

The Trip of a Lifetime Canceled

by [Armando Simón](#) (April 2024)



Lake Ruovesi in Winter –Akseli Gallen-Kallela, 1916

It was a late Saturday morning and Amos, a 67 year old man, collected the bills he had to pay and sat down at the dining room table: mortgage, electric, water, and various credit cards. He had arranged with the companies so that the bills would all be due the first week of the month, so he could pay them off in one swoop and not have to worry about them later

in the month. His wife was elsewhere in the home, beginning the weekly cleaning.

He grimaced after writing checks for all the bills and flexed his hand which these days seemed to cramp easily. He was old-fashioned that way, preferring to write checks rather than paying electronically through the internet. He was set in his ways and would joke that he would not adjust to the world, the world had to adjust to him. Besides, he had heard of hackers intruding online into people's financial affairs and ruining their lives.

Having finished the painful ordeal, his mind wandered to last night's television program, a travelogue of Europe. The program was a series, focusing each week on a specific country. Last night, it had been on Finland.

Amos felt sad remembering the program. He had finally come to accept the reality that he would never achieve his dream of a trip to Scandinavia. For years, he had dreamed of it, had even saved enough money for a trip for both him and Mary. But then, in quick succession, his son and daughter had been unable to secure scholarships for the universities. So, naturally, he stepped up to pay their yearly tuition, whereupon his savings had steadily declined. Then ... after paying for his daughter's wedding ... what was left vanished.

He had done so throughout because he felt it was his duty as a father.

Amos would not ever admit it to anyone in his family, but in retrospect, he wished that he had never had children.

The first fifteen years or so of fatherhood had been great, he had to admit. The children loved him, looked up to him, listened to his advice, and he was a source of knowledge for them. He adored them.

Then, around fifteen or so, they had become ... teenagers.

Snotty, judgmental, ungrateful, dismissive, even rude at times. Without actually saying so, they felt that those sixteen-year-old friends of theirs with their vast inexperience knew more than he did ... on any subject.

He paid for their food, for their clothes, for the roof over their heads, for their medical expenses, took them to games, movies or festivals—and they took it all for granted without an iota of appreciation.

They tolerated him.

Occasionally, there would be brief expressions of love directed at him, which is to say when he bought them something they really wanted. Then, afterwards, they resumed their previous judgmental and condescending demeanor. As they had gotten older they had learned to hide it well, but it was still there.

After graduating and securing jobs, it had never even crossed their minds to pay him back for all the money he had spent on them, not even for their tuition. Of that he was certain. Not that it had ever crossed his mind to ask them to do so.

Then, they each got married and had children of their own.

Both he and Mary loved to see their grandchildren. The grandchildren reminded them when their own children had been cute and loving. Fortunately, the grandparents saw them on a regular basis, usually for Sunday dinners.

Anyway, Amos was now thinking about Helsinki and Suomussalmi and the many lakes in Finland.

A metallic clang near the front door signaled the mailman had left mail in the mailbox, so he got up to get it. Mary was in the bedroom fighting with the bed sheets and pillowcases prior to washing.

He reached inside the mailbox and took out two glossy notices

of nearby businesses and one envelope. His eyebrows arched up in surprise on seeing the latter. It was from his son, addressed to him and his wife.

His son lived in town.

And why a letter instead of a phone call or an email?

Amos took the mail inside and sat down at the table. He opened the envelope and took out a letter and read it.

"Hello Dad. Hello Mom," the letter began.

I'll make this brief. Michelle and I have been discussing this for a while now and we've decided that we're not going to allow our children to have contact with you from now on.

You both voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 election and from what we've heard you say since then, we know that you will vote for him again. We've decided that we cannot allow anyone who did so to have any contact with our children. That man is a racist, a Fascist, a xenophobe, another Hitler. He is truly despicable. A dictator who wants to end democracy. All the news media agree on this, so it's not just us and, unlike you, we firmly believe that the media never deliberately lies.

If either one of you, or both of you, removes the blinders from your eyes and see Trump for what he really is, and show us proof that you didn't vote for him in the next election, then we will consider resuming your having contact with your grandchildren.

Naturally, this means that both Michelle and I will

also not be having contact with you.

*Since you offered to pay for new tires for our car,
I will come by Sunday to collect the money.
Afterwards, I'm afraid, you won't see us again.*

*Your son,
Rob.*

Amos stared at the letter in utter disbelief, then violently crumpled it up and hurled it against the wall.

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