

The Potato Eaters

(Kartöfluæturnar)

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(trans. Lytton Smith)



1.

the potato eaters

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LÍSA
a war nurse

BRIMRÚN (BRÚNA)
a bus driver; Lísas daughter

MIKAEL
Lísas ex-stepson

HÖSKULDUR
Brúna's son

KRISTÍN
Mikael's "girlfriend"

Lísas apartment on Vallhólmi in the Kópavogur neighborhood is reminiscent of a battlefield, with cardboard boxes and all kinds of debris scattered about, as though the inhabitant hardly settled in. A red axe can be seen hanging on a wall. The bathroom wall has been removed; a bathtub faces the audience. Drywall has been nailed across the doors to the other rooms of the apartment. A sliding glass door opens to a sundeck in the garden. Steps descend from the living room to the basement.

1

Lísa is sockless and wearing high-heeled, transparent, plastic boots. Piles of human hair (occasionally braided) are scattered about the room. Lísa strokes the hair and combs it, then systematically places it into a clear plastic bag. There's a knock at the door. Lísa stuffs the hair into a suitcase she tries to hide. More knocking. Lísa opens it cautiously; Brúna rushes in and slams it behind her. She's wearing her bus driver's uniform and brown, open Ecco-brand sandals. She's dark-haired and has on pearl earrings. Lísa startles when she sees her daughter but doesn't do anything.

Lísa Why aren't you wearing the shoes I gave you?

Brúna They're too small. Why is your voice so hoarse?

Lísa Because no one talks to me. Do you know how much they cost?

Brúna It doesn't matter, they're too small.

Lísa 64,000 króna

Brúna They're still too small.

Lísa I doubt such shoes are beautiful in very large numbers. Won't your feet keep growing and growing without shoes to hold them in?

Brúna My feet haven't gotten any bigger since puberty. But you were long gone before that happened.

Silence.

Lísa Are you at work right now? Or do you put on a fleece sweater without getting paid for it?

Brúna I'm on second shift.

Lísa Those shoes...

Brúna Mom, what are you going on about?

Lísa No, it's just... Your shoes...

Brúna I didn't come to Kópavogur for fashion tips.

Lísa You're the only one who doesn't want my advice. Did you see the advice I gave out in the Nursing Journal? "Karate for Neglected Children"? Thousands shared it on Facebook. Five thousand likes.

Brúna Ok. What's up with my shoes?

Lísa It's just they look comfortable.

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Brúna I drive seven hours a day, believe me, you need to air your feet, my feet are my tools.

Lísa Have you seen the feet on the pigeons in big cities like Paris?

Brúna I've never been to Paris.

Lísa I don't know if that would be right for you.

A knock. Höskuldur is standing at the glass door.

Brúna Damn.

Lísa Is my little Hoskuldur with you? Let him in. He'll freeze out there.

Brúna I'd rather he freezes out there than in here.

Lísa They're crooked, lopsided, crying, exhausted, and none of them have claws.

Brúna What are you talking about?

Lísa The feet on the pigeons! Often they rot or wither because the pigeons land on the power lines or on those little needles on the windowsills, you have to watch out...

Brúna What are you on about?

Lísa Pigeons. People put spears on windowsills so when the pigeons are tired and plop themselves down, they impale themselves. Except if they put their feet down first, the spears go through their claws and deform them.

Brúna I have a friend online.

Lísa From Paris?

Brúna No, Sauðárkrókur, up north, and he said that, you know, you never see baby pigeons. Simply never. You only see adult pigeons. And you never see pigeons sitting on eggs, either. And he said, it's not something I necessarily agree with, I don't mean anything by it, it's just he said pigeons come straight from hell. (*Höskuldur knocks on the door again*) Höskuldur is dressed for cold, it'd take him until tomorrow to freeze to death.

Lísa The claws tear off and the skin frays on the bones so that bits blow off so they're walking around on their stumps, crippled, around all the fine French slim women. In Kosovo, on the other hand-

Brúna Can we have just one Kosovo-free moment?

Lísa That's a bit extreme.

Brúna Do you see the redness on my nose, yes or no?

Lísa No.

Brúna Right, you just can't be bothered to look, I'm as red as fire here.

Lísa Isn't it just the cold?

Brúna It's not that cold outside!

Lísa I don't think you need to go to a dermatologist...

Brúna You're not a dermatologist.

Lísa But I know all of them, and they know me.

Brúna I've been on the waiting list for six months.

Lísa You know, I saw this woman the other day doing stand up. Should I do it? So many men these days are hot for funny grannies, they think we have no limits sexually.

Brúna Don't talk like that!

Lísa Brúna, my love, you can't come here, lock the child outside, and get mad at me.

Brúna Can he stay with you?

Lísa Wha-?

Brúna Do you want to look after him?

Lísa Me look after him? For you?

Brúna Just this once. No more than that. I just don't want him to be alone.

A short silence

Lísa You know, it's absolutely ridiculous that I've never been asked to look after the boy before now. I could perform CPR on him if something happened, I still have my notes from nursing school, or help him psychologically or ...

Brúna Just toast, marmalade, Disney movies, reading time. Be a grandmother.

Lísa But what about your wife?

Brúna We won't tell Magga about it.

Lísa Come now, your wife doesn't know you're going to the best doctor at the mall. You're hiding it. That lesbian ogress. You know, Brúna, I have my doubts about the relationship the two of you are...

Brúna *(interrupts)* You jabber on like some old dude in the hot tub...

Lísa *(interrupts)* No, fair enough. But I want more: it's not fair that I'm plan C. You're punishing me because I saved people's lives back then, first in Bosnia and then in Kosovo and then of course...

Brúna *(interrupts)* No, mom, I haven't been punishing you for saving lives!

Lísa What if I'm busy?

Brúna What?

Lísa I have that app on my phone and, yeah, somebody might want to swipe right and swing by for some afternoon delight, some guy might...

Brúna Ugh, don't say anything more. Hössi can just play in the basement for a bit. *(Calling her son)* Hössi! Give it!

Höskuldur lifts his hand and drops Brúna's phone on the floor. She picks up the phone and leaves. Lísa taps away at her phone and Höskuldur stares at her.

Höskuldur You know how to knit?

Lísa Do you think I got the Order of the Falcon simply for knitting?

Höskuldur I know how to.

Lísa Well, good for you.

Höskuldur Why do you have so many shelves with nothing on them?

Lísa I'm not like your mom with all my closets and drawers stuffed with candy. That was your great-grandma. Piled food around her like bricks in a wall.

Höskuldur I don't eat candy.

Lísa I don't either.

Höskuldur I know.

Lísa We're too smart to think that a bit of pic-n-mix would do us any good.

Höskuldur Grandmother.

Lísa Also, you can never drink wine.

Höskuldur Can I tell you something?

Lísa What?

Höskuldur Mom says you make her ill.

Lísa Why do you talk to me like that?

Höskuldur (*pulls out some patterned cotton underwear*) Is this your underwear?

Lísa So what?

Höskuldur It's nice.

Lísa You think so?

Höskuldur Yeah.

Lísa Would you like to visit me more often?

Höskuldur We visit grandmother the first Saturday of the month at 3pm for one hour.

Höskuldur drops the underwear on the floor and picks up a hair braid.

Lísa Give me that! What's with you?

Lísa snatches the braid from Höskuldur and puts it in the suitcase.

Höskuldur What's with you?

Lísa (*picks the underwear up off the floor*) These are new, you can wear them.

Höskuldur What am I meant to do with them?

Lísa Whatever you want, you're visiting grandmother, that's all.

Höskuldur But I can't eat candy.

Lísa Right.

Höskuldur Or knit.

Lísa No

Höskuldur Or drink.

Lísa And you can be called whatever you want. Your great-grandfather hated the name Höskuldur.

Höskuldur Can I change it?

Lísa You can be called Pablo and be from China.

Höskuldur Or I could just be Lía.

Lía Like me?

Höskuldur Yes.

Lía Lía, my dear, as you like.

Höskuldur And we'll be mom's friend.

Höskuldur put the underwear on over the jeans.

Lía The color suits you. Lía my love, how about I fetch us a snack?

There is a knock at the door.

Lía (*calling*) Clearly the four travels fast.

Lía runs her fingers through Höskuldur's hair just before the door opens.

2

MIKAEL is standing in the doorway. He is very attractive, in a boyish way, though he's no longer a boy.

He resembles a prince from a fairytale except he's too pale and too much of a smoker to convincingly

pull it off. Perhaps he's still living his glory days from the past, when he was cooler. When Mikael

takes off his sweater, his shirt rides up above his nipples.

Mikael Are you working?

Lía Hi.

Mikael Hi. Why are you off work?

Lía I hardly work at all. What are you ...?

Mikael Why?

Lía, I have few needs.

Mikael I was sure you weren't going to be home. I was going to have to sit here on the steps like I was locked outside. Is that a new perfume?

Lía I changed in Kosovo.

Mikael I've seen you since you came back.

Lía I know. You just haven't said hi.

Mikael (*looks at Höskuldur*) Wait, who is this freak?

Lía Why would you address him that way?

Mikael Greetings.

Höskuldur Hi.

Mikael Brúna's sprog?

Lísa Mikael, I can't talk to you right now. It's not a good time...

Mikael Can I sit down?

Höskuldur Do you have a car?

Mikael No. I came on horseback. I'm a prince.

Höskuldur What do you mean, a prince?

Lísa A former prince.

Mikael Yes, maybe a recovering prince. I'm your ex-cousin. My dad married your grandmother during a bender.

Höskuldur Where is he?

Mikael Right now? He's probably waking up in a wet bed somewhere in Pattaya, Thailand. Yes. And taking off his mask. He has sleep apnea and so he travels with a small bag and a snout which he connects to his face via this mask. And that's how he avoids choking in his sleep. One day at a time.

Höskuldur Do you live there too?

Mikael No. I live on the tenth floor of a palace. Do you know what it's called?

Höskuldur Bowling Palace?

Mikael No.

Höskuldur Furniture Palace?

Mikael No.

Höskuldur Video Palace?

Mikael No. Engihjalli.

Lísa I'm babysitting, Mikael, come back when I'm not babysitting.

Mikael *(to Höskuldur)* You see how gravity has been kind to your grandmother. Even though she went to war. Now, my boy, step out of those.

Höskuldur takes off the underwear.

Lísa What do you want to talk to me about?

Mikael I don't want to talk to you about anything. I want you to talk to a particular woman about me. About my situation.

Mikael I want you to talk to this woman for me.

Lísa What woman?

Mikael Kristín.

Lísa Who is she?

Mikael I'd totally planned out Christmas.

Lísa Now wait, Mikael.

Mikael With Kristín—Stína—at a hotel in Chiang Mai in Thailand, hundreds and hundreds of miles from Pattaya, half board, you get breakfast, but you can choose, you know, dinner or lunch. I'm not kidding, you absolutely get to decide for yourself. And then perhaps we party a bit, you know, do some uppers, something to wake us up, just to refresh us, and the thing is that Thailanders have such sweet amphetamines, totally the finest. So we'd wake up, you understand, half past ten in the morning and oh shit, only half an hour left for breakfast and we'd take the rest of pills just to get us out of the room. Then we'd go downstairs to the buffet, but then began to laugh obscenely. Of course, we'd have no appetite. Because of the uppers. So we'd just drink the coffee and go back up to fuck. But then you ...

Lísa How do I fit into this Thai fantasy of yours, am I working at the breakfast buffet?

Mikael Your generation.

Lísa Huh?

Mikael You raised a generation of little frumpy cunts: "Be independent. Take space."

Lísa We just taught them to see through you.

Mikael *(to Höskuldur)* Listen, freak, I reckon there must be some old car or other here, look *(lifts the cushion off the couch and pulls up an old electric car with a cable)*, go play with this. You're horribly girlish, poor wretch, your grandma is to blame, you know, she's got some magic eye she casts over people.

Lísa Stop it.

Höskuldur My name is Lísa too.

Mikael Hahaha, well, you just keep fucking up the youth, Lisa. You want to have grandmother all to yourself, is that it?

Höskuldur Can't you go away and visit that man with the snout?

Mikael No, I don't see him very often.

Höskuldur Why not?

Mikael I stole his girlfriend one time. Do you have a girlfriend?

Höskuldur Yes, I broke her tooth.

Mikael You'd be a hit in Pattaya.

Höskuldur Yes, sure. Do you have a brother?

Mikael No.

Höskuldur Okay. How much did the snout cost?

Mikael Years of drinking.

Höskuldur Yes, sure.

Lísa Höskuldur, dear, go down to the basement to play.

Höskuldur Shouldn't I stay and help you?

Mikael Jesus Christ.

Lísa Just hurry on down.

Höskuldur hands Lísa her underwear and she puts them in her pocket. Höskuldur goes.

Mikael By the time she woke up, I was giving her an orgasm. I was lying there in a good mood, I had a good buzz on. And I didn't want to wake her up, so I came first, and then she woke up when she came and got mad, really mad.

Lísa And?

Mikael And she wants to throw me in prison for that, for satisfying her.

Lísa What are you taking about?

Mikael She's planning to formally charge me, she's from a family of lawyers. They call me the dropout.

Lísa Mikael, this is very serious.

Mikael She certainly thinks so...

Lísa Is this the first time something like this has come up?

Mikael Sure.

Lísa Answer me, Mikael.

Mikael Yes, this is absolutely the first time someone has accused me... of rape.

Lísa I'm sorry, why are you telling me this?

Mikael I need to use your phone, she won't answer mine. Are you going to help me?

Lísa What can I do?

Mikael Talk to her. Make her stop.

Lísa Right. You know I ran for parliament for the Women's Liberation movement, I'm not going to... why would she listen to me anyway?

Mikael You don't want to help me? I knew it.

Lísa I think it's for the best.

Mikael There's just one thing. I have a fantastic lawyer. Dad came through for me, the old boy, he totally gets it.

Lísa Well, that's good.

Mikael Not for you.

Lísa Mikael.

Mikael Well. My lawyer asked: Is there some explanation in your history for your lack of boundaries when it comes to sex? If there's an explanation, something in your history, then this matter's over, we just need that explanation...

Lísa And what did you say?

Mikael Nothing, yet. But, of course, I do have an explanation: my stepmother raped me when I was fifteen...

Lísa *(laughs, her laughter increasing, becoming shrill)* What did you say?

Mikael I started fucking my stepmother when I was fifteen years old.

Lísa *(sitting)* You're full of crap, child.

Mikael And that family of lawyers is surely going to try the case in the media. And the judge will have to find me guilty. You'll be pulled through the shit: "National honoree had sex with child." Brúna will be done with you. You want to be a martyr and a moral leader. But you don't know what it's like to be alone. And I mean alone. Someone who's always passive. Who takes six hours to get it together to go shopping. And then the checkout girl simply says good day, with her chewing gum and the cigarette smell from her fingers. And as soon as you walk out of the store, you start to analyze. What did she mean? Is she being ironic, good day, because of course I couldn't have a good day. Your life becomes full of strangers. You stumble into others' thoughts. Everyone is thinking and saying something nasty about you. You order in and try to avoid eye contact with the pizza delivery guy. If you manage it, the pizza guy must find it really weird that you don't want to look at his face. Then one fine day, you try poker online. Or something. Because you're no longer a participant, the universe has set you apart, the world's bastard, as they say. *(Embraces Lís, pinches her breast and takes her phone)* Well, wicked old stepmother, just go do it, you're so convincing, explain to Stína that she's just talking shit and if something happened then you're to blame and you two can agree to put an end to this fucking nonsense.

Lís What happened to you, Mikael?

Mikael *(into Lís's phone)* Kristín. Don't hang up. Wait. There's a woman here. Lís. She wants to talk to you. She wants you to come and meet her.

Lís Mikael, I'm not talking to this girl.

Mikael *(into Lís's phone)* Vallhólmi 23. Just do this, talk to her. And then I promise I'll make myself vanish, once and for all.

Lís goes into the bedroom and slams the door.

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Brúna enters the apartment.

Mikael Well, hi.

Brúna *(looking at him long and hard)* Do you try to be a jerk?

Mikael No, what do you mean?

Brúna I sent you a friend request on Facebook and you rejected me. What's wrong with you?

Mikael I'm only on Facebook when I'm totally out of it and trying to give people viruses and stuff.

Brúna (*embracing Mikael*) Huh. All I do is share photos of tulips with some saying or other attached so that people think I'm blooming, haha. (*a beat*) Where did Mom go?

Mikael Why are you dressed like a retard?

Brúna I drive a bus.

Mikael You drive a bus? I thought you were going to be prime minister! Where've you just come from?

Brúna I went to see a doctor.

Mikael Everything okay?

Brúna Hey, what are you doing here?

Mikael When you've got a full bus, you know, little kindergartners and maybe some preschoolers and muscular tourists and the windows are steamy and it's slippery, winter's just getting started, and you're hungry and your back's sweaty... don't you ever just think: I'm going to drive into the car ahead?

Brúna No. Never.

Mikael Oh.

Brúna But there is one old vehicle still in use. Or old, not so old, maybe just a bit worn out.

Mikael Right.

Brúna And, well, the seats are so low, they barely reach your shoulders. So if you went and got into a smash, everyone from one to seventy would break their necks. (*Screams*) Hössi!

Mikael But if you had to emergency brake?

Brúna Emergency brake – crik, crik, crik - forty broken necks. Nobody would blame me. (*Screams*) Hössi! We need to get out of here.

Mikael Is that your child?

Brúna That's my son. Did he fool you ...?

Mikael What do you mean?

Brúna Nothing, he pretends he's trans, he definitely fooled mom. He made a special agreement with all the teachers at the school, he didn't have to do homework or anything for a whole year. We knew nothing about it. Hössi, do you want to be a girl?

Höskuldur Fuck off.

Mikael Good for him. And his dad is?

Brúna Two moms.

Mikael Yeah, okay, cool... I mean when I'm seventy with too much skin on my eyelids, taking a stroll in Patpong in Bangkok, and I see a very beautiful body, you follow me, a little flesh on it, a fine orange skin, but fresh skin, like honey in color, cheap homemade silicon, and it turns out that this is a ladyboy, with a little rice dick, am I going to be some kind of moral compass? No, I'm heterosexual! I mean, it's naturally all confusing... especially over there ...

Brúna Yes, and everyone these days is either a bit pansexual or a bit non-binary.

Mikael Yes.

Silence.

Brúna Your dad, he's always in full swing out there in Thailand ...

Mikael His wife tried to set him on fire. He actually says your mom tried that too.

Brúna Definitely right. Who wouldn't want to be a fly on the wall out there.

Mikael I think they fuck flies, too.

Brúna Hössi, we're going!

Mikael Hold on, you've got pearls in your ears, aren't they heavy?

Brúna No. *(She opens the sliding door and makes as if to go)*

Mikael Are you in a hurry?

Brúna Yes.

Mikael You cut your hair.

Brúna It was heavy.

Mikael Was it? *(A fly can be heard down low)* Listen, there's a fly on your ass.

Brúna You going to kill it?

Mikael "Never kill flies in someone else's house." Remember?

Brúna Yes, she said that, that old lady in the book, *The Fish Can Sing*. Still confuses me.

Mikael Why?

Brúna This is your house as much as mine, we lived here together for five years.

Mikael kills the fly by slapping Brúna's butt; she's both confused and enticed.

Brúna Ha, always so hard, you always did everything so hard. Funny you're here. I've just been thinking about how it all was back then and...

Mikael Hey, I was just a teenager, I was busy with other people, I couldn't be a brother, no one taught me anything like that, my mom was dead and your mom was trying to set my dad on fire and I just ...

Brúna Wow, you're so all over the place. Sometimes I imagine you're at the back of a bus and ready to take the wheel if something happens. Or there to throw out the winos.

Mikael Of course. I threw dad out of my own Confirmation.

Brúna You told me.

Mikael He's big, but not especially strong.

Brúna No, you know, he's small boned and he just floods over everything like water, you know?

Brúna tries to pinch Mikael on his nose with her toes.

Mikael What are you doing?

Brúna Don't you remember? We used to do that! Instead of saying sorry.

Mikael Yes, I remember.

Brúna You were kind to mom. That's not easy.

Mikael I remember your mom so well, but it's like there's something missing...

Brúna Wow, people never remember me, waiters at restaurants always forget what I ordered or bring me just any food. My mother is always acting up in front of others, but then she just takes her leave in front of me, stops looking after herself, clings for the most part to a belief that she doesn't exactly realize her effect on people. She never lives in reality,

she's trapped in an imagining of what reality could be. Oh god, I talk and talk and talk, I have to stop talking.

Mikael *(looks at his watch)* Höskuldur!

Brúna Hössi! You're being called! Why are you calling him?

Mikael It's here... the battery. I was wondering if it would be ok if we went to buy a battery for his car.

Brúna Do you want to?

Mikael Yes.

Brúna We can take the four to the mall.

Mikael Sure. Or. There's a shop across the street, we can walk ...

Brúna Together?

Mikael Yes.

Brúna Yes. Yes. Absolutely. Yes. Yes.

Lísa comes out of her room and Höskuldur up from the basement. Lísu is wearing sunglasses and fails to see them.

Lísa Why are you here?

Mikael I got Brúna to stay a little longer.

Brúna Thanks for looking after him.

Lísa *(distracted)* Yes, it was nothing. *(Scrutinizes them)* You haven't changed. Except your hair, Brúna, what have you done to your hair?

Brúna What about my hair?

Lísa Nothing. It's fine.

Brúna Are you saying I'm beautiful?

Lísa Yes.

Brúna Did you hit your head?

Mikael We're just going to the shop.

Höskuldur No, you're going to see the man with the snout.

Brúna Hössi! Then we'll go home.

Mikael No, we'll come back here so we can chat more, hear about your life, Lísá, find out how you're doing.

Mikael, Brína and Höskuldur leave.

4

The doorbell rings. Lísá opens it for Kristín, who is holding coffee in a carryout container and a bag full of needle and yarn. Her perfume wafts over to the audience. She stands in the street in her wool socks like she doesn't dare enter.

Lísá Come in.

Kristín Yes, thanks.

Kristín puts the bag, the coffee, her phone and her sunglasses on the floor and starts to remove her jacket.

Lísá I invited you to come in, not move in.

Kristín No, sorry. *(She picks everything up again).*

Lísá What are you doing here?

Kristín Mikki promised to stop calling if I listened to you.

Lísá But I have nothing to say.

Kristín Oh.

Lísá Just stand there a moment, and we can say we tried.

Kristín *(stands dead still and looks around)* No flowers?

Lísá I water them too much. Drown them.

Kristín Do we need to stand here much longer, do you think?

Lísá Only a bit longer, just so we can tell Mikael and ourselves that we tried to resolve this.

Kristín You know it's the police who solve crimes.

Lísá Relax.

Kristín Okay.

Lísá turns on the radio and Nina Simone's "Marriage is for Old Folks" resounds in the living room. She wiggles her hips in time, sings along a line, turns Kristín around in a circle as she holds onto all her stuff. Finally, Kristín cannot help but smile.

Kristín Funny song. You were married, of course, right, you and Mikki's dad before you went to

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Lísa To Serbia. Yes. (*Kristín blinks*).

Kristín You're a nurse?

Lísa You know a lot about me.

Kristín You're famous, aren't you?

Lísa Are you a nurse?

Kristín No, but I actually took ...

Lísa Took what?

Kristín A short online course in co-dependency.

Lísa You should have taken a longer one...

Kristín Wow, it suddenly occurs to me, since we're just, you know, killing time, couldn't we, I mean I'd really like... a glass of white wine, something dry?

Lísa I don't drink.

Kristín Yes, then maybe coffee or you know red wine, something dry?

Lísa clambers up on an old sofa and fishes out a vodka bottle, pouring it into a glass and handing it to Kristín who pours the liquor into the coffee.

Kristín I have to ask straight out: Are you going to tell me off?

Lísa You don't tell grown-ups off.

Kristín You don't have a liquor cabinet? Nursing isn't well paid, of course.

Lísa Dad kept the bottles down in the couch.

Kristín (*sitting on a chair*) Is he dead?

Lísa Died where you're sitting.

Kristín God, aren't you glad. Joke.

Lísa The same day my dad died mom sat in that chair and people watched her grief... she was completely in her element. And then that night she died, too.

Kristín From sorrow?

Lísa Obesity.

Kristín (*standing*) Your mom?

Lísa Yes. Do you always do this?

Kristín What?

Lísa Ask questions so we don't have to talk.

Kristín No. I can tell you that my dad would go crazy if he knew I was here.

Lísa Why?

Kristín Dad wants to send Mikki to prison for four years. And then Mikki will spend his whole life paying me damages, so he'll be in prison forever.

Lísa In a lifelong prison?

Kristín Yes, because I'll always be in a prison too. I feel like I am in a helium balloon hovering above me. Dad just says: this is why we have laws in this country.

Lísa I also had a great dad. Very strict. His face was all hard.

Kristín My dad too.

Lísa Until the weekend came. Then he was in love.

Kristín With you?

Lísa We don't all want our dad to fall in love with us. With a young man. And dad didn't care, just walked around, boasting like a five-year-old boy. Until Sunday evening. Then he beat his boyfriend, came home and wept in mom's lap. And starved himself until the middle of the next week.

Kristín From love?

Lísa Hahaha. No. Dad came back from work and had to cook us a feast but all he ate was potatoes. "My dear Lísa, guilty men eat guilty food," he said.

Kristín How do you remember so much? I can't remember anything. Not before I'm ten years old, there's this toy monkey in a cage at this mall called Eden... And I remember thinking, he's just a rag doll, he shouldn't have to be in a cage, unless the cage is protecting him.

Lísa Is this how we're going to handle this?

Kristín And I remember how there would always be a little comment, every day, you're not too good to look after kids, no, I know, I know I'm not too good, that's not my problem...
"Kristín, wear wool socks, so they can't hear you so much when you walk."

Lísa My first memory is of mom, lying there totally alone because of her obesity, on the bed, her cheeks furry, howling in her greed. Then she stopped washing. I woke up at night and stole in to wash her underwear. I stopped letting friends visit after they saw the blood leaking down her legs and down into her shoes which filled up and spilled onto the floor. And dad down in the basement eating potatoes. Everything went in circles. And I don't know what Dad enjoyed more, the crime or the punishment. Which do you think is better?

Kristín Punishment.

Lísa Mikael grew up here to a large extent, with those people, and they were still better than his dad. Could it be that Mikael has already served his punishment?

Kristín You are disgustingly funny. Like some mafioso trying to get me to quit. I know your type all too well. You're just afraid of what people would think of you, a fine woman, respected, who was there in that stupid war feeding Starvin Marvin or something. Then your stepson is just a rapist ...

Lísa Well, I tried.

Lísa turns up "Marriage is for Old Folks." Kristín finishes the coffee and goes to leave. Lisa's phone can be heard making a sound and she turns down the music. Kristín looks at her

Kristín Are you on Tinder?

Lísa This one's sent me a picture, yes, this proud penis. Wants to piss on me. Perhaps the best offer of the day.

Kristín Yes, better than, "Can I look into your eyes while we make love?"

Lísa Are you on Tinder?

Kristín No.

Lísa But you're not in a relationship anymore?

Kristín I'm not going to just jump into the next one.

Lísa *(looks at the phone)* This is a pretty nice penis. One should humiliate oneself on a regular basis. Otherwise, we start to think everything is humiliating, and life gets boring. Right?

Kristín I don't know.

Lísa Did you believe in him?

Kristín Yes.

Lísa How did you do that?

Kristín What do you mean?

Lísa Mikki is a loser. He never wanted to get full marks on a test. He wanted to get full marks on a test without studying. He did not want to learn an instrument, he wanted to play an instrument. He was in a band, he does not know Old Noah.

Kristín Wasn't that the idea of this band of his.

Lísa That so?

Kristín Maybe not.

Lísa These boys sit and wait for everyone to think they are sensational. You know, Kristín, that he isn't sensational. He is not misunderstood. You've kept his nonsense afloat. If you keep on, he'll never mature; that way, you can control him totally. It's called manhating.

Kristín Has it occurred to you that it will help him to take responsibility for what he did?

Lísa Should he be grateful that the one person he currently knows and trusts is sending him to jail? You know he was saving up for a trip for you two to Thailand.

Kristín You're lying.

Lísa You're just sulky because you feel something for someone you loathe.

Kristín He uses violence, Lísa, I'm afraid of him, I woke up ...

Lísa The truth is that violence is just like wine, wonderful with good food but sad for those who are addicted to it. Violence is just the animal part of us and entirely absurd to think we should get rid of it... that doesn't work. Do you know what I find so awful about it all?

Kristín Do I want to know?

Lísa I think you're longing for it. After having been in Kosovo, where I stitched genitals back together from what was left of their parts after the kinds of real attack you only see in war, then we girls realize how hollow it is to be upset over some mild misunderstanding.

Kristín And because someone happened to be gang-raped in Kosovo many years ago, I'm meant to be grateful for having known my rapist?

Lísa When did your dad last visit you?

Kristín Yesterday.

Lísa Exactly. And before that? It's been a long time. Maybe several years. Hasn't it? Now you're getting attention, love and this wonderful role, the role of the victim. A free pass from dad. And wounded. Wounds you salt every time the world sends you a sign that perhaps you ought to bear some responsibility for yourself.

Kristín Stop it.

Lísa And pain brings a high.

Kristín Listen you, well, you just, I ...

Kristín can't come up with anything. Lísa hands her back to the bottle, and then a dove flies into the glass door with a dink.

Lísa Mum only knew one story: Doves with babies are in trouble if they can't find food anywhere, they look for two days, but if they do not find anything they stand on tip-toe in the middle of the nest and begin to peck at their chest, picking at it until they bleed and the kids can drink the blood. The dove dies, but the carcass suffices to bring the young up.

The dove stirs, Lísa opens the door out to the deck and stamps down on the pigeon's head.

Kristín What's the matter with you?

Lísa *(throws the carcass into the garden)* It's fine, give it to the cat, she can eat it. Shouldn't females stand together? *(strokes Kristín's hair)* Sometimes what you want isn't what you need. Mikael is really so gentle. And you do have some faith in him, dear.

Kristín He's only gentle when it suits him.

Kristín sits, Lísa moves behind her.

Lísa Do you believe that?

Kristín Yes.

Lísa Kristín, it's not so awful. This will all be okay, it will pass. *(Strokes Kristín's shoulders).*

Kristín Stop.

Lísa You just have to forget about it, just rest and then you and Mikael can keep on going.

Kristín Stop.

Lísa You'll have Mikki in your pocket.

Kristín Stop, please.

Lísa (*eases down the straps on Kristín's shirt and strokes her chest*) And he doesn't make all these demands. He thinks you're great.

Kristín I'm, well, here I... (*no words come to her, she takes a gulp of vodka*). You smell wonderful.

Lísa (*bends down to the girl's cheek and kisses her, as if wishing her a good night's sleep*) Stína, you've shown Mikael that he can't use you for anything.

Kristín But how do I stop him?

Lísa Stop who?

Kristín Dad. He wants Mikael to go to prison.

Lísa Kristín, my sweet.

Kristín What?

Lísa You just go to your dad.

Kristín Yes.

Lísa And says you're done accusing Mikael. Your dad will respect you for that.

Lísa gathers Kristín's stuff and puts it in her lap. Kristín leaves. Lísa puts water in a bucket and cleans the blood on the deck and glass door.

Lísa (*to herself*) Like the Sisters said at Nursing School: The floor will never be cleaner than the water in the bucket.

5

Mikael comes in holding a branch of redcurrants.

Lísa Did you break a branch off my bush?

Mikael Sorry. (*hands her the branch*).

Lísa Kristín and I chatted.

Mikael How did it go?

Lísa Where did Brúna and Höskuldur go?

Mikael To the shop, to buy a battery for the car.

Lísa Which car? Is he interested in cars?

Mikael You know he's always lying with his "I'm a girl" bullshit.

Lísa Do you think he's the first thirteen-year-old boy to bully me?

Mikael I was fifteen. (*Walks over to the toilet and pretends to pee*) You stood there saying, "Maybe he's not very big but he is beautiful like everything else about you."

Lísa Mikael, you describe me like someone in a porno, I never said that.

Mikael Do you know that I always know where you are in the world? Not what you are doing but where you are.

Lísa Mikael the stalker.

Mikael Why is this so simple for you?

Lísa Because I'm not trying.

Mikael What?

Lísa To be a princess in some fairy tale.

Mikael Aren't you? I think I'd like to have you wear something natural, like flax. Indeed, I know of one cute fat girl who marries such odd people, dwarves and trans and so on. She has no prejudices. She could marry us at some waterfall and we could rent a summerhouse and have a weekend there and have a barbecue even though it's winter. There's nobody else waiting for us.

Lísa We're not getting married.

Mikael I know. But I fooled you.

Lísa Just joking?

Mikael Yes, you don't get anything. I'll stroll into the mall. Feel it in my sacrum and in front of my pelvis that you are in the mall too, but still I stroll in. I start arguing with you in my head. I lose. Beginning to try to kiss you and argue again and losing again and now I've gotten speechless. Then I bump into you. Look at you and am completely exhausted and lovesick and you grab my penis in front of everyone but nobody sees it and you walk

away and waggle like you are much younger than me. And I've become heavy and old, deranged from horniness, and I'll chase you up to the third floor and ...

Mikael goes over to her, Lísá grabs hold of his zipper, slides it down and loosens the belt. Then she puts the shirt down in the pants, pulls them up and rezips.

Lísá Look at you, locked in your pants.

Mikael Lísá ...

Lísá Do you think they are happy?

Mikael Who?

Lísá Brúna and Höskuldur.

Mikael I'm not exactly an expert on happiness.

Lísá Ach. Do I have a bad effect on them?

Mikael You have a good effect on me.

Lísá Did Brúna talk about how she was going to stop coming here?

Mikael Why don't you let these redcurrants grow? It's like some soldier cut them.

Lísá So I do not lose control of them. Damn, you smell funky. Hahaha. You use too much washing powder. And cheap stuff. You smell like a teenage girl, I mean it. Is this something vanilla?

Mikael I use perfume.

Lísá This is bodyspray. I mean it. Your dad used to wear too much aftershave but he still knew he should use aftershave.

Mikael He invited me to Thailand the other day and when I'd been on a bender with him for a few days, I beat him. I was telling him how I met you in the mall, and he started laughing so I beat him ... you should have heard him crying.

Lísá You beat him. Thirty years too late.

Mikael Hey, I was just a kid, was I supposed to beat my dad for you?

Lísá You should just be grateful your dad is alive.

Mikael What would have changed if I had beat him thirty years earlier, you ever wonder?

Lísá I wouldn't have gone to Kosovo.

Mikael But wouldn't the war have been lost without you?

Lísa (*grabs him around the head*) I made cheese on toast for you every day. You never came to fear me. We were both young, like kids. Why do you want to destroy me with this bullshit?

Mikael Stína started studying nursing once but did not complete the classes and gave up entirely. But before she stopped...

Lísa Failed.

Mikael Yes, then, failed. Before she failed, her class spent a whole day discussing war nurses and Florence Nightingale and all those caring old ladies who nobody cares about. And you.

Lísa What did people say?

Mikael You'd gone to war.

Lísa I did not know, one never tells me anything.

Mikael I like telling you things.

Lísa How can you be both so sad and happy in your eyes?

Mikael Because with one eye ...

Lísa yes

Mikael I see you in a flaxen dress at our waterfall.

Lísa But of course.

Mikael But in the other, I see you dead in a coffin.

Lísa And there is nothing in between those two things?

Mikael I only have two eyes.

Mikael takes off his pants and moves close to Lísa.

Lísa You didn't beat him badly?

Mikael (*steps out of underwear*) He had to go to hospital.

Lísa strikes him gently with the branch on his penis. Mikael moans. Lísa lifts the branch again and strikes him on his buttocks. Mikael removes his shirt.

Lísa You should not hit! (*She strikes him in the stomach then tosses away the branch*).

Mikael Look at you. All horny and messed up. No, I don't think you have a good effect on Brúna and Höskuldur, maybe I should tell them.

Lísa (*serious*) I convinced Kristín to stop accusing you.

Mikael I was joking.

Lísa Did what I could.

Mikael Sorry.

Lísa We're quits. When Brúna returns, you say goodbye to her and your and my relationship's over.

Mikael And you will be alone?

Lísa I do not care.

Mikael And I will be alone?

Lísa Yes.

Mikael If you think I'm going to hit the bottom all on my own you're insane (*rips the branch away from her and throws it to the floor*). Wherever I go, you go with me.

Lísa Stop this madness, boy.

Mikael I'm not a boy!

Lísa I spoke to Kristín. Get out.

Mikael thrusts his face up to Lísa, kisses her but she falls back. He grabs at her, holds her tight and kisses her again, when the little electric car comes onto the deck and into the apartment. Höskuldur appears.

Höskuldur Farty little fartpig, fart for me fartytig, hear the fartpig, fart for me, mmm, fartytig.
Now go away!

Mikael (*stands up*) Listen up little freak, I belong here too.

Lísa No, Mikael.

Mikael What are you going to do?

Lísa I'm going to learn to forget you.

Mikael (*about Höskuldur*) Who the hell is this kid? He talks and behaves like he's five years old? Is he a retard?

Mikael intends to grab Höskuldur; just then Brúna comes in with a bag from the shop at Engihjalla.

Brúna You and Mikael are neighbors, mom, did you know?

Höskuldur tries to pinch Mikael, but he steals away.

Lísa (to Mikael) Be nice to the boy!

Brúna Mom, what's up to you? He worships his cousin, we worship him.

Mikael You hear that, Lísa?

Brúna Is there anything to eat?

Lísa What does he want to eat?

Brúna Let him choose.

Lísa Okay.

Brúna You're terribly sweet when stressed.

Lísa Thanks, Höskuldur.

Brúna Hössi, sweetie, go find something to eat.

Höskuldur Yeah, yeah.

Lísa and Höskuldur go down to the basement.

6

Brúna Why are you trembling?

Mikael I need to get moving. Being at a hostel, starting to shower and finding that the smell of my feet is so weird I must buy fungal cream. I just want someone else to make that trip with me, I don't want put the fungal cream on her unless she asks for it, people are all sorts. But having somebody with me, who also has fungus, the smells mingling into one stench.

Brúna What did Mom say exactly?

Mikael I'm going.

Brúna No, don't go.

Mikael What?

Brúna Did you know my wife is a doctor, pediatrician?

Mikael No.

Brúna Do you know any doctors?

Mikael No.

Brúna So, you don't know the way doctors talk?

Mikael Are you fucking with me?

Brúna No, of course...

Mikael Brúna, I'm not someone people should talk to.

Brúna I came home yesterday and began to describe my day to her, which was totally absurd. I went to get a haircut, but my hairdresser had gone missing in Spain. And then I went to work and two people vomited on the floor on the same trip!

Mikael Were you driving especially ridiculous?

Brúna No, no. But it's always, man, just wow, missing in Spain and two pukers, that's something.

Mikael It's something.

Brúna I was quite sure she would feel that... something... but she didn't answer, just said, "I lost a kid today on the operating table. He was twelve years old."

Mikael It's like you have your mom twice over.

Brúna Last year I was looking for a Christmas gift for Magga and I just thought: Okay, I'll shave my pussy.

Mikael She must have been really into that.

Brúna You have no idea what my pussy looks like these days. Giving birth to a child is like throwing a hand-grenade into your pussy ... or something. Anyway. I didn't dare look at my pussy so closely. So I gave up on that and decided to save up instead for an iPad. I saved so much I even managed to buy a computer for her as a Christmas gift. Know what she gave me?

Mikael Err, also a computer, you think alike?

Brúna A Range Rover. But I get free travel on the bus, and she knows that. It's just like mom all over. Before she went to Kosovo, she asked: Can Momma go to Yugoslavia to save children? And I answered Uh, no, you're supposed to be here because you're our mom. She didn't laugh and didn't cry, it just frustrated her because I'd given the wrong

answer, and so she left. And sent me pictures of the children she saved. They were somehow all like me.

Mikael Can I ask you one thing?

Brúna Yes! I don't think I've ever been asked permission to be asked something.

Mikael What did the dermatologist say at the mall?

Brúna *(after a short silence)* That I have dry scalp.

Mikael And what does that mean?

Brúna I have to use Head & Shoulders every day.

She hugs him.

Mikael What are you doing?

Brúna *(laughs)* I don't know, you make me act weird. In a good way. Is that why you were called prince? Coming and rescuing people from reality, rescuing them from Kópavogur?

Mikael No, when I went to school I had a beard like Prince. The musician. Your mom thought that was great. Are they just pottering away down there?

Brúna I hope so.

Mikael She is so fried.

Brúna What did she say?

Mikael "I'll forget all about you."

Brúna Oh, that's mom in a nutshell. And yet she's mellowed and I think she's become rather silly, a little like me ... and that makes me hate her even more. Once she called, she'd gotten with some soldier in Kosovo, and they decided to go on vacation to Paris. And she rang just to describe the perfume store. That's why I don't use perfume.

Mikael Do you know why she left?

Brúna To Paris?

Mikael To Kosovo.

Brúna No, but it would definitely be possible to trick me to go to Kosovo. I was tricked into artificial insemination at 19 years old.

Mikael He's a cool guy, the little freak.

Brúna I was so disgustingly thin, I stopped getting my period so I wouldn't ever get pregnant. But then I got fat and then ... I'm really into Hössi, but he's why I lack for so many things.

Mikael Your wife...

Brúna Yes?

Mikael Is she why you're lacking, too?

Brúna Yes.

Mikael Didn't she just give you a Range Rover?

Brúna Sure.

Mikael I'm grateful if someone just gives me herpes. You don't love her?

Brúna I love that her jaws don't make a sound when she chews, or stuff, that there's no such mess in her mouth while she eats, so she's not really annoying in that sense. And, Mikael, in real life love means not always being annoyed at your partner.

Mikael No, love means fucking someone without having to think about porn during it.

Brúna Ha, then I'm not in love. Fuck it, you know, sometimes there are memories I have of us that are... like my porn ... is that weird?

Mikael I don't know.

Brúna It's not like we're related.

Mikael No, but I was a bit older.

Brúna We were both children. I think my mother knew this and envied me, hahaha.

Mikael Sure. Remember, you took pictures of me?

Brúna I still have them.

Mikael Didn't you study photography?

Brúna Yes, I did.

Mikael Why didn't you make that your job?

Brúna After I began to have to take family pictures, Hössi and Magga and me, the photographer in me just died. I wouldn't know how to hold a camera, I just use my

phone. You know, one time we got 1,000 likes. Made me miserable. Sometimes when I think I'm going crazy, I start thinking it would be good idea to go see mom, but of course I don't because she would make me insane. It's like I'm stuck in safety overalls made of glass and I scream and scream but no one hears me and because of all the screaming the glass is steamy so nobody sees me either. You know, I'm talking so much I'm getting hoarse.

Mikael You're almost more alone than me.

Brúna I told the dermatologist about mom. He told me to stay well away from this woman. Do you think he's right?

Mikael I don't know. But... I mean, he's a dermatologist, right.

Brúna I've been thinking ... (*plucking up courage*) Today you were talking about Thailand and stuff, the fungus cream.

Mikael Yes.

Brúna And...

Mikael What?

Brúna I want us to go.

Mikael Hahaha, what is this crap?

Brúna I'm a Taurus, Mikael, I always make sense. This is really important.

Mikael Now?

Brúna Yes. Yes, or else I'll be tricked into not doing it. I want to go to Thailand, not for the ladyboys or anything like that... Thailand is definitely far enough away.

Mikael And not come back?

Brúna You know, brought back by the police, lose Hössi in some bitter divorce, being sent to prison. If I just get to decide this one time, to decide something big, you know, for me. And for Hössi. And for you. I'm not a loser. Yes.

Mikael Brúna, not everyone leaves you and steals from you. Sometimes things just happen and it's not about you.

Brúna Mikael. If your phone were lost for a week, how many people would have called you?

Mikael None, but ...

Brúna What else are you doing anyways?

A rustling is heard from the basement.

Mikael I have a little money... then we can take out local currency in Thailand's, using debit cards... you use the credit card to buy our tickets.

Brúna You must teach me everything! I don't know anything.

Mikael I'll take a credit card from your mom.

Brúna You know, I'll buy first class tickets, I mean, I don't care.

Mikael And some of those little liquor bottles?

Brúna Yes, and a device for watching tv shows.

Mikael And blankets so we'll get too hot, all moist on our scalps.

Brúna Yes. Not dry ... I'm not afraid.

7

Lísa and Höskuldur come up from the cellar. She holds a saucepan with boiled potatoes and laughs aloud.

Lísa Höskuldur, you're as crazy as your grandmother. Tell them what you said. Go on, say it! Speak! I asked him to choose some food from the pantry. He walked into the pantry and out again saying, "We'll have nothing but potatoes to eat." And I asked: Why in the world, Hoskuldur, would we just want potatoes for dinner? Why in the whole world, my dearest boy, and he answered ...

Höskuldur (*interrupting*) Then it is like we are really lacking something.

Lísa If you have a potato, you have a feast, that's what the Serbs say.

Mikael Are you still in Kosovo?

Lísa And of course I'm just like every other potato, no shell around me, no skin, well, a little skin, no complications in the middle like blood oranges, cut in half with all their patterns and millions of colors. I'm simple and ...

Mikael (*interrupting*) Empty as a potato.

Silence.

Lísa Do you know what I did in Kosovo?

Mikael What did you not do?

Lísa I was a pediatric nurse in Kosovo. Mamítsa. All the kids called me that. It means mom. Serbian is so beautiful because it's rough.

Mikael Then you abandoned them too. Why did you come home?

Lísa I was sent home.

Brúna So you were forced to come back to me again?

Lísa By a soldier with a gun.

Lísa puts the potato pan on the table and Höskuldur arranges four small white ceramic cups on the table. Lísa fetches a coffee pot and puts it on the table. Höskuldur puts a black blanket over Mikael and Brúna's shoulders, and a third over himself. Lísa sits, Höskuldur puts a black blanket over her shoulders. Lísa looks ahead, stoops her shoulders, and pours coffee into the cups. They eat the potatoes. A dim light the table. Höskuldur takes up a potato.

Hoskuldur This one's weird.

Mikael Oh, what's up with it?

Lísa Perhaps that's the mom.

Mikael *(bites into the potato but spits it out)* Oh ... that's disgusting.

Lísa You don't care for it?

Brúna No war food. *(Silence)* Can I tell you what I dreamt?

Lísa Well now, you've suddenly started asking me permission?

Mikael *(shouting at Lísa)* Listen to her!

Brúna I'm buckled in and cannot get out. I'm trembling with fear and I'm trying to run away but then I look down and see my legs are wooden.

Lísa Are your feet pieces of wood?

Brúna What do you think this means?

Lísa Like parquet? Is it a trap?

Brúna Would you try to answer me?

Lísa You forgive yourself for everything but not others. As soon as you get into a relationship with another person, you stop being yourself and begin to look for a prince to save you from the relationship. Then you start being with the prince and cease to exist.

Brúna So, I'm only alive ...

Lísa In a state of war; you erupt when between relationships, then lie dormant in a new relationship. This is bound up with mankind's most dirty secret. Do you know what mankind's most dirty secret is?

Mikael Something tells me you know.

Lísa There's nowhere as interesting as a warzone because there's nowhere as terrible as a warzone.

Brúna And you still miss it?

Lísa I miss the wounds. Wounds gaping wide, welling pus, the putrefying stench from the flesh and the insects eating the muscle apart. To deal with such a wound, a real wound, heal it, save what cannot be saved. That's something. Here I draw splinters from fingers and wipe bedridden old biddies!

Brúna Then go back!

Lísa Kosovo's peaceful now.

Brúna Couldn't you blow everything to pieces?

Lísa The Serbs says that when a bomb explodes, you have to start dancing, there's nothing else to do!

Lísa stands up and begins to dance a Serbian national dance. She draws Höskuldur into the dance.

Höskuldur This is not a dance, it's just a stroll.

Lísa Now, want it like that? (*Singing*) My kitty dances tango tango tango. Is grandmother odd?

Höskuldur Yes.

Lísa Your hair's so beautiful. Let's play a game!

Brúna I'm trying to talk to you.

Mikael Brúna, she doesn't hear anything anyone says.

Lísa The first one to talk has to keep quiet for what's left of the evening! One...

Brúna Mikael and I made a decision.

Lísa Two...

Brúna Mom! You're so fucking embarrassing.

Lísa All be quiet on three!

They fall silent.

Brúna We ...

Lísa (interrupting) You lose! Hahaha.

Brúna We're going to...

Lísa By a landslide!

Mikael Listen to her!

Brúna We're going to Thailand.

Silence.

Lísa (*laughing*) To punish me?

Brúna You won't believe it, but I'm going for me.

Lísa You too?

Mikael We three.

Lísa You mean "we four."

Brúna No, mom, just three.

Lísa, What about your wife?

Silence.

Brúna We're going to separate.

Lísa Does she know?

Brúna Not yet.

Lísa Not yet.

Brúna Don't you understand me?

Lísa No.

Brúna Thanks.

Lísa For what?

Brúna For not stopping me.

Lísa I'll just let the police deal with it. You don't have a bean, Mikki, and you're probably using your wife's card. And after she rings when half-a-million króna are taken late in

the evening and you do not answer, she will call the police. You'll probably be at the candy isle at Duty Free at Leifsstöð International when you're arrested for trying to steal a child or, should I say, two children.

Brúna But I would be arrested for something I'd decided by myself, for myself. I would grin from ear to ear in the police car because it would absolutely be my fault, I alone would be responsible because I alone had made the choice. Yes!

Mikael Nobody's getting arrested.

Lísa's phone rings.

Brúna Don't answer that! You're talking to me. Mom, you're talking to me!

Lísa *(answers the phone)* Lísa.

Mikael *(on his phone)* I need a taxi at Vallhólmi 23.

Brúna Is everyone going to be on the phone?

Lísa Why not?

Brúna Because I'm saying goodbye to you, mom.

Lísa First, I have to introduce you to this woman. *(On the phone)* Forgive the hullabaloo, I'll let you in.

Höskuldur opens the door for Kristín. Silence strikes the group.

Kristín Are you playing statues or ...?

Mikael *(to Kristín)* You fucking cow.

Kristín Hi. I should have just called, I thought you were alone, Lísa.

Mikael *(to Kristín)* No, sorry, it's just this whole thing has been hard on me, but I'm right, and if I can, I'd like to call you sometime and chat just as often as you like. I can voice call you, it's free of charge.

Brúna Hold on, hello there, Brimrún, and no, we're not playing statues.

Kristín I need to vomit.

Mikael I forgive you, my Stina.

Lísa Now I need to vomit.

Kristín Oh, I should have just called.

Mikael We'll reserve a table, I'll wear a suit ...

Kristín Dad made the charge earlier.

Brúna What charge?

Mikael *(to Lisa)* This is your fault.

Kristín There's four of them, people who work with him, at home right now planning how to put you in prison for a long time.

Mikael Kristín, you don't want to do this to me.

Kristín Dad drives me to work in the morning and we have lunch together and he's going to take me to the cottage this weekend because he doesn't think I can be alone. I'm a daddy's girl. For the first time in my life. And even if I could completely forgive you, Mikael, for being one of the world's greatest assholes, and you're a crazy woman, and whomever you are ...

Brúna Brimrún.

Kristín Oh, god, maybe you're worst off. Yes, I would totally help you and would completely sacrifice myself or, you know ... Except that Dad and me went today and got ice cream.

Mikael I'll give you an icecream machine!

Kristín He's crazy. I thought he might have had a stroke but he's going to throw you in prison, Mikael. And he starts crying when he talks about you, and then I start crying, not because of you, because you're such a loser, but because he's crying.

Brúna What is this woman talking about?

Mikael Eating ice cream and crying.

Kristín I can't give this up, he needs to formally accuse you and I hope he'll do well because I am with Daddy in this.

Mikael Damned bloody dried up cunt.

Kristín Mikael. You were right to start. You should have killed me.

Mikael So you're going kill me? A judgment like this, a charge like this, people talk about it endlessly, I'll be in prison forever. I'll never become a lawyer...

Kristín Mikael. You don't even have a high school diploma!

Lísa Kristín.

Kristín Yes.

Lísa Good for you. Good luck.

Lísa leads Kristina to the front door.

Kristín Thanks. *(She goes)*

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Mikael That fucking okay with you, Lísa?

Brúna What's happening?

Lísa Your travel companion has been charged with rape so you'll probably both be arrested at Leifsstöð airport.

Brúna *(to Mikael)* I know how we can do this.

Lísa You definitely haven't caught on to the difference in being with a man and being with a woman. You're not allowed to mention that they drink. You sometimes wake up in a pisswet bed and have to believe them when they claim to have spilled water. And then they may still be drunk and ask you to suck them off. I doubt your pediatrician will do that.

Brúna If I don't get started on this, I'll just get more remorseful. And you know, Mikael, if you did any of this, I don't care. I like being with someone who is guilty and I would *so much* like to escape with you. You get me to talk and talk and talk, Mikael, it's like I can shovel into you everything that's within me and you'll take it. I look at you, I just talk, and talk and...

Mikael And maybe it's time to shut up for a moment. Lísa, you had supposed to fix this!

Brúna Mom. *(Short silence)* We'll leave Höskuldur behind.

Lísa Have you gone totally insane?

Brúna Mom. You'll be with him most days when his mom is working. I'd be said to have gone to find myself, everyone understands that sort of thing.

Mikael walks to the bathroom, takes out his penis, pisses and sighs loudly. Brúna and Höskuldur look at him admiringly. Lísa sits.

Höskuldur Grandmother.

Lísa Yes

Höskuldur Why is the bathroom in the kitchen? Why are all the doors shut up?

Brúna Because your grandmother must have things closed off. She has never been able to let anyone in. Because your grandmother protects herself from those who love her. Because your grandmother starves you. Your grandmother makes you thirst for love and recognition. Like a dried-out potato doesn't nourish anyone.

Lísa My sweet Höskuldur.

Höskuldur I just asked.

Lísa Don't you need a lift?

Brúna Ha?

Lísa Don't you need a lift to the airport? What route will you take? Answer me!

Brúna To the airport and then by plane.

Lísa Don't you have to take a bus first?

Brúna Well, yes, the four.

Lísa Everyone aboard. (*Lísa tries to get them to sit like on a bus but they don't*) All aboard! Being with my Mikael. (*Lísa pretends to drive a bus*) No need for seatbelts.

Brúna Drive carefully!

Lísa Mom won't get into an accident. And the bus, it's full of gauzes and cheesecloths. (*Lísa flings potatoes first at Mikael, then Brúna and finally Höskuldur*) And mom is stuck in her seat, mom can't get away and just drives.

Höskuldur Grandma, you can stop now.

Lísa Bruuuuum. Bruuuuum. And my bus costs nothing because I'm mom and mom is a faucet full of water and mom is a pantry full of food and mom ...

Höskuldur Grandma. Are you there?

Lísa (*hesitates*) Yes.

Mikael (*stands up*) Brúna, the cab's almost here.

Brúna (*stands up*) Lísa, we're going now...

Lísa It doesn't work like this.

Mikael What?

Lísa You cannot end things this way. This must be a start. My Höskuldur, fetch the axe.

Höskuldur obeys his grandmother. Lísa gets slowly to her feet with the ax, but then rushes at the drywall that has been nailed across a door and rips it apart. Brúna's child room and Mikael's teenage room can be seen. Yellow light streams out. Brúna walks in through the doorway of her room and looks around.

Brúna My old room... You're kidding. God, surely no one has been in here for 20 years.

Lísa I was in here this morning. I wash the bedding twice a month and I dust every other day and scrub the other. Same with your room, Mikael. And in Kosovo, I thought of you first every day and talked to you in my mind.

Mikael You're lying.

Brúna goes into the room and comes back with a plait of human hair.

Lísa Then I started calling you into being in the little girls.

Brúna *(grabs fistfuls of hair, some of it braided)* What is this?

Lísa The girls in the camp usually didn't have names so when no one saw I baptized them Brúna and they answered to their name and followed mamítsa. I changed you and nursed you. We celebrated your birthday. I baked pancakes, I don't remember why I had a pancake pan. Ten girls and I together for your birthday party. See, here are some pictures.

Lísa opens the suitcase and takes out a photo album.

Brúna Who took the pictures?

Lísa Brúna number three or Brúna seven, they were so artistic, like you, had such a good eye.

Mikael comes out of his room in an old sweater by himself and with winner's medal from pee-wee-soccer around his neck.

Mikael Did you also cut hair off the boys?

Lísa The boys were all close-cropped.

Brúna What did you do exactly?

Lísa At first I just took some hair, then I sometimes cut off locks. I gathered up all the hair when the Brúnas died, and they finally understood that, my bosses. I had started calling

them Brúna in the medical records. And they sent me home. But I got to have your hair, Brúna, you see, it's like Höskuldur's hair. Don't you want to touch it, Brúna? Touch your hair, Brúna.

Brúna No, no.

Lísa AmIi just a bit crazy now? Well, now, hahaha. You are completely ...

Mikael Brúna, the taxi is waiting. Matter of fact, it's a real car with a real steering wheel and everything. Your mom is just confusing you. Well, she baptized some kids in your name, but she left us, left me with my dad which is an awful thing, but you were left with your grandmother and grandpa which was, you know, an atrocity.

Lísa *(hands Höskuldur his phone)* My Höskuldur... connect me.

Höskuldur shows her the phone.

Lísa So I'm on Facebook and everyone can see?

Höskuldur Yes.

Lísa *(talking into the phone)* Dear friends on Facebook and people in the media. And my beloved Brúna.

Mikael Don't do this.

Lísa Today, Kristín Kristjánsdóttir formally accused my former stepson Mikael Ólafsson of rape. Mikael is a confused man and in a bad way and needs to take responsibility. But this, on the other hand, is not his fault. When Mikael was fifteen, I, his stepmother, fell in love with him. I have never before or after known such a lovely boy, gentle, sensitive and understanding. No one had ever listened to me like Mikki and nobody had ever loved me like he loved me. But he wasn't as mature as I had hoped, maybe he was just like all teens younger than they seem. And shortly after we began having sex, he changed, hardened, and then his dad found out about us and I fled to the war in Kosovo. Mikael had become a different person. It is clear as day that Mikael has mitigating circumstances, the force I used on him. I will return my nursing license to the Medical Director and my Order of the Falcon goes to anyone who wants to take it. It'll hang it

outside here in the redcurrant bush. It's not like it goes well with anything. Sometimes a person is just a bit guilty.

Höskuldur Come.

Mikael I never meant any of this, Lísa. I would never have done anything, I'd never have said anything, you know that. You're totally insane, you just interpret things, you just ...

Lísa I'm just free of you now.

Mikael Are you going to throw me out?

Lísa You have no right to be here.

Mikael How can you say that?

Lísa I'm not your mom.

Mikael Shut up.

Lísa I'm not your mom.

Mikael Don't say that!

Lísa I'm not your mom... but Mikael ...

Mikael What?

Lísa I still want to know you. But you have to grow up.

Mikael Brúna.

Brúna Yes.

Mikael Brúna, come on, let this sick shitty cunt rot here in this filthy bedsit. Come on!

Brúna doesn't move.

Mikael Brúna, come on.

Höskuldur We're not coming.

Mikael rushes at Höskuldur, but Brúna steps into his path.

Mikael Get yourselves into the car, right now!

Brúna Or what?

Mikael storms out and slams the door behind him.

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Lísa, Brúna and Höskuldur are standing on stage. Lísa's phone beeps, vibrates, rings. Lísa takes her ax and cuts the phone in half.

Brúna You went to Kosovo.

Lísa Yes

Brúna Not because children in war are so much more grateful than Icelandic greedy-guts?

Lísa No

Brúna Or because I'm so normal and boring?

Lísa No

Brúna You just fell for some boy?

Lísa And I was not big enough to handle it.

Brúna You didn't find it easy to leave me?

Lísa No

Brúna You fled.

Lísa Yes.

Brúna You didn't want to leave.

Lísa I wanted to stay.

*Brúna falls on her knees in front of Lísa and screams her life and soul's pain into Lísa's abdomen.
Brúna's phone rings and she answers.*

Brúna *(into the phone)* Yes.

Brúna turns on the speaker and puts the phone down.

Mikael *(from the phone)* Can she hear?

Brúna Yes.

Mikael Can she hear how it's all quiet here?

Lísa Are you back home?

Mikael Yes, nothing to be heard here.

Lísa No, Mikael, it's quite alright, the apartment's quiet.

Mikael But then when I open the balcony door.

Winds moan over the phone.

Lísa Go back inside, Mikael!

Mikael This, Höskuldur, this is what it is to be a prince, it's more blustery than one thinks.

Lísa Show Höskuldur how responsible you are and go back in.

Mikael I don't want to be alone ... *(the wind whines)* The last few seconds with my love are good, the last few seconds he was with his love, that sounds great.

Lísa Mikael.

Brúna Mikki, no.

Mikael Stay with me while I die, I won't be as afraid.

Lísa Everyone dies alone but ...

Mikael Not a prince like me, I ... *(The noise of the wind falls silent)* You have to come here, to me, Lísa.

Lísa Are you back inside?

Mikael Yes. Come. We can finally be together. You owe it to me, Lísa.

Lísa Mikael, I ...

Höskuldur breaks the phone apart with the ax. A feather from the peace dove flutters to the ground. Silence. Lísa sits in the center of the stage.

Lísa You know, being alone, it's fine. Alone.

Brúna You're not alone. We're here now.

Lísa But I mean, tomorrow I'll be alone.

Brúna Not if Höskuldur and I come.

Lísa Why would you come?

Brúna Because you'll invite us.

Lísa For a meal?

Brúna dresses Höskuldur in his clothes.

Brúna For example. For example, lamb chops.

Lísa And potatoes.

Höskuldur And potatoes.

Lísa But Brúna, maybe we'll just argue and slam doors and you'll leave and...

Brúna Maybe? I guarantee we'll fight and slam doors and I'll storm out before we eat the damn potatoes.

Lísa And then?

Brúna A few days later, we'll try it all over again.

Lísa And what next?

Brúna So we try again.

Lísa And then?

Brúna Again.

Lísa And then again.

Brúna disappears through the door. Höskuldur hesitates.

Höskuldur Lísa. Ma'am.

Lísa (*standing up*) Yes.

Höskuldur You're beautiful when you're standing.

Fade to black.

Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson's award winning plays have been featured at Festival d'Avignon, La Mousson d'été and during Island, terre de théâtre at Théâtre 13 in Paris. In January 2020 his play *Helgi Comes Apart* was a part of the 2020 Nordic Spirit Festival in Chicago. In October the Teatr Dramatyczny in Warsaw will perform a reading of Tyrfingur's *The Potato Eaters* which will also be a part of the final event of Fabulamundi in Rome. Toneelgroep Oostpool has bought the rights to that same play in The Netherlands. Tyrfingur's plays have been translated into Dutch, Italian, French, Polish, German and English.

Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson was born in 1987 and grew up in the small town of Kópavogur, Iceland where all his plays take place. He studied at the Iceland University of the Arts, Goldsmiths University of London and Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts.

Tyrfingur's first play *Grande* was his graduation piece from the Art Academy and earned him recognition in Reykjavík and a nomination to Gríman, the Icelandic Theatre Award. Two years later *Blue Eyes* premiered at the Reykjavík City Theatre where Tyrfingur was made resident playwright.

Tyrfingur has received seven Gríma nominations and won the award once and is now up for the Play of the Year for *Helgi Comes Apart*. In the fall of 2018 *The Potato Eaters* were nominated for the Cultural Awards (Menningarverðlaun DV). He has taught at both The Iceland Academy of the Arts and the University of Iceland.

Blue Eyes (Bleus) was given a staged reading at the Avignon festival in July 2018 during a forum dedicated to contemporary writings. *Bleus* was also performed at La Mousson d'été in France in August 2019.

The Potato Eaters received five star reviews, with critic Jakob S. Jónsson naming Tyrfingur as Iceland's preeminent playwright. *The Potato Eaters* were featured at Théâtre 13 in Paris during the festival on contemporary Icelandic playwriting called Island, terre de théâtre in April 2019. In September *The Potato Eaters* will be read at the final event of the Fabulamundi project. And in October 2020 the Drama Theatre of Warsaw (Teatr Dramatyczny) in Warsaw will perform a reading of *The Potato Eaters* as well.

His play *Helgi Comes Apart* premiered at The Reykjavík City theatre on the 17th of January 2020 to raving reviews: "Chekov is fine and Bulgakov is fine, but they do not raise the audience's blood pressure. Tyrfingur's work does." *Helgi Comes Apart* was featured at the 2020 Nordic Spirit Festival in Chicago in February.

Blue Eyes and *Helgi Comes Apart* were performed online by the ensemble of The Reykjavík City Theatre in April 2020.

Tyrfingur's next play *Seven Fairytales about Shame* will premiere on the big stage of The National Theatre of Iceland in April 2021.

Tyrfingur Tyrfingsson lives in Amsterdam.

www.tyrfingsson.is