

Arctic Dreams

By Nils Rinaldi

Scandinavian char power

MY FLY STOPPED MID-SWING AND I THOUGHT FOR A MOMENT THAT I'D HOOKED A good one. But no, only a solid snag that ended with a busted leader. Again.

I wondered if it was time to crawl back into my sleeping bag like everyone else already had. It was 11 P.M., after all. And the sun had finally set, so my light would eventually be gone, even at this latitude during summer solstice.

A reindeer made its way toward shore on the opposite bank, aiming to cross the river. As he waded out, most of his body disappeared beneath the water, with only his head and majestic antlers sticking out. The current swept him a good way downstream before he made it safely to shore, disappearing into the birch wood.

Fighting my urge to get some sleep, I tied on a fresh leader and new Intruder, returning to the river just below the spot of my previous snag. I was still lengthening my Skagit casts when the deep pull came at the end of the swing.

He was calm at first, before he turned, jumped, and showed himself. Huge. I stumbled along the large cobblestones until I eventually tailed a beautiful arctic char, his belly as red as a maple leaf.

I returned my trophy to join his fellow spawners, and he soon disappeared like the reindeer and like the sun. I sat on the bank for awhile, before wandering back to camp, climbing into my sleeping bag, and falling asleep to fish dreams.

NILS RINALDI is a spey-rod aficionado, who wishes he lived closer to British Columbia's steelhead. During winter, when not tying intruders, he is cruising the Swiss Alps on skis.