

To the honourable Board of Voll Poorhouse,

50 – fifty – wretched, long Years have now passed since that Day of my misfortune, on which I entered into Matrimony with Miss Hille Eriksdatter Venås.

For the whole of this long Time, this Woman has plagued me and made my Existence miserable, partly through Hunger and an angry and unpleasant Deportment on her part, combined with a constant deafening Row, and partly by diminishing that Authority, which is due to me as master in my own House, and by which she little by little assumed the Trousers and made me powerless and turned me into an insignificant Null.

Throughout that Strife for a Living on land and sea, that fell to me in order to gain for me and my family a bare minimum of Sustenance, I had become weakened and had suffered Injuries especially on certain Limbs, and due to persistent Hunger my Body's Powers were reduced, generating on this Account a sinking Optimism, which little by little came to reside in and was apparent through the constantly so extremely unpleasant Existence which had become my Lot, and from which it was never possible to envisage any Escape in my unfortunate Lifetime, I became easy prey for my Oppressor – and I became totally abject.

My unhappy Condition has long been known to most People, although certainly to few or none in its full, terrible Extent. By means of a completely superior disingenuous outward Benevolence she has always been able to express herself in such a way as to attract the Sympathy of many who are unfamiliar with the Reality of the Situation.

Regarding her Insults against me with Respect to my Honour, I will only point out that in her Time she has misled a certain Gentleman in a treacherous manner to enact a Deed on our Land access in her own Name only, and for the same Reason I allowed myself against my own Will, when I at the time was very Sick and without the Ability to take Account of the Effects of any Action at all, to be led to sign a Kind of Right-of-Way document for my Son Ole, on our Access road without my Interests in this Respect being taken into the least Account.

I could list endless Examples of the Misery under which I have been obliged to live out my Days through nearly two Lifetimes, but as this would not improve my Position I will omit to do so and simply let it me known that I frequently, indeed daily, suffer a lack of Food.

If, for example, a cornmeal porridge is made, it is cooked in 2 Pans: one for the House's Quality people made from the best pure Corn, and one for me in which the good Corn is mixed with a fair Quantity of last year's Oatmeal.

And while I, in a Corner, consume my allocated Half a lumpy Potato without Fat, together with a little Oat Gruel, some are served at Table with the finest Rye bread with Butter, Cheese and Coffee, etc, so there will always be a difference between the Rich Man in his Castle and the Poor Man at his Gate.

I have not had Clothing for at least 10 – ten – Years; and I am therefore now extremely inadequately equipped. At the death of Ole Ellingsen Hovde on 3rd March 1893, my Wife purchased a Suit of his. There are also no future Prospects of Clothing coming to me in my House. I received a pair of Socks about 14 Years ago. This was when my Sister Brit Sæbø knitted a Pair for me, this being almost at the End of her Life, and since then, some 5-6 Years ago, I received a Pair from my Daughter Anne. The Condition is thus probably easy to Appreciate.

Apart from my being obliged nearly all my life to suffer a lack of Food and Clothing etc, my Wife has in addition attempted to make Life miserable for me and others, amongst other things by accusing me of Infidelity, about which I assume almost everyone has heard talk. I cannot however assume that any sensible person can attribute any truth to such things.

As everyone knows, I have a Son, Ole, who by underhand means has acquired Rights on our Access road.

It might be expected that he would supply my Needs and prevent Disaster. This is unfortunately not the Case. It is true that he cannot yet be said to have taken over the Farm, in that his dearly honoured Mother herself wishes to run it, but unfortunately nothing appears to be or is more certain than this; that he is his Mother's completely expressed Likeness and Image in Body and Mind.

It pains me deeply to have to pass this Judgement on my own Son, but I have to respect the Truth.

In order to pass the probably few Days of my unhappy Life that remain to me in Peace and Tranquillity and in the good Repute of my fellow men as in that long-ago time, when Hille Eriksdatter Venås was as yet a stranger to me, I hereby with the deepest respect request of the Board of Voll Poorhouse that the said Board will graciously take me under its Protection and place me under the Provision of a Stranger. It gives me no Pleasure, and it is not with a light Heart, that I make this Request, but alas I know no other Solution. My Position in my own House is intolerable to me and will soon bring about the ending of my Days.

Pro tem. Sæbø, the 18th September 1903

Most Respectfully,
John Eriksen Skare