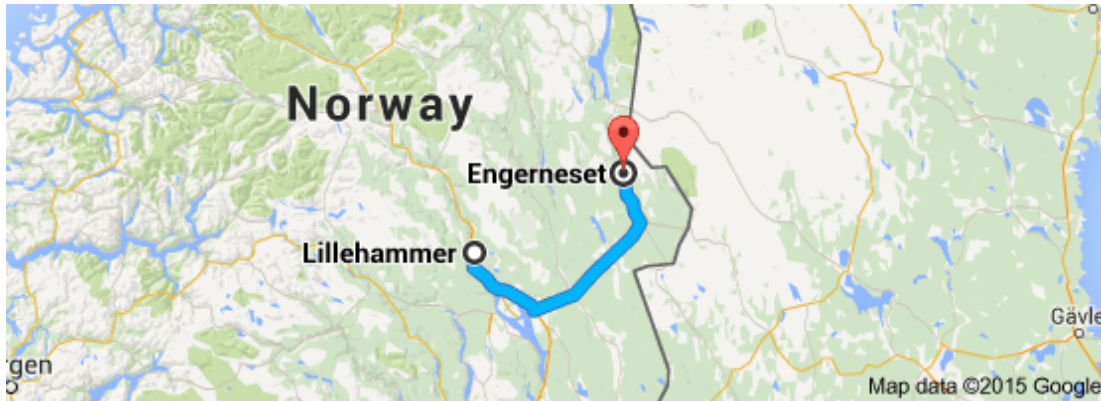
By nightfall, Erling is ready to leave. He parts with his girlfriend, knowing he may never see her again.

Skiing conditions were good. I was in fairly good condition but since I mostly had to travel at night I slept little - and ate less. The guides were unbelievably selfless and they took great risks. The routine was to give the first guide an envelope containing kr.50 [50 Kroner] for each leg of the journey. The envelope I handed over contained kr 350. (See [Erling's story](#) using his own words.)

The first leg of Erling's escape trip—which takes place in March of 1945—extends from Lillehammer to Mesnalia. During a rest period, he sleeps in a cabin.



Continuing from Mesnali, Erling and his guide have to travel to Engerneset, near the Swedish border. It's a distance of 185 kilometers.



Finally getting to the Swedish side of the border, Erling stays with a man named Pelle Anderrson and his family:

As we approached Pelle Anderrson's cabin on the Swedish side, my guide lost his way in the dense fog. But, like all good boy scouts, I had a compass in my rucksack, we found the right track, and when we parted the guide was a compass richer for future trips. (See Erling's story using his own words.)

Once safely inside Sweden, Erling has to register as a refugee. Anderrson points him in the right direction, on the road east from Gørdalen to Særna:

Next day Pelle led me eastwards to the road between Særna and Gørdalen. I left my skis with Pelle and began walking, in my white camouflage overall, along the snow-decked road. (See Erling's story using his own words.)



Before long a military patrol appeared: "Halt, where do you come from?" From Norway I replied. "From Norway - without skis?" was the skeptical response. I showed them my student identity card: "Oh yes, student - we'll write saboteur in our report."

Thus I became Norwegian refugee number 53000 (or thereabouts), to be registered in Sweden. (See Erling's story using his own words.)

Years later, in 1985, Erling describes his escape to freedom after he is reunited with one of his guides:

...it was a terrible trip. From Sjusjøen we went on skiis, the snow was wet and stuck in lumps to the undersides making the going difficult. I was worried about my father who was ill and had been arrested by the Germans. I mentioned this to my guide who told me to relax - he had been told to let me know that father had been released. (See Erling's story using his own words.)

During that same 1985 meeting, Erling also learns something crucial about [his reassuring guide](#):

The guide, Albert Taraldstad, met Erling again for the first time at the memorial ceremonies in Lillehammer on May 7 1985. He told Erling that the news about the release of his father had been made up on the spur of the moment – and that he had been carrying a pistol with orders to shoot Erling if there was any danger of being captured by the Germans. (See [Erling's story](#) using his own words.)

At the time, Erling has no clue that his guide could have been the one to deprive him of his life.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ESCAPE-to-SWEDEN-Shadow-on-the-Mountain>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/ESCAPE-to-SWEDEN-Shadow-on-the-Mountain>

Media Stream



[Erling's Route - Lillehammer to Mesnalia](#)

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>



[Erling's Route - Continue to Engerneset](#)

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>



[Erling's Route - Arrive at Gordalen](#)

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/>

[Erling Storrusten Learns His Life Was in Danger](#)

Thinking that he was only in danger if he were caught by the Nazis who occupied his country, during World War II, Erling Storrusten (a Norwegian) is surprised to learn the rest of the story, in 1985.

During that year, he was reunited with Albert Taraldstad—one of his five guides—who helped him escape to Sweden. For the first time, Erling learns a key fact.

The guide had orders to shoot Erling (who was a teenager when he fled Norway, trying to evade the Gestapo) if they encountered Germans during Erling's escape to Sweden.

This image, from a Norwegian newspaper printed in 1985, depicts Erling (wearing glasses) as he appeared at that time.

Image described above, online via "[WWI in Norge](#)" (WWII in Norway), a Norwegian website, with an English translation, created by Geoff and Else Ward, which tells stories about "Norway: War Resistance Peace."

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Erling-Storrusten-Learns-His-Life-Was-in-Danger>



Griini Prison and Concentration Camp

This drawing depicts a view of Griini Prison, and its adjacent Nazi concentration camp, as it appeared during World War II.



Although Griini was originally built as a prison for women, in 1939, the Nazis used (and expanded) it for their own purposes during their occupation of Norway, beginning in June of 1941. Among other individuals, the Nazis sent political deportees to Griini.

The prison complex is located in the city of Bærum, near Oslo. During the war, it was the largest Nazi-operated concentration camp in Norway.

At about the time that Erling Storrusten had to flee Norway, in March of 1945—when the Gestapo learned his identity—the Germans captured Erling's father. He was sent to Griini as a political prisoner.

Illustration online, via Norway's Lofoten War Museum.

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ESCAPE to SWEDEN

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