**Summer doesn’t last all year anymore**

by Katrin Ottarsdóttir

English translation by Marita Thomsen

She lets herself get sucked into the north wind leaning against the house, hissing in through the valve in the attic, moaning. The brutal norther, the wind of her kin.

She and her hands are in the bathroom. The cabinet door sticks. Sliding door. Her fingertips redden. The door slides open, reluctantly, noisily. On purpose. The sound of the cabinet door is crucial, both mum and dad have to hear it, need to hear it; they’re cast in this play. Unwittingly. Her play.

She takes one of the sanitary pads, they’re piled up in the cabinet in orderly white stacks. Like dried klipfish. Or halibut, as dad often says. Teasing.

The needle is poised between her teeth. Sharp, long. Her lips half-parted, naturally red, her own lipstick, congenital red. Blood tinted.

One hand places the pad on a thigh, the other takes the needle, jabs it in the soft bit of the thumb tips, first one, then the other, blood drips on the pad. Neat beads. But not enough of them, never enough.

Fingers wander down the naked thighs, down to the knees, wavering, find the softest spots around there, the needle pushes into the skin, into the tissue, the fingers press, blood trickles, the pad absorbs. She knows how life-giving the red fluid can be, her sixteen-year-old sap.

Her thumbs disappear in between her red lips, the tongue licks the last blood drops, sucks them, reaches all the way down to the knees to lick them clean. And the lips. Painstakingly. The blood pounds in her lips. At least that’s what it feels like.

She looks at her slender hands, her long fingers, they’re so nimble, the skin so pale. Her young-girl hands not yet marked by the scuffs of life, as her godmother, her *gumma*, always says about her own. They’ve probably also washed more clothes than most, and wrung more rags.

She studies her nails. Short, some a little bitten, others chipped, nothing like her mum’s elegant ones, long – sharp and manicured, perfect for clawing dad arms. Not her, she couldn’t care less about her nails, filing and trimming and varnishing, softening cuticles. She leaves that to the older ones. Her hands are hers.

*Neglected nails are unattractive. Unladylike.*

That’s one line she often gets from her mother, who mercifully has stopped smearing that awful, bitter concoction on her nails meant to make her stop biting them and sucking her thumb.

Someone is breathing outside the door, out on the prickly Heuga Lux carpet, pig’s bristles on asphalt, stinging dark brown. She gets up off the toilet lid, flushes, muffling the sound of the breathing mother prone to peeping through the keyhole. She always has to cover it with something. Today it was the woollen jumper gumma knitted for her.

Mum said when she saw the jumper that gumma doesn’t have much else to do on the long winter evenings up in the dark north, that gumma isn’t as keen on playing solitaire as her gran down south. As far as she’s concerned nobody needs be bothered if they don’t know how to or like to knit, but that’s impossible to tell her mum. As for her, she neither wants nor intends to ever know how to knit anything at all. Or do cross-stitch.

She never hangs a towel in front of the keyhole. Mum might think that she put it there on purpose to hide something. The jumper covering the hole is probably interpreted by mum as hitched on the door handle, because it’s far too warm to be on the loo in all that wool, and the door is right next to the toilet. She has to think like that, always stay a few steps ahead. Ahead of everyone.

She hurries to wrap loo paper around the bloody pad, stuffs it into the bin bag with the other pads – orange bag – ties the bag, shoves it behind the toilet. Strange that her mum should want such a garish colour in the toilet, the palette in here is otherwise so tranquil, slate blue and grey, the colours of the loo and sink. Maybe the bag gets to lie there in all its orangeness, so it’ll remind mum to check what gets put in it.

She squeezes the needle into a minute crack between the toilet waste pipe and the floor, opens the tap, all the way, even though she knows mum doesn’t like it. The spray is a bother. Stains.

She rubs and rubs the soap into her hands, while she studies the pale face in the mirror, the slate-blue eyes. Serious almonds behind the lenses in her glasses, the size of coke bottle bottoms. Tortoise shell goggles in the middle of the round face, with features broader than most girls she knows. The nose that looks like one of her grandfather in Suðuroy’s seed potatoes. The mouth with the deep Cupid’s bow, the mouth that knows how to laugh, but is even better at being serious. Suspicious. Blood-filled lips, not broad, make the skin even paler, the skin with no scuff, the skin without even a pimple to dot the ‘i’s. She sticks her tongue out at herself, can’t bear what she sees, while bearing it very well. She turns off the tap, pulls on the jumper, which droops baggy and wide on her body. Long-limbed, skinny.

She jiggles the key, opens the door. Mum eyes her with suspicion, up and down. She smiles at mum, intends to go to her room. Mum won’t let her, follows her, positions herself in the doorway.

‘do you think you own this house do you think you can come and go as you please…’

‘No, I don’t. We’ve just been set so much homework for tomorrow.’

‘I hear you young lady but don’t forget about dusting in here too you’re not lodging at a hotel…’

‘No, I know, mum.’

‘don’t you think you’re worth so much more than your mother just because you’re in upper secondary school…’

‘No, I don’t, mum.’

But the mother can’t hear her, because just then the bedroom door slams and the mother stomps out into the kitchen.

She stays stock still right behind the door, back straight, at a loss for a moment, why is she even standing here, she’s forgotten all about her homework.

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Mum comes scampering towards her. Happy in her psyche. Far too happy. Behind her the psychological glass doors swing, the green bag swings too and is just as giddy. Now they’re going home to daddy. Mum pants with joy. On the way home mum offers to get off when a hill is too steep, up or down. Nothing is impossible.

She ought to be happy too, share in the joy, she knows that, but a disquiet always comes over her when her mother is as overjoyed as she is now, happier than everyone else. She can’t shake the feeling that something ominous looms. Something inescapably unsettling. As per usual. At the very core of the elation.

She knows not to ask how it went with the medicine-man of the mind

They drive. Mum doesn’t care if anyone sees them. Not right now. The ride home on the bright red Puch goes smoothly, eerily smoothly, all the way home to their driveway.

Mum runs up the stairs, into the kitchen to dad. She knows that he’s there waiting, rocking back and forth, ready with the hot cuppa, always ready. Patisseries from Frants’ Bakery.

Mum blows dad a kiss, lands giggling on her own chair, in breathless excitement. They wait, she and her father.

‘the psychologist says there’s nothing wrong with me on the contrary I’m probably more normal than most if everybody were as strong as resilient as I am then all would be well with the world as he said when I left and he also commented on my chic bag…’

The mother laughs. Loud. Tense. Winks. At the father. At the daughter.

‘it’s beyond me why you keep insisting that I’m sick in the head mad crazy…’