

Irene: Hello and welcome to Queer as Fact. I'm Irene.

Eli: I'm Eli.

Alice: I'm Alice.

I: We're a queer history podcast that comes out on the 1st and 15th of every month, covering people, places, objects and events relevant to queer history. Today we'll be looking at Tove Jansson, the creator of the Moomins.

[intro music plays]

I: We have a few content warnings for this episode: there are mentions of anti-Semitism, period-typical homophobia, World War 2 happens, and there's one mention of suicidal thoughts. If any of that is something you need to skip, go ahead and find a different episode.

E: Should you explain what a Moomin is?

A: Yes.

I: Oh, yeah, okay.

E: So...

[laughter]

E: Probably not everyone knows what a Moomin is.

E: They're the most delightful species. They're very chubby. They look kind of like hippos but upright.

A: [laughs]

I: Yeah, they're characters which...

E: They're...

I: ...appeared in her children's books and comic strips and many other things.

E: Mm.

A: You can visit our blog and we will put many pictures of Moomins for you.

E: [snorts] Yeah, welcome to Moomin Week on the blog.

[laughter]

I: When I started looking at Tove, I went and looked on her like, official website, and sort of looked at what they said about her life and that kind of thing, and while they mention her partner a couple of times, they don't ever mention like, the relationship between them, or how she fits in to Tove's life or anything like that, and so I was having that kind of, "Okay, I was gonna do an episode. Is this person queer?" freak-out that we...

A: Oh yeah.

E: Mmhm.

I: ...invariably have for every episode.

[laughter]

A: Yep, yep.

[laughter]

I: And then I read her biography and she was quite queer. I'm going to start a little bit before her birth actually, just 'coz her mother was super great.

A: Okay.

E: Is her mother queer?

I: Not as far as I know. But her mother is just quite cool. So her mother's name is Signe Hammarsten.

E: Mmhm.

I: She's generally referred to as Ham.

[laughter]

I: Like, even by her children.

[laughter]

A: That's very cute.

E: That's quite funny.

I: Like, Tove is always writing in her diary like, "Saw Ham today," and that kind of thing.

[laughter]

A: So what country are we in?

I: Ham is born in Sweden.

A: Okay.

I: But we're in Finland ultimately.

E: Mm.

A: Okay, my main question was – does Ham mean anything in these people's language? [laughs]

I: I don't know.

A: Okay.

I: So she was born in 1882 in Sweden. She was apparently very physically active – I'm told she enjoyed sailing, hiking, skiing and was a crack shot, and she preferred to ride with an ordinary saddle rather than side-saddle.

E: Like a reasonable person. We've had side-saddles come up before and every time I'll make this comment because...

[laughter]

E: ...it's nonsense.

I: The biographer that I was reading told me that at one time Ham performed as a circus rider to the king and queen of Sweden.

E: Sure.

I: I was not very convinced but I wanted to put that in anyway.

E: [laughs]

A: Okay.

I: There was no citation for this.

E: [laughs]

I: She also started a troop of Girl Guides, before there were Swedish Girl Guides.

E: Mm.

A: Oh!

I: She heard about them overseas and was like, "This sounds cool," and started some Girl Guides. And she was a suffragette.

E: Good.

A: Good.

I: She's generally quite cool.

E: Mm.

I: Ham is a drawing teacher in her, like, 20s, and then she decides she wants to become a, like, artist on her own...

E: Mmhm.

I: So she goes to Paris to study art, where she meets Viktor Jansson, who is Tove's father. Viktor was born in 1886, so he's four year younger than Ham, and he is from Helsinki. For some reason, and I couldn't find the source of this nickname...

E: [laughs]

I: ...he's referred to as Faffan.

E: Faffan!

A: [laughs]

I: Faffan, so they're...

E: How's... how's that spelled?

I: F-A-F-F-A-N.

E: Okay, good.

I: Faffan. So...

E: Faffan and Ham.

A: [laughs]

I: Yeah, that's what like, Tove calls them in all her writings.

A: Aww!

E: No wonder she ends up doing children's books, with parents called Faffan and Ham.

[laughter]

I: Yes.

A: Did you try just like, looking up if Faffan had any meaning in Swedish?

E: In Finnish, presumably.

I: Ah, he's a Swedish-speaking...

E: Oh, he's a.... okay.

I: ...Finn, so probably in Swedish. I found they suggested it was related to I think farfar, which is 'grandfather'.

A: [laughs]

I: Which they thought he may have got at school...

A: Okay.

I:for some reason, but they really didn't know.

A: [laughs]

I: So he is studying art in Paris on a scholarship, and he and Ham fall in love, and get married, and she falls pregnant, and the new baby is Tove. She has this gorgeous sketch which she does of Tove at like, one day old.

E: Mmm....

I: It's just like, very round.

[laughter]

I: And wrinkly, and she sketches in her diary a fair bit, Ham does, and the entry underneath says, like, translated obviously, "Born on Sunday 9th of August at five minutes to 12. It's nice she was a girl, but she was so ugly, like a little wrinkled old woman!"

A: [laughs]

E: Mm...

A: That's how new-born babies are though. They have very squashed faces.

E: Some more than others.

A: Yeah. Presumably she was a very squashed one.

I: So when Tove is little, Faffan goes off and fights in the war against Russia, as you do...

E: Mmhm.

I: ...they were invading Finland, it was a reasonable thing to do.

A: Mmhm.

E: Okay.

I: Tove says that he came home from the war like, much more reserved and much more serious than he'd been when he left. I assume that she's speaking from like, her mother's memories on this, because she was like, quite young at this point when he...

A: Mm.

E: Okay.

I: ...at the point when he left, so she wouldn't know. Generally the family still seems to have been like, very stable and very happy. She spends the summers with her mother's family on the island of Helsingfors [correction: on an island in the Pellinki archipelago], which sounds just like, very idyllic.

E: Mm.

I: Her mother's got this large family, and they rent out this island.

A: Mm!

E: Good.

A: Sounds good. So is Tove the only kid?

I: At the moment. Later she has two younger brothers.

A: Mmkay.

I: The youngest of them is 12 years younger than her.

A: Mm.

I: He does important Moomins work later. Yeah, so the rest of the year the family lives in Helsinki. As a child, she was very interested in like, writing and drawing, partly just because this is what she saw her parents do all the time.

A and E: Mmhm.

I: Her mother was an illustrator, her father worked as a sculptor.

E: Mmhm.

A: Yep.

I: And so she's always producing these little like, children's books.

E: Mm.

A: Awww.

I: Which are very cute.

A: Do we still have them?

I: Yeah, there are like, pictures from them in the book. I will find them for you later. And sometimes she'll put in like, the little title "Upcoming titles from Tove Jansson's publishing house."

E: Aww.

A: Aww!

E: That's so cute.

I: And like, list little books she's planning to write later.

E: Mm.

A: [laughs] That's very good.

E: Mm.

I: But she soon kind of grows up from here to having sort of, real adult ambitions in illustrating and being published, that kind of thing.

A: Mmhm.

I: Her career as an illustrator begins in 1928 – I think she's 14 at this point, or 15 – when her grandmother fell ill and Ham was busy caring for her mother, and so just kind of, I think she just kind of left the work and Tove was like, “Well I guess I'll take this commission.”

[laughter]

E: Wow.

I: And so she does some illustrations for a children's newspaper.

A: That's a very enterprising 14-year-old.

E: Mm.

I: She's a very enterprising person generally.

A: Mmhm.

I: She was quite anxious about it at the time, I guess understandably.

E: Mm.

A: Yeah.

I: But the editors seemed to like her work, and they published her illustrations like, several times over the next few years.

E: Did she have a style quite similar to her mother? Like, was she passing this off as her mother's work, or was she just like, “You didn't expect this, but here's my stuff!” and they were like “Alright, great”?

I: I think the latter.

E: Alright. Okay.

I: She also wanted to publish a children's book. She talks about being sort of, 14 or 15 and cycling from publishing house to publishing house in her town, trying to like, give them her manuscript.

E: Oh my god!

A: Aww.

I: And be like, "Publish my book!"

A: And are they like, "You're a child," or are they like "This is good"?

I: She did get accepted once – they agreed to publish her...

A: Mm!

I: ...and then other things came up and the publication was delayed for some reason.

E: Mm.

I: And they didn't end up publishing the book until many years later when she made them publish it under a false name 'coz by that point she was embarrassed by it I think.

[laughter]

A: Like, that's fair enough. If someone published any of my 14-year-old work I'd be mad.

E: Yeah. It's like when you are 14 you're jealous of that French girl...

A: [snorts]

E: ...who wrote the book about the three gem ladies, but now you're glad that you didn't publish the books you were writing then.

[laughter]

A and I: Yeah.

I: Yeah. It's like, I remember being so angry that the Eragon guy got published. Anyway, in 1930, and I think she was 16 at this point, she finishes high-school, and moves on to the Stockholm Technical School, where she intended to study industrial illustration. This seems to be kind of like graphic design, like...

E: Okay.

I: ...the sort of stuff she's learning is like...

A: Mm!

I: ...drawing for advertising.

E: Mm.

A: Ah, yep yep yep. I see.

I: That kind of thing.

E: That sounds more boring than Moomins.

I: Yes. It does. She, in order to attend the school, she left home and went to live with her uncle's family in Sweden, because it was in Stockholm.

E: Mmhm.

I: She was quite excited about this at the time, but as you said, she found it fairly boring in the end.

E: Mm.

I: She found it quite like, repetitive...

E: Yep.

I: ...and stifling, and it just doesn't encourage the kind of work she's interested in.

E: Okay.

I: But she feels the need to be employable I guess, in order to help support her family.

E: Mm.

A: Mmhm.

I: And so she sticks it out and graduates after three years, at which point what she really wanted to do was stay in Stockholm and go on to study painting, but she was always aware that her mother was at home trying to support the family. Her mother seems to have brought in most of the money into the family, like, Viktor's doing sculpture and that's fairly kind of, unreliable income.

E: Mmhm.

A: Oh yeah.

E: Mm.

I: So eventually she decides she's better to come home instead of studying more in Stockholm, and she returns to Helsinki. So she returned to Helsinki and enrolls in a painting school there, which her father had studied at.

E: Mm.

I: And so she studies drawing and painting there while she works. So she starts studying at the Athenaeum in Helsinki, which she also finds fairly stifling. She just, I think, generally doesn't find classroom-based instruction...

E: Yep, okay.

I: ...really to suit her. But she seems to enjoy her classmates. She writes at this time, she writes a lot of like, narrative poems about the exploits of her classmates and things like that.

E: Oh good.

A: That sounds fun.

I: Which sound quite fun but unfortunately I didn't get...

A: Oh....

I: ...hold of any of them. I'll see if they're out there. I don't know.

E: Mm.

A: Do you know if, maybe they haven't been translated into English?

I: Yeah, that's possible. That's possible.

A: Mm.

I: She just left a lot of notes when she died. She left like notes, and correspondence, and she kept diaries for her whole life.

E: I love historical figures like that.

A: I'm so unfairly resentful of historical figures that don't do that. Like, why didn't you write a diary?

I: [laughs]

E: Did you know that we'd want to research you for a podcast one day?

[laughter]

A: Exactly, exactly.

I: It's in these narrative poems we see the first mention of Tuulikki Pietilä, who we will hear much more about in the future.

E: Mmhm.

A: It's a very cute name.

I: It gets cuter.

E: [laughs]

A: How does it get cuter?

E: It gets diminutive I assume.

I: But the two of them aren't really close at this time. They're in different years and...

A: Mmhm.

I: ...they don't sort of really know each other. They're just kind of peripheral to each other's social circles.

E: Mmhm.

A: Yep, okay.

I: But during her time at the Athenaeum, she has what looks like her first serious romantic relationship. It's with a man named Samuel Vanni.

E: Mmhm.

I: Who is an already-established artist. He's five years older than her. She seems to be like, genuinely quite in love with him. She describes looking at the portraits that he paints of her "with a joy that hurts".

E: Mmm....

I: And believes that his paintings of her "could not be so beautiful if he did not love her".

A: Aww.

I: So...

A: That's sweet.

I: She seems to be quite in love with him, but she also feels that pursuing a like, long-term relationship with him will take away some of her independence and that kind of thing.

E: Mmhm.

A: Oh yeah.

I: So...

E: Mm.

I: ...she doesn't really know where to go from there. She keeps the relationship secret from her parents, particularly her father, who she feels wouldn't approve, one – for the age difference, which is five years, so I'm not sure why she was worried about that.

A: Mm.

E: How old is she?

I: She must be 20.

E: I mean, I think that's fine, but I can also see why a parent might think that was a bit uncomfortable.

I: Yeah, I guess so.

A: Do you know if her worries about like, being in a long-term relationship with him taking away her independence is a thing about just being in a relationship with a man, or is it a thing about him?

I: It's generally a thing about relationships with men. It's something she talks about a lot in later relationships.

A: Mmkay. Yep.

I: The second reason she keeps the relationship secret is that Sam is Jewish, and she doesn't think her father would approve.

A: Mm.

E: Well he's dead to me.

I: He...

E: ...is dead to me.

[laughter]

I: He's quite ideologically bad.

A: Okay.

I: He seems to be generally like, a good parent, like he doesn't cause direct suffering, but he's ideologically a bad thing.

A: I mean, "I have to keep my boyfriend a secret 'coz he's Jewish" sounds like causing her suffering and being a bad parent.

I: Mm. They do eventually find out and while they tell her that they're opposed to the relationship...

A: Mm.

I: ...they don't sort of force her to do anything about it.

A: Okay, so her mother.... Is Ham also opposed to the relationship?

I: It's not really said I don't think. The concerns that she's talking about are concerns about her father and his anti-Semitism, and the age difference. At one point though, before he's found out about the relationship, seeing that Tove is frustrated at school, Faffan proposes that she instead leave, and take an established artist as a private teacher and mentor – for example, Samuel Vanni – you seem to know him.

A: [laughs]

I: And she writes in her diary like, “Oh God, they have no idea! I don't know how to approach this!”

[laughter]

E: Oh God.

I: Eventually Sam proposes marriage to her, but like I said before, she has those sort of issues with giving up her independence, or allowing his ambitions to take priority over hers, and so she turns down the proposal.

A: Mmhm.

I: They remain friends for essentially what seems to be the rest of their lives. She becomes quite close with Sam's later wife.

E: That's nice.

I: And she still like, shows him her pictures and stuff, and asks for critique. So that seems to have gone quite well overall.

I: In 1937 she wins an art scholarship. I couldn't really figure out what the conditions of this scholarship are, because basically she goes to Paris and she tries out a bunch of different art schools there for like short periods of time, on the money from the scholarship. So she seems to have just been given a bunch of money.

E: Okay.

A: That's nice.

I: To go and like, further her education.

A: When will Queer As Fact win such a scholarship.

E: [laughs]

I: I know, right, I know. Anyway, she goes off to Paris to see if she can find a school that suits her there because she hasn't enjoyed the ones she's done so far.

A: Mm-hm.

I: After trying out like three or four different schools, she finally finds one that suits her. It's smaller and less well known than most of the schools that she's been at before. It doesn't have the same

kind of reputation. But she finds that that offers her kind of the freedom to explore the things that she wants to.

A: Mm-hm.

I: As well as still having that kind of guidance and instruction.

A: Okay.

I: She's particularly interested in painting. She doesn't really at this point see herself becoming like, a writer or an illustrator. She wants to be a painter.

E: Yep.

A: Do you know what sort of painter she wants to be? Like a portrait painter, a landscape painter, like...?

I: She does a fairly wide variety of things. She does landscapes, she paints portraits, she paints still lifes. She paints a lot of things.

A: Okay.

I: She has a very kind of... I guess it's almost a little bit of an old-fashioned style? In that she complained a lot when she was at the technical school that they always wanted her to draw things in a modern – modern style, and she was like, "I hate this, it's terrible."

A: I don't know anything about art. What does that mean?

I: For her, most of what she objected to was the kinds of colours they used. She was like, it's really drab, it's really brown, I hate it.

A: [laughs]

E: Mm.

I: It's too kind of...

A: Uh-huh.

I: She always like really sort of vivid, bright colours. Her instructors were often kind of looking at her paintings like, "This is really good, Tove. But don't you think you were a bit heavy on the green?"

E & A: [laugh]

A: Okay.

I: Her time in Paris is very kind of formative for her as a young adult, just in terms of, she's living away from family for the first time. She sort of is developing her independence and developing her art style. Her father comes to visit her in Paris while she's studying there, and he writes home to Ham about how she's developed as an artist and how proud he is of her, and how she's sort of developed this independence and maturity, and he sort of says admiringly how she can get around like a local, and her art is so mature, and he's just very impressed with her basically.

A: That's good, that's good.

I: I know he's dead to you, but like...

E: He is still dead to me.

A: Yeah.

I: That's fair, that's fair.

A: So how long is she in Paris for?

I: She's in Paris for I think, a year?

A: Okay. What year are we in?

I: We are just before World War Two, you are correct.

A & E: [laugh]

A: That wasn't actually what I was leading to.

I: I assumed that's what you were asking. 1937.

E: So are you spoiling for us why she leaves Paris?

I: No, no.

E: Okay.

I: No, actually.

A: I was more just leading to like, Paris was a pretty queer place between the wars. Is she involved in any kinda queer subculture or anything at that time?

I: She doesn't seem to be. She does seem to sort of – it was never really mentioned, her having romantic relationships or that kind of thing at that time. She really only sort of explores the queer side of her sexuality much later.

A: Mmkay.

E: Mm...But she's so close to so many lesbians.

I: I know!

A: [laughs] Exactly.

E: This is kind of good, actually, because untangling all of those lesbians into like, different episodes that don't overlap is already hard enough without Tove being in there.

I: Yeah, true.

E: So, fine.

A: That's true.

I: She's like, doing painting, and like, not hanging out with lesbians, apparently. Or she didn't write about the lesbians if she was.

E: Mm.

A: Uh-huh.

I: But she seems to have been like, fairly thorough in her diary writing, so. I feel if she was having lesbians she would've said.

E: [laughs] If she was having lesbians!

A & I: [laugh]

E: Okay.

I: Anyway, she spends – so she spends about a year in Paris, and then a little more time travelling around the rest of Europe. She goes to Italy and writes a bunch of letters home to her family telling them how great it is, how much she's learnt from looking at the museums and that kind of thing, and how she'd love to live by the sea, and "Please don't worry, Ham and Faffan, I know there's a war coming, I know what I'm doing, I'm staying safe."

A: Aww. That's good. I'm glad she's staying safe.

I: And then, when the war's coming closer, so, in 1938, she decides, look, this is probably sensible, I'm gonna leave Italy now. And she comes home to Finland, where she gets a job drawing political cartoons for a magazine called Garm. [laughs]

A: What is Garm?

I: I do not know what Garm means. I could find out if you like...

A: I think we should Google Translate "Garm".

E: How do you spell Garm?

I: G – A – R – M.

[typing]

E: So Garm's just some nonsense.

A: Garm's just a word.

E: I'll ask my Swedish friend if she knows what Garm is, and she'll be like, "What is this text?"

[laughter]

E: No context, just, "What is Garm?"

[more laughter]

I: Yeah, Garm may just be a nonsense word. But anyway, she's drawing political cartoons for Garm. Basically...

E: I'm terrified about what these are in context....

I: No, she's good.

E: Ah, thank god.

I: She's good, she's good, don't worry. Mostly like, anti-fascist, anti-Hitler. She does a lot of like poking fun at Hitler and Stalin.

E: Okay.

A: Okay. That's a pretty safe level of political cartoon.

I: Yeah, she's like, on the right track there. There are the first of her works actually, where the Moomin figure appears.

E: The Moomins are anti-Hitler?

I: The Moomins are anti-fascist! That's right!

A: I was gonna ask when we saw the first Moomin in her life.

I: Yeah, she doesn't call it a Moomin at this point. She calls it "Snork".

A: Snork! [laughs]

E: Is that a like...name of species? Or is there an individual Moomin named Snork?

I: I think there's just one of it at this point.

E: I see.

I: And its name is Snork.

E: Aww, Snork is all alone at this point. He is the Adam of Moomins.

I: Yes. The Moomin named Snork...

[laughter]

I: ...is fighting Hitler.

A: [laughs loudly]

E: I want them to remake Captain America: The First Avenger but cut Chris Evans, and replace him with Snork the Moomin.

I & A: [laugh]

E: Like, skinny Steve just comes out of that tank thing as Snork the Moomin, and they're like, "We'll take it," and then he fights Hitler.

I: [laughing] I would watch that movie!

A: I'm picturing that scene where he goes in on the motorbike and rescues...[inaudible through laughter]

E: Ohh, dancing with Peggy Carter.

A & I: [laugh]

E: Are there villains in Moominland?

I: No, Moomins mostly seem to like, they face natural disasters and they face like, personal character flaws.

A: And Hitler.

E: Only Hitler very early on.

A: They defeat Hitler and they're like, "We're done."

I: Yep, basically. So yeah, she has Snork, and he becomes a kind of like, signature in all her comics. People start saying, "Oh, you can always recognise a Tove comic. It's got Snork in it."

E: Oh my god.

A: Does she like, incorporate him into the comic, or is it like where she just draws like a little Snork in the corner so you know it's her?

I: He sometimes interacts with things. Sometimes he's just like, you know that little snail, that...

A: Yeah, yeah. That's what I was thinking of. That little snail that that one cartoonist does... I don't know who that is.

I: Yeah. He's just this kind of signature character who comes and like, sometimes makes pithy comments. She preferred not to have text in her political cartoons. She was like, "I find it most insightful if you can get this across without words."

A: That's good, as she probably didn't do it in English and we don't speak Swedish or Finnish.

I: She has one and it's about Stalin, and Stalin's there like, ready to draw his massive sword, and it's like, in its massive scabbard.

A: Mm.

I: And in the next frame it's Stalin drawing his sword, and it's like, this long.

E: Wow.

I: It made me laugh.

E: So, you gestured "this long" with your hands, and we can't be seen, but I think from context the people listening to this can guess that it was quite small.

A: [laughs]

E: Okay. Well, Stalin probably didn't love that.

I: Stalin did not. It got censored, that one.

E: What Snork in this somewhere?

A: [laughs]

I: No, I don't think so. It has like a small chubby dog in it, like a pug, at the bottom, who's looking like, alarmed in the first frame, and then in the second is like, "Oh, this is chill," and barks at Stalin.

A: [laughs] Can Moomins talk?

I: Yeah.

A: Okay.

I: Yeah, Moomins talk. So, the war has the effect of seriously damaging Tove's relationship with her father. He...

E: [suspiciously] Why?

I: Basically thinks the only reasonable position for a sensible patriotic Finn is to be opposed to the Soviet Union. Being opposed to the Soviet Union means being friends with Germany. Also he's anti Semitic. You can see how this is not great.

E: I'm digging him up and killing him again.

I: Yeah, okay. She basically thinks he's being unreasonably rigid. He's formed this political opinion in the war with Russia that he fought when she was little.

A & E: Mm...

I: And she's like, "Look, you're not taking the current situation into account. You can't just be allies with Germany."

A: A reasonable line, Tove.

I: Yep. And she's perpetually angry at him because she also has a lot of Jewish friends like, in her social circles.

A: Mm-hm.

I: And like, left-leaning friends, because that's what artists are like.

A: [laughs]

E: Yep.

I: And so they fight about this perpetually. And she writes at one point to her friend Eva, who is living in America now. She was a Jewish Russian. She decided that was not a cool place to be for a Jewish Russian and left for America.

A: Mm.

E: Russia's very rarely been a cool place for a Jew to be.

I: Yeah.... So she writes to Eva at one point, "Faffan and I have said we hate each other. I feel sorry for Ham, but otherwise I feel no guilt, no sorrow, no nothing. I feel like a stone. It would be nice to stop living, but one goes on all the same. It's hell to be still living at home here, but for Ham's sake I must at least come home to dinner. Damn the war!"

E: Oh my god.

I: It does seriously damage her relationship with her father, basically. She says she's not upset about it, but she's apparently quite upset.

E: I mean... "I'm not upset. I wish I were dead."

I: Yeah, basically.

A: Yeah, okay.

I: She also, during the war years, she has another lover, the artist Tapio Tapiovara.

E: That's amazing.

I: That's his name.

E: That's amazing.

I: She calls him "Tapsa".

E: Okay.

A: [laughs]

I: I didn't have a lot of information about him, but he proposed to her as well, and she decides she's not going to marry him. She can't give him what he wants. One, she's not willing to give up her independence, and two, she's not willing to give him children, which – I'm going to read you a quote she says, hang on. So, when he proposes to her, this is what she writes. She also looks at the relationship of her parents and she's sort of thing, I don't really want that. "All the reasons I don't want to get married came up. One man after another. Faffan came first. The whole male solidarity and protective pedestal of privileges. Their weaknesses inviolable and fenced in by slogan. Their inconsistency and charming disregard for the feelings of others..." She goes on for a while. "I haven't time to marry any of them. I'm no good at admiring and comforting. I've seen how Faffan, the most helpless and instinctive of men, tyrannises over us all, how Ham is unhappy because she has always said yes, smoothed over problems, given in and sacrificed her life, receiving nothing in return except children war can kill." And she finishes all this with, "I refuse to give birth to children who can be killed in some future war." She's basically decided at this point that marriage to a man is incompatible with what she wants in her life, and she's not going to have children, because humans are bad.

E: Cool.

I: That's where she's at.

E: So the war's really doing a number on her.

I: She's not in the trenches, nobody's shelling her directly, but this definitely affects her.

E: Mm.

I: One of her brothers is called up to the army. The older of her two brothers is called up to the army.

A: Uh-huh.

I: Later on, her younger brother is called up, but the war ends before he ever goes anywhere.

A: Okay.

E: Is her brother okay?

I: Yes.

E: Okay, good.

I: Yeah, everyone in her family survives the war.

E: Cool.

I: Although the early war years were quite successful for her career as an artist, over time just the stress of the whole situation with her brothers in the army, and the situation with her father and the general threat of invasion from Russia...

A: Mm-hm.

I: Is taking a toll on her, and by 1943 she's writing, "I began to get started again with my painting, but now it's all gone wrong again. The main thing is not to be afraid."

A: Mm-hm.

I: Which basically, she's sort of trying to say, I can't not be afraid here, and I need that for my painting.

A: Yep, yep.

I: It's sort of, she's not very direct about whether she's talking about being afraid of creating something substandard, or just being generally afraid.

E: Yeah...

I: But, yes... However, even though her painting isn't working out, in the later war years, she starts to work on the Moomin stories.

A: [gasps]

I: Here is where the Moomins come back!

E: Good.

I: She's...in the early '40s, she's written down some of the structure. And by 1944, her notes contain a story titled "Moomintroll's Strange Journey".

E: How wonderful.

I: How wonderful. In the story "Moomintroll's Strange Journey", Moomintroll and his mother, Moominmamma, are looking for somewhere safe to live in the winter, and looking for the mysteriously disappeared Moominpappa.

E: [laughs]

I: He comes back, it's fine.

E: These collections of consonants are just so delightful.

I: Yeah. Reading about Moomins is like, very uplifting. I can see why she got halfway through the war and was like, "Alright, I'm thinking about Moomins. That's it." She had some trouble getting it published at first. She—

A: Why??

I: [laughs]

E: For what possible reason??

I: I don't know! She sends it to her usual publisher, but basically they just take a long time to get back to her. In her diary she writes angrily, "They don't care about my Moomintroll now, when the war's going to hell.

E: Mm...

I: So basically I think she just thinks they're not up for something so frivolous.

A: I care about her Moomintroll.

E: I too.

I: Yes.

E: So they're delaying when Moominpappa will be found, those monsters.

I: I know, I know, they're keeping Moomintroll's family apart. In 1945, as we all know, the war ends. Yay!

E: World War Two shows up more often than I'd like in this podcast.

I: World War Two shows up in the 20th century like, every time.

A: Yeah...What's with that?

I: Yeah, so, the war ends in 1945, and in the autumn of 1945, the first Moomins book is published.

A: So is Moominpappa found now?

I: Moominpappa is found.

E: Where was Moominpappa?

I: I don't actually know.

E: That's fair.

I: I can find out.

A: [laughs]

E: Five seconds...I just want to see if this comes up with the desired content...

I: I believe in you, Google.

E: [typing] Where...is...Moominpappa?

A: Moominpappa At Sea?

E: No, that's a different book.

I: Later on she also writes an autobiography from the point of view of Moominpappa, explaining about his exploits before he had a family.

E: Is it called "The Exploits of Moominpappa"?

I: Yep, that's the one.

A: Is his name Moominpappa before he has a family?

I:

A: [laughs]

I: I mean, I never really thought about this.

E: He was just going about the world, and then he met Moominmamma, and he knew that they were meant to be.

I: But yes, so, the book comes out. It's now titled, "The Moomins and the Great Flood".

E: Is that...biblical? Or not...

I: I think it's like, moderately biblical, just in that it references a Great Flood, but it's not like full of...

A: Bible references.

I: Yeah, like, symbolism.

E: Noah, but a Moomin.

I & A: [laugh]

I: It is not Noah but a Moomin... She doesn't seem to have made a great fuss out of having her first published book. Both her brothers put out books in the same year, and I think she's just a bit like, "Yeah, and my book as well. Everyone's doing this now."

E: Mm.

A: Sorry, before you said she sent the Moomin book, whatever it was called, to her usual publisher.

I: Her publisher that publishes her drawings.

A: Oh, right. Yep.

I: She draws for like, children's newspapers, and like children's books and that kind of thing. It's also her family's usual publisher, so her mother will send things to be published there.

A: Okay.

I: They have this kind of ongoing relationship with the same publisher.

A: What sort of books do her brothers write?

I: Her brothers write...less adorable short stories? One brother writes a book of short stories. The other one writes some kind of...it was described as "a stone-age novel".

E: Sure.

I: And I was like, I don't know what's in this. [laughs]

A: Okay. Good.

I: [laughing] Anyway, what with both her brothers' books, she doesn't really seem to think that the Moomin book is a huge deal. But she's fairly excited about it. She starts getting ahead of herself and imagining it being translated into English. She writes to Eva, her friends in the US, "Do you think the Moomins could come to the USA? That would be enormous fun!" and starts talking about getting her brother to do the translation.

A: Aww.

E: Going back to the stone age book, I have an important comment.

I: Yeah?

E: You know those, like, stereotypical cartoon outfits that Stone Age people wear, with the like, animal skins?

I & A: Yeah...

E: Imagine a Moomin in that.

I & A: [laugh]

E: That's my comment. We can go on now.

A: Do you know how many languages Moomins are now in?

E: All of them.

I: Many.

E: So she gets ahead of herself, and then Japan is like, "We're gonna get ahead of you..."

I: Yeah, basically. The rest of the world is like, "You thought you were overexcited about this book? Just wait and see!"

A: [laughs]

I: She tends to kind of slip her own views and satire content that really only makes sense from an adult perspective into her Moomin books quite often.

A: Mm-hm.

I: There's one which I kind of enjoyed, later on. It was in "Comet in Moominland". The plot of Comet in Moominland basically is that there's a comet coming and they're all alarmed that the comet is maybe gonna hit and kill them all.

E: Cool...

I: So they're like, looking for somewhere safe to hide.

E: They seem to do that a bunch.

I: Yeah, that seems to be what Moomins do.

A: Can you just verify that the Moomins do not die in Comet in Moominland.

I: The Moomins do not die.

A: Good.

I: It is fine. But so, in Comet in Moominland, she has Snorkmaiden come to...I guess I can't call Snorkmaiden a Moomin, because Snorkmaiden is the girlfriend of Moomintroll. She is not a Moomin herself.

A: So, is she a white, upright hippopotamus, though?

I: Yes.

A: But she's not a Moomin.

I: No...

A: I thought that was what a Moomin was.

I: The Moomins are like, the family that has Moomintroll, and Moominmamma and Moominpappa, but there are a bunch of other Moomin-shaped things, like Snorkmaiden and her brother.

A: But Moomin isn't actually the name of the species?

I: [laughs] It's hard to say! And then there are some other things that aren't Moomin-shaped, in the books, but are also cute, and have little names like....

E: [whispering] Snufkin.

I: Yeah, Snufkin. And what's the other one called? Hattifattener?

A: [laughs]

I: I loved that one.

A: Okay. I'll stop trying to understand the classification of Moomin-like creatures.

I: You can make like a dichotomous key.

A: [laughs]

E: Oh my god, I hadn't thought about dichotomous keys in like a decade.

I: [laughs]

A: I enjoyed dichotomous keys.

E: Me too, me too. Like, gonna organise turtles.

A: Yeah.

I: Yeah, so she has Snorkmaiden come to this meeting that her brother Snork has called, about how they should deal with the impending comet, and she basically called him and the other men at the meeting to account for spending too much time talking and wasting time, and not enough doing anything. "You make such a fuss about it all," she says, "It's quite simple. All we have to do is creep into Moomintroll's cave and take our most precious belongings with us." Which, relates directly, and Tove writes about this in her notes and things, her personal opinion is that "there is nothing more idiotic than assembled men being formal".

A: [laughs] Like, we've all watched Parliament.

I: Yeah.

E: [laughs]

I: And I just really enjoyed that that kind of went in. She was just like, "Oh my god, men having meetings, I'm gonna be angry about that in my children's book."

E & A: [laugh]

I: At this time as well, as the war is ending, she has another lover, whose name is Atos Wirtanen.

E: This is the man that Snufkin is based off!

I: Yes!

E: He has the hat!

I: He has the hat!

E: And I believe also the pipe.

I: Yes. So his surname is Wirtanen, but I don't really know how to say Finnish names, to be honest.

A: Fair enough.

I: So I don't know where you put the emphasis in that name.

E: We have Finnish listeners don't we?

I: Yeah. So, message me and be like, "Jesus Christ, you could've like, put some effort into that, Irene."

E: Yeah, "We're quitting your podcast forever now, bye," and then we'll just sit here and cry quietly with Moomins.

A: [laughs]

I: Yeah, yeah that's what will happen. So the relationship they have seems to have been kind of very free and very open. It causes a lot of sort of talk among her social circles, in that way where they're like, "You two are doing something which is like, slightly pushing the boundaries of what's acceptable here. You need to get married or cut this out."

A: Ah yep, yep.

E: She's like, constantly felt that she can't be confined by what's expected of her as a married woman. Is her social circle not sympathetic to that. Can she not express that with her like, friends? Or...

I: I think they're in theory sympathetic to that, and in practice this just sort of goes on for long enough that...

E: Okay.

I: People start being like, hang on, what are you doing?

A: I guess it could be a bit like, "I don't want to get married." "Okay, that's fair enough, why are you doing all the married things with a man, then, if you don't want to get married. Just marry him."

I: Yeah. But she didn't feel like their attitudes to relationships or love, were the same.

A: Her and her partner?

I: Yeah, her and Atos's. It wasn't very clear in what I read, what she thought the problem was, but she writes, "I know he is scarcely capable of love, or at least, of what we mean by love."

A & E: Mm, okay.

I: But she's very fond of him, and he's very fond of her, and they're generally like, then seem quite happy, so I'm not really sure necessarily what she's getting at there.

A: Okay.

I: Another one she writes, and I don't have the quote written down, but she's like, "He loves me, the way he loves the sun, or the trees, or the air, only more." And again, I'm not quite sure...

E: What??

A: [laughs]

I: What she's getting at there, but she obviously is trying to say she he's approaching this in some way which is fundamentally different to the way she is, and...

E: Is she just not quite comfortable with some kind of poly thing? With you saying they're very free and open, or what?

I: Maybe? I think maybe she's looking for more commitment.

E: Okay...

I: But then on the other hand she doesn't want...I mean, I guess it's not that she doesn't want commitment, as she doesn't want the kind of giving up of herself that would be expected from a woman in a marriage.

A: Mm-hm.

I: So yeah, maybe that's the issue there, that there's a commitment she wants that she's not getting. Anyway, she seems to have generally been happy with him, in spite of this tension, and he proposes that they get engaged.

A: Mm...

I: Which is like the third proposal that she's had.

E: She's like, "This again?"

I: Yeah, basically. She turns him down because she thinks their views on relationships don't quite match, and partly because she doesn't want children. And she writes again, "This war has taught me one thing at any rate. No sons, no soldiers."

A: Mmkay.

I: So she's not doing that.

E: That's quite sad.

I: Yeah... She does sometimes think about having children again, where she's like, maybe if I could have a girl...

E: Mm.

A: Mm-hm.

I: But, obviously she can't like, make that decision, so she's not going to have children at all.

A: It's okay, because she has Moomins.

I: This is true. She has Moomins.

E: She is the Moominmamma.

A: Yes.

I: Actually, her mother is the Moominmamma.

E: Oh?

I: There are only, apparently, there are only two Moomins that she sort of openly admitted publicly were based on people in her real life, and one of them was Moominmamma, who is based off her actual mamma.

A: Ah.

I: So Ham is the Moominmamma.

A: Good good. And so what's the other one that she based on someone in her real life?

E: "Ham is the Moominmamma" is the best sentence that I've ever heard.

I: [laughs]

I: We can cross-stitch that too for you guys.

E: [laughs]

A: A cross-stitch Moomin would be good.

E: The other one is Snufkin, right?

I: No, she only – like, that's in her letters, but she doesn't come out and say it publicly.

E: Oh, I see.

I: There are like, a number of people where she writes to them privately with like, the pet name that she then gives to their Moomin later and things like that.

A: Aww. [laughs suddenly] Eli is just screaming into his hands, listeners.

E: I love Moomins!

I & A: [laugh]

A: Yes.

I: So this is where things get gay.

A: Good.

I: In 1947, so she's still with...Snufkin, at this time.

E: [laughs]

I: I'm sorry, I couldn't resist.

E & A: [laugh]

I: Atos.

A: Does he have the hat, in real life?

E: Yes.

I: Yes.

A: He does have the hat. With the flowers around the brim?

E: That's only sometimes.

I: There's a picture of her with a flower crown as well.

A: Good.

E: I've seen this, yeah.

I: She has some like, very charming photos of herself. In 1947, Tove meets, the theatre director Vivica Bandler.

A: So Vivica Bandler is a women?

I: Vivica is a woman. She is definitely a woman.

A: I just don't know how these Scandinavian names work, I'm sorry.

I: I'm not sure what ethnic background Vivica is as a name.

A: Okay.

E: It's quite a nice name.

I: It's quite a nice name. I thought that. I'd never seen it before and it's quite nice.

E: Mm.

I: It's not entirely clear to me the circumstances that they met in or how they fell in love, but it's apparently that they become very close in a very short space of time, and it's definitely, there's no question about this: this is queer.

E: Okay.

I: Very queer.

E: How do you know?

I: I will tell you. In a moment.

E: Okay.

I: But first, I will tell you...she based two characters in a Moomin book off herself and Vivica.

A: Aww... Are there queer Moomins?

E: Are there gay Moomins?

I: I don't think Moomins...some Moomins don't have gender.

A: Oh, okay.

I: It's apparently an ongoing – I have a quote at the bottom somewhere from her niece who now runs the like, Moomin...

A: Estate?

I: Estate, yeah. Who says that they used to get letters, Tove used to get letters all the time, being like, "Hey, what's the gender of this character?" and she'd be like, "Why do you keep asking this? I didn't draw them one."

A: So I assume, are Moominmamma and Moominpappa male and female?

I: Yes. I believe so. Moomintroll I think is male, Snorkmaiden is female, but there are a bunch of more androgynous characters, and apparently they get letters in all the time saying, you know, "What's the gender of this character?" and they're writing back saying, "Look, it's not defined. Whatever you want."

A: Okay, yep, that's good, that's good.

E: So Moomins are almost inherently queer.

A & I: Yes...

I: Moomins are queer and anti-facist.

I & A: [laugh]

I: Moomins are everything you wanted!

E: I knew there was a reason I was drawn to them in childhood.

I: [laughs]

E: [sighs] And they're so cute and fat.

I: They are.

A: Mm.

E: They're just everything you could want them to be.

A: They're so chubby. It's so good.

E: They are so chubby! Their heads are the same shape as their bodies.

A: Yeah.

I: They're just like a small head on a bigger head.

A: They're like a pear.

E: Yep. They are like a pear.

A: That's good.

I: So yeah, she bases two characters in a Moomin book off herself and Vivica, which, she calls them Thingummy and Bob.

A: [laughs] Is she Thingummy or Bob?

I: I believe she's Thingummy. She signs her letters to Vivica with Thingummy.

E: Oh god.

A: [laughs]

I: And Thingummy and Bob speak an impenetrable language of their own that nobody else speaks, and they sleep together in a desk drawer.

E: That's some heavy queer symbolism.

A: [laughs delightedly] They sleep in a drawer! I didn't know Moomins were so small!

E: Maybe it's a massive drawer.

I: Tove is still seeing Atos at this point. This doesn't seem to be a problem. I mean, I guess it did appear to be quite an open relationship.

E & A: Vivica is married. I don't know whether her husband was just aware that this was happening, or whether he didn't consider it a possibility, or whether he just wasn't paying a lot of attention. I'm really not sure.

A: I mean, it's definitely a thing where people will like, dismiss close female relationships and not really think about them.

I: Yeah.

E: Just imagine him having dinner with Atos and being like, "Isn't it nice that our partners are such good friends?" and Atos being like, "Oh my God."

I & A: [laugh]

E: "This is so awkward."

I: Yeah.

E: And just hiding under his massive hat.

I & A: [laugh]

I: He just like, retreats into the hat... Yeah, they write a lot of letters to each other because like three weeks after they meet, Vivica spends a while in Paris, so they have a lot of really like, effusive, honeymoon-phase, in-love letters.

A: Aww.

I: And Vivica writes to her, "I'm in love with you. I'm in love with your mind as well." And then urges that, "We have to be careful." Homosexuality is still illegal in Finland at this time.

E: When did—

A: Even for women?

I: I think so.

A: Oh!

I: I seem to be given that impression, that they apparently bothered to ban that.

A: [sarcastically] Cool...

E: Well that's...

I: I mean, that's novel, that they thought of it.

A: Yeah...

I: Yeah, I'm not sure of the details, but that seems to be a concern for her.

E: Mm, I guess that's both validating and offensive.

I: Yeah, basically. [laughs]

A: Mm.

I: And Tove's letters are even better. They're very like, florid and effusive and what she writes is, "Now I'm the sun shining. It's as though you have made me new. How can I explain how everything has changed since I met you. Every tone is more vivid, every colour cleaner, all my perceptions sharper. My happiness is stronger, my despair more powerful." She's very—

E: Yay.

I: Passionate, and intense, and gay about this.

A: [laughing]

I: Basically, it's quite gay. And so, while Vivica is in Paris – I was going to say "overseas", and the I was like, wait, this is Europe.

E: [laughs]

A: That doesn't work in the rest of the world.

I: Yeah, so, Vivica is in Paris, and Tove is working on a mural which includes a depiction of Vivica. She also writes a poem to Vivica, which I'm going to read to you. So she never published any of this poetry, but she did write poems to Vivica. This one, she writes – obviously this is translated – she writes, "Blue I painted the sky/Sun yellow your skirt/Lovely your smile/I painted you most sweetly/I painted you on the wall/There you will stay/Just as you were when you loved me".

E: Mm. I like how her bright colour thing has continued.

I: Yes. Very bright, at all times.

A: Good.

I: Vivica is abroad for a while, and they exchange letters a lot, and by the time Vivica returns, they're still in a relationship, but it becomes clear that this relationship isn't going to kind of last in the long term.

E: Mm-hm.

I: I never saw a reason why. I think they just weren't long term suited to each other. While Tove was very upset by the breakup itself, she still writes that being with Vivica made her feel proud and natural.

A: Aww. That's good.

I: Which I thought was an interesting word, natural.

E: Mm.

I: But after breaking up with Vivica, she writes to Atos at the end of 1947, proposing the marriage that...

A: Oh...

I: He proposed to her and she turned down last time.

E: Okay.

A: What's changed? Why does she want to get married now? Respectability? Is like...how is being an unmarried woman at that time, as a thing?

I: When she was travelling, it was something that she had trouble with, but she doesn't seem to have at home.

A: Okay.

I: The book I was reading suggested – suggested that what she wanted to do here was sort of close the door on relationships with women. What they said – “She wanted to close the door on what she referred to as “the other side”, which is relationships with women, having had such a passionate and turbulent experience with Vivica.

E: I like how paranormal that makes lesbianism sound.

I: Later on she refers to it as the ‘spook side’

E: Oh my god.

[laughter]

E: So instead of like a personals column in a queer ladies magazine she gets out a ouija board.

I: Yeah, yeah.

[laughter]

A: So, is there any evidence from Tove's own writing to suggest that this is what she was doing or is this just speculation by the biographer that you were reading.

I: I think this is just speculation, like, it wasn't sort of backed up by quotes from her beyond like, the phrase ‘the other side’ which is just...

She does talk later on about finally feeling at peace with herself in relation to her sexuality and that kind of thing, so I would believe that it troubled her at this point.

A: Okay, okay.

I: It's also, yeah possible that this relationship with Vivica has finished and she's thought ‘well, I guess I should go back and sort of cement the good thing I had’.

A: Yeah, maybe.

I: I don't really know why she did that. But anyway, she writes to Atos and suggests a marriage, and Atos agrees, and then keeps kind of postponing the date for various reasons. Putting it off and putting off, he sort of says ‘look let's wait until after the election’ which is quite a serious business at the time. We're in like, the late 40s, they have the kind of Communist vs Fascist situation going on.

A: Oh, okay.

I: In their elections, and they're sort of genuinely waiting to sort of see how life is going to go.

A: Okay.

I: But yeah, he keeps putting it off and eventually she stops waiting and sort of planning the wedding and take a trip to Italy with Sam Vanni and his wife Maya.

A: So why does he keep putting it off.

I: I don't know. That wasn't clear either. Possibly he asked her to marry him earlier, and by the time she came back and said 'oh look I'd like to marry you' he was thinking 'this isn't really what i want after all'.

A: Oh yeah that's fair enough.

I: Yeah, like I think they may have just changed what they wanted.

A: Yep.

I: So yeah, instead she takes a trip to Italy with Sam Vanni and his wife.

A: So that's her old ex-boyfriend.

I: Yeah. That's her ex-boyfriend. She remains quite close to him and she gets very close with his wife.

A: That's good.

I: And she also gets a 50 year lease on an island called Bredskär.

E: Good. Bread.

I: Yes, bread.

[laughter]

I: She's always wanted to live on an island. It's quite near the island where her family spent their summers I think?

A: I want an island.

I: When she was young. And, she distracts herself from the break-up with Vivica and her sort of hurt pride that Atos keeps putting off this wedding. She moves over to the island and spends a few months there living in a tent writing Moomin books and building a log cabin.

A: Oh my god.

[laughter]

E: That is the ideal life.

I: Yeah, basically.

A: That's so idyllic.

I: The finished log cabin, incidentally, it looks incredibly legit for something she apparently just built on her own.

E: Good.

A: Good on her.

I: She did a nice job.

A: I mean, her mother founded Girl Guides right, she was probably pretty well-trained.

I: Yeah, true.

E: Do Girl Guides make log cabins in the woods?

A: I don't know. I've never been a Guide.

I: Girl Guides can do anything.

[laughter]

E: Bredskär is a wonderful name for a place.

I: Yes.

E: It's both comforting and hardcore.

[laughter]

I: Yeah, it really is, it really is.

E: It's like if you called it like, Cheese Doom or something.

[laughter]

A: I would live on the island of Cheese Doom.

I: Anyway, you can assume through all this time, the Moomins are gradually getting more and more popular.

A & E: Mmm.

I: The books are translated into English, as she hoped.

A: Does her brother do it?

I: No, I don't think so. And they go to the UK rather than the US, but they are translated into English. She writes her first Moomin theater piece.

E: Oh my god what.

A: Wait, how does this work. Do people dress in like, big Moomin costumes, so they're all padded out like Moomins?

I: Presumably.

E: Can I get a big Moomin costume?

I: Maybe.

[laughter]

E: Next time we record I'm going to be in a big Moomin costume, so I want you to picture that if you're listening to this.

I: She gets criticism in her Moomin play, hilariously, from an angry parent, for the strong language that her Moomins use.

E: What?!

A: What do Moomins say?

I: The phrase that is raised in his complaint is something which seems to translate as 'Hell's growl jumps'.

E: What?

I: Hell's growl jumps. Like, Hell, growl 'grrr', jump. Like, it's like a nonsense child's swear word.

E: Ok.

A: But I guess the issue is that they said 'Hell'.

I: Yeah maybe.

E: The Ron Weasley swear word.

[laughter]

I: Yeah, it's definitely a Ron Weasley swear word yeah. She didn't take this complaint very seriously. She was like 'No, my Moomins are expressive and emotive'.

[laughter]

A: Beautiful.

I: They are permitted to speak.

A: Don't censor the Moomins.

[laughter]

E: They're anti-fascist and they will be heard.

I: At this time as well, she starts writing the autobiography of Moominpappa.

[laughter]

It's in 1st person, I think you should all know that.

E: Does he always have a top hat? Do you think you learn how he gets the top hat?

I: I hope so.

E: I hope so too.

A: And the cane. Is that from like an injury in his adventures in his youth, or?

E: Moominpappa goes to war.

I: Yes.

[laughter]

I: That's what I was going to say. The Evening News, which is a newspaper in London. It was I think the like, most widely circulated English language newspaper at the time, take on a Moomin comic strip, in the 50s.

E: Oh my gosh.

I: So now everyone sees Moomins, at all times.

[laughter]

She writes about, after the premiere of the Moomin play, she writes to her friend Eva, and she writes "It would be lovely to paint a peaceful old fashioned still-life". This whole Moomin situation is getting like quite hectic.

E: Oh, I see.

I: "But how I'll miss the theater" she says. So she obviously enjoyed the Moomin theater experience.

A: Sorry, was she involved in the Moomin play, or did it just happen and she went and saw it?

I: Oh no, she wrote it.

E: When she said a still-life, I know that's not even what a still-life is, but I very much did picture like, a very formal oil painting, but of a Moomin-

I: A Moomin family portrait? There are actually some of her traditional paintings, with Moomins in them. There's like 'Street at Twilight with Moomin'.

[laughter]

I: And then, in the US they write to her and they sort of say 'look over here when we have like cute comic characters, we start making like, branded merchandise of them, like Moomin soaps or whatever, are you into that?'. And she's like, yeah sure, as long as it's good quality. They make a bunch of like, Moomin branded products. Like, little plush Moomin toys and Moomin lunch boxes and things.

So the Moomins are going really well. She's got a lot of money coming in. She writes at one point and I think what she says is "It's going so well I get rich even though they cheat me". But on the other hand she's becoming increasingly frustrated with the amount of time that just, Moomin business takes up.

A: Mmm.

I: Like, drawing comic strips, like negotiating those kind of business things like the Moomin towels or whatever.

A: Oh yeah.

I: You know, responding to letters, that kind of thing. Her first love has always been painting and she wants to get more time to sort of pursue that. But she doesn't get a lot of opportunities because she's busy with Moomins. So meanwhile, while the Moomins are doing crazy Moomin things and getting famous, her personal life, she's making significant changes in her personal life. In 1952, she ended the relationship with Atos. They sort of mutually agree that the marriage they've spent like five years putting off is probably never actually going to happen.

[laughter]

A: Reasonable.

I: And maybe they should stop this relationship. So they end the relationship, I believe they remain friends as well. She just seems very good at breaking up with people.

E: Yeah, she really does.

A: Good on her.

I: And so she writes to Eva in America: "I haven't finally made up my mind, but I'm inclined to believe that the happiest and most genuine solution for me now will be to go over to the spook side".

E: Ok, I'ma need a minute.

[laughter]

That was so iconic.

I: Yeah.

A: I need to know if she made up the 'spook side', or if that's just like a thing they say in Swedish.

I: I don't know, is that like a common phrase in Finland. I have no idea.

E: Is Halloween just gayer in Scandinavia?

I: Eva expresses some like, concern about Tove and her attraction to women and like, 'I don't know if you can be happy this way, people make it hard'.

A: Oh yeah, yeah.

I: So Tove writes back and says "It would be silly for you to be upset about it. I myself am very happy and feel a strong sense of liberation and peace".

E: Oh, I'm happy for her.

A: That's good.

I: So, she's very happy within herself about this. She has more relationships with women and she basically feels like she's at peace with this and this is what she's looking for. But it bothers her that she can't be open about this with either of her parents. Her father Vafin manages to ask her about her sexuality, but what she writes is "He can't bring himself to say the difficult word, homosexual". So he kind of obliquely asks her and she's like 'yeah, yeah I'm quite gay'. And as for her mother, "Ham said nothing. She never said anything. I think she knows, but she doesn't want to mention it. I can accept that this is right and more elegant, but it feels lonely".

A: Aww.

I: So, she can't talk to her parents about it really, which upsets her, but personally she feels like she's gone in the right direction.

A: So does she write anything at this time about how she feels about her previous relationships with men?

E: Yeah does she feel like this is a kind of compulsory heterosexuality thing that she's been going through, or?

I: I don't know really, she doesn't kind of write about it directly. I definitely get the impression that she's like, a lot more sort of effusive about her feelings in her relationships with women, but I don't know whether that's just she feels more comfortable with them because she's older or because she finds it easier to talk to women or because the other relationships are something she considers less genuine now. But she definitely seems to have reached this point where she like 'I have dated men in the past but now I have gone over to the spook side'.

[laughter]

E: I love that.

I: I'm using this phrase forever.

A & E: Yeah, yeah.

I: I'm making like a badge. In 1955, when she is 41, Tove met Tuulikki Pietila, who I mentioned before because she made a brief appearance in like, a poem she wrote at uni.

E: Where she was very obviously flagged.

[laughter]

As important and gay.

I: As important and gay. Who is also in her own right, an artist and graphic designer. So they're both independently quite successful in their fields. And like I said, they knew each other before this, they attended the same art school in Helsinki, and they had some mutual friends in Paris. They apparently once encountered each other in a nightclub in Paris.

But they had never really become close until, in 1955, they meet at a party where they were both, this is quite hilarious, hovering close to the gramophone to make sure that no-one would meddle with the music. So basically they're both hanging out by the gramophone to make sure no-one changes it before their favourite song has ended or whatever.

A: Do you know what music they liked?

I: I don't know, but they do apparently share music taste. Tove asks Tuulikki to dance, Tuulikki thought that would be inappropriate. But in any case, like fairly shortly after that they start spending time in Tove's studio together drinking wine and sharing records with each other.

E & A: Aww

A: That sounds nice.

I: So yeah, they apparently have some opinions on music together. It's quite a slow developing relationship, but after a few months Tove writes "I've finally made progress with the person I want to be with".

E & A: Aww.

A: That's good.

I: It's very cute. She invents the nickname 'Tooticky'

E: Aww.

I: Which is the name of the Moomin which she modelled after Tuulikki. Incidentally, the Moomin that she modelled after Tuulikki is a very androgynous Moomin.

E: Ok, so is Thingummy still around?

I: Yeah Thingummy is still around. There are a bunch of Tove insert Moomins.

E: Ok. Does Thingummy stay with Bob or does Thingummy now get together with-

I: Yeah, Thingummy stays with Bob.

E: That's nice. In their drawer.

I: In their drawer. So that's fine. At home, Tooticky is rapidly shortened to Tooti, and that's what they call her for like the rest of her life.

A: Tooti!

I: That's what Tove's family calls her, forever. Yeah they also send each other nice letters. So Tove writes to Tooti and says "I love you and chanted it [???] at the same in great peace. I'm not afraid of anything that lies between us". And Tooti writes back "Tove you can have no idea how much I love you". And they're just very in love and it's very nice. They move into studios side by side, so they're not like in the same studio, they're just in the same building with rooms side by side.

E: So it's very easy for them to be like "I'm done. Let's drink wine now".

I: Yeah

[laughter]

Yeah.

A: That's good.

I: Which is something Tove has always kind of wanted from a relationship. That ability to live and work independently, but together.

E: That's nice.

I: Rather than having to kind of give up parts of your life to each other. So she is very happy. After a trip to Paris with Tooti she writes to Maya Vanni, so Sam's wife, who she's quite close to now "I would never have thought life could be so happy and peaceful, so friendly day after day, week after week".

A & E: Aww.

A: I like that she always described it as being peaceful when she's in happy relationships.

I: Yeah, I think that's just what she likes. And that's when she says about her relationships with women and I never saw it come up about the men, that she feels at peace.

E: You know, she was worried that she'd have to give up parts of her life if she got into a relationship with a man.

I: Yeah.

E: So I guess she maybe just doesn't have that anxiety constantly in the background.

I: Yeah, that's true. In 1958 Tove's father Viktor died.

E: Shame.

I: Shame. What a tragedy. They'd reconciled somewhat after the end of the war. By the time of his death he would write her letters that opened with "Dearly beloved Tove" and ended with "Say hello to wonderful Tooti for me".

E: Well I'm happy for Tove, but he can choke.

I: She was still a little bit stunned I think by how upset like, how grieving she was about it. She writes after his death "I must have loved Faffan a lot despite him being so difficult". So yeah, she was quite upset about it. She was much more worried, she thought it would be much harder on her mother than her.

E: Yeah.

A: Ah yeah.

I: Understandably, so she was much more worried about Ham than she was about herself.

E: Does Ham live alone from now on?

I: Yeah, Ham lives alone sometimes. Sometimes she spends time on the island with Tove.

A: Ok. On Tove's island that Tove has.

I: Yes.

E: *Bredskär*.

[laughter]

I: Yes.

A: On *Bredskär*.

I: In the 1960s, she's becoming more famous and she's beginning to get upset. People keep trying to come to her island to look at her.

E: That would upset me too.

I: Or like, interview her. So she moves her studio to an even more remote island. I don't have the name of the further island written down; I think there's a lighthouse on it?

E: Oh yes.

A: This must be Cheese Doom.

[laughter]

I: It must be Cheese Doom. I think at this point is when she writes 'Moominpappa at Sea' on her even more remote island. And this part of her like time of her life is fairly idyllic honestly. She and Tooti split their time between summers on their remote island and the rest of the year in Helsinki in their two adjacent studios. She outsources much Moomin's work to her younger brother, and so she starts finding more time to paint again.

A: So does she outsource like the business side of things, or does he draw Moomins too?

I: He draws Moomins as well.

A: Okay.

I: He draws some Moomins and does some business things for her.

E: I'd be so happy if a Moomin career just fell into my lap like that.

I: Yeah I know.

E: I feel like I could draw a Moomin.

A: Yeah.

I: She stops making the Moomin comic strips after some like 10,000 and something pictures of Moomins.

E: Oh my god.

I: She's like 'that's enough, I'm going to stop now'. She doesn't stop the Moomin stuff completely. She still writes several more Moomin books in the next couple of decades. Once she starts working on paintings; I originally had a whole lot of detail here about the things she painted and the awards she won and how good she was. She was very good at painting. I'm not actually going to list every Finnish painting medal she won. At one point she was crowned 'Moomin Queen' in Stockholm.

E: Oh my god.

[laughter]

I: I don't know if that's an ongoing award.

E: Can we become Moomin Queen?

[laughter]

I: I don't know. Her family was apparently very proud.

E: I mean, were there like big competitors to the title of Moomin Queen?

I: I mean, she made the Moomins, I don't think there was any competition until like 2001. Yeah, she also starts to feel like she has more to say than she can say in children's lit, and starts moving into adult writing. A lot of her works are sort of semi-autobiographical, she writes at this time 'Sculptor's Daughter', which is a series of short vignettes about her life.

She-

E: That sounds just, straight autobiographical.

I: Yes. It's a bit like, semi-fictional.

E: Stylized, yeah.

I: And she writes 'The Summer Book', which is based on the life of her niece Sophia. Watching her and Ham spend time together on the island. So it's sort of this novel about a six year old girl and her grandmother and their relationship.

E: That also sounds very pure.

I: It sounds quite pure, yes.

E: All of this just sounds like such good fodder for like, a Studio Ghibli movie.

I: Yeah, it really does. She also writes another play called 'Fair Play' which is shamelessly based on her life. It follows the lives of two women, Jonna and Mari who are two like artists and graphic designers who live together.

E: I see.

I: I think they live on an island part of the time. Like, it's completely obvious.

E: She's like 'we can't call it Bredskär, that's too obvious. What should we call it? Cheese Doom'.

[laughter]

I: Yep. It was given good reviews apparently, but while some critics recognized it as an autobiography, others thought Jonna and Mari were two different sides of the same woman. But few wrote about love between woman and woman or about homosexuality as a narrative.

A: So is it a queer play?

I: It is, I think not an overtly queer play in that they don't sort of kiss on stage. But it's very much based off her and Tuulikki's relationship.

A: Ok.

I: And I just thought it was that sort of worth noting that critics preferred to read it as 'these are metaphorically two sides of the same woman' than 'hey, maybe they're a couple'. I don't have a lot to say about her life from here on, it's fairly stable. She spends her summers on the island. They take a lot of lovely like home footage of them messing around in boats together.

A: I'm so keen to see this.

I: It's really nice.

E: I'm so glad she just settles into this like, nice life and then just lives that.

I: Yeah, she really, she really just does. She kind of, it takes her like until she's 40 something to find it, and then when she does she's like 'alright I'm here now'.

E: It's always nice when you hear about people meeting their like, partner when they're like 40 or something like that.

I: Yeah.

E: There's just so much fiction about people, like, meeting someone in high school and then marrying them and everything like that, and not a lot of people meeting like a partner as a middle-aged person.

A: Mmm.

I: Yeah. People start kind of stressing in their 20s about if they haven't found their partner yet.

E: Yeah.

I: And it's like, chill, you may live on an island friend.

[laughter]

A: Yeah, and probably more so for queer people as well. Once it's taken her a while to kind of understand what she wants, and then come out, and be comfortable with that, she going to be, you know, 40 by then.

I: Yeah, the two of them just continue to live this idyllic life where they paint and write Moomins books and live on an island. In 1989 she writes a letter to Vivica actually I think, where she says "Imagine two people alone together for four months on a deserted island without getting angry with each more than twice. Well, three times, says Tooti. But it didn't last long!".

[laughter]

E: Aww.

I: They're just very cute and it's very nice.

A: Aww. So how long does she live for?

I: She died in 2001. She was quite ill in the last five years of her life. She had lung cancer. In 2000 she suffered a stroke and was cared for her in a nursing home for the last year of her life. And, she was buried in her family grave with her parents and oldest brother.

A: So we co-existed with the Moomin creator?

I: We did. We did. And Tooti lived until 2009. I couldn't find out where she was buried. Whether it was close by. There was one thing I wanted to say here, and it was from that interview I read with Sophia Jansson, her niece who runs the Moomin estate now.

E: Where the Moomins run.

I: Where the Moomins run free.

[laughter]

I: She's talking about realizing when she was a child that there was something unusual socially about Tove and Tuulikki's relationship, and she tried to ask the family what was going on there and she says "They kind of made me say it, and then said, yes that's it, but the word lesbian was never used". I don't know precisely what she means when they made her say it, I don't know what words she used.

She goes on to sort of say, she thinks lesbian was perhaps not the right word anyway. She made a positive documented choice not to marry and have a family. She made a conscious decision not to bring children into the world, and so I think she's trying to say no she had genuine attraction for these men but that part of her identity just didn't really fit with what she wanted.

A: So she sees this just as a bi woman, thinking that a life with another woman would suit her better.

I: Yeah.

A: And so, choosing to pursue that. Oh yeah, that makes sense.

I: But she does say "It wasn't gender that mattered to Tove. It was the individual". That doesn't come directly out of Tove's mouth, I can't say how she interpreted herself. She definitely kind of writes about it as leaving behind men and going to the other side.

A: The spooks.

E & I: The spook side.

I: But, yeah, she seems to have-

E: Like, whether she would have identified as lesbian or bisexual doesn't really seem all that important, and it was pure and good and there were Moomins.

I: That is all true.

A: A beautiful and wholesome story.

E: What a beautiful thing she brought into the world.

I: This has been Queer as Fact. I'm Irene.

E: I'm Eli.

A: I'm Alice.

I: If you want to get in contact with us, you can find us on Facebook or Tumblr or Twitter as Queer as Fact, or you can email us directly at queerasfact@gmail.com. We would love to hear from you. You can find us on Podbean or on iTunes. If you did listen to us on iTunes, we'd love it if you wanted to rate us and leave a review. It makes iTunes think we're great and show us to more people.

E: We have had a few review on iTunes, and some of them aren't even from people we directly know and who feel obligated.

I: True.

E: So thank you very much, we love you. One review we got was from a person who doesn't have a very read-out-able username which is either m3 and then a smiley face or perhaps the 3 is meant to be a part of the smiley face, who wrote "If one was to get their information from the mainstream culture, they would think that no gay people existed before the 1970s. This is why Queer as Fact is so refreshing. They provide information on Queerness-" which they capitalize, which I quite like, "from around the world and across time, illustrating to any and all modern queer people that we are not alone, and that's a pretty nice feeling". So thank you for writing that.

A: Aww.

E: Yeah, we get that from this podcast too, and we love you. And we had another one from Tardis Chaser, who's either feeling very good or very bad about the Christmas special right now I guess. That could be one of our friends, I don't know, who writes "My favourite podcast, and believe me I listen to enough of them. The history is well researched, and despite what you might expect the stories are often surprisingly uplifting. I have seriously learned so much listening to this podcast, and I cannot get enough. They offer a content warning at the beginning of each episode, so if a particular subject might be troubling for you, you know what you're in for".

A & I: Aww.

I: Thank you.

A: That's good.

E: Yes.

I: Yes.

E: We're someone's favourite podcast.

A: Aww.

I: Yeah.

E: Which is nice. Thank you. If you give us reviews we'll also tell everyone that we love you on air.

I: I just wanted to say we've been getting your suggestions. We appreciate them and we hopefully will get round to them all eventually.

E: We are very much aiming to, but we do have like a year and half's worth of content even if we only did those episodes. So we do want to do them all, but you need to be patient, we're very sorry. That's not to say not to keep sending them to us, especially if you have a suggestion that is from not in the last 200 years, or from any time if they're not European.

I: Yeah, basically.

E: If you were like 'damn I had a list of five European white men from the 19th Century', that's fine, send us them anyway, but we do try to make this diverse as possible.

I: We'll be back on February 15th, with Eli telling us about Harvey Milk, an American politician and the first openly gay elected official in the history of California.

I: Before we finish, one last thing to say. On January 30th, British-Trinidadian LGBT activist Jason Jones went to the Trinidad High Court to challenge the law that criminalises homosexual activity in Trinidad. The hearing is over, though we won't get results until April 12th, but there are several things you can do to help still. First, if you have any spare cash, donate to Jones' crowdfunding campaign, to cover court fees, printing costs, transport and security for his pro-bono lawyers. You can read up and educate yourself and others on this issue, and finally, listen to and share this Trinidadian pride anthem produced by eqlovesmusic and sung by Swedish-Trinidadian Sarah Elizabeth Hanson, and American-Trinidadian Etzia Haylett, which I'm about to play on your way out. The links to all this information, including the crowdfunding link, are available on our Facebook page, our Twitter, and our Tumblr. Thanks for listening! We hope everything goes well for Jason Jones and the the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

["Only God (is your superior)" by Sarah Hansson plays]

E: We love Moomins.