

“Hello!” Havard shouts. “Hello, Emil?” He is in the living room. I hear him move the bottles on the table, then open one of them, probably the whisky. “Is anyone at home?” he calls out. I hear the seal tear and the metallic sound when the cap is screwed off; I can hear it clearly because there is no real wall between the bedroom and the living room, just a partition through which one can hear almost everything.

“Not bad,” he says.

Now he is sniffing it. I wait for him to take a swig, to hear the splash from the fifteen-year-old whisky when the bottle is tipped up, but I don’t hear anything like it; instead he slams the bottle down on the table and the next moment his shoes echo on the hall floor.

“Are you there, Emil?” he says, as if he knows quite well that I am hiding in here and am only waiting for the right moment to come out and surprise him.

I lift the dark blue sheet up one or two centimeters and my heart nearly stops when I see Havard pause in the space between the bathroom and the bedroom. I can’t see if he is looking in here, but I hear him whistle something and imagine that he is trying to decide in which direction he should go. Then he grows silent, goes into the toilet, and stops in front of the sink, no doubt to look at himself in the mirror.

“He can’t have gone far,” Havard says to his reflection. “The millionaire Emil S. Halldorsson.”

How on earth does he know about the lottery prize? Whom has he been talking to? Who has told him about it? It has to be the reason for this visit, unless it is entirely a coincidence that he calls me a millionaire, which is most unlikely.

“What’s that?” he says, surprised, and the next moment I hear him screw the lid

off something, probably my aftershave, and slap his hand on his cheeks or neck. “Après-rasage,” he says with a hard French accent, and then in English, before he bangs the bottle down on the table beside the sink.

I was right about his shoes. He is wearing the same kind of shoes he wore five years ago: black patent leather with pointed toes that have clearly covered a lot of ground; perhaps these are the shoes he bought in London just after we arrived there together. His trousers, on the other hand, seem to be comparatively new: dark grey Terylene trousers that droop down a little over his shoes when he opens his fly in front of the toilet bowl. I haven’t seen him in trousers like this before.

He starts whistling again as he urinates. I turn my head and push it down into the carpet with as much strength as I can muster.

The air under the bed is terrible. When I bought the flat I got someone to sand the rough surface on the walls, and the resulting dust collected in the carpet, where I suspect most of it still is. It feels as if my head is getting stuffed full with dust, which isn’t exactly what I need in these circumstances.

By lifting the sheet slightly higher I see that Havard is still wearing his anorak. It seems to be torn above the lower right-hand pocket, which might have happened when he climbed in through the kitchen window. When he pulls the anorak back—probably to prevent it from getting in the way of the stream of urine—I can see he is wearing a suit and a light grey shirt, which I must admit goes very well with the suit. My first thought is that he has been shopping in Reykjavik on credit and expects me—who, in his mind, is quite well off at the moment—to help him pay the bills. He stops whistling for a moment, farts,

and sighs happily, and when he starts whistling again I think I recognize “Habenera” from *Carmen*.

It is obvious that he has consumed quite a lot of liquid. He zips up his fly and, without washing his hands, rushes out of the door by grabbing on to the lintel and pulling himself out into the hall. I don’t remember these abrupt movements of his. He seems to be in a hurry, and I begin to hope, feebly, that he will leave soon, perhaps snatch something to take with him and then disappear before I return from the shop or from wherever he has imagined that I have gone. But these hopes are short-lived; he stops suddenly in the hall and comes into the bedroom—my guess is that something caught his eye as he was coming out of the bathroom. He walks straight up to the computer in the corner by the headboard of the bed, just beside my legs.

He sits down at the table; the old wooden chair creaks and his nylon anorak crinkles. I lie dead still and don’t dare to lift the sheet. Havard presses one key on the keyboard and then seems to stand up from the chair. He takes off his anorak, throws it on the bed, and sits down again.

“Dear Vigdis,” he reads out loud, and continues in a lower voice: “Here I am back from London at last. How are you? Is the hotel busy? You told me the other day that you would be attending some meeting today so I shall just write to you. It was a good trip. I visited Jonas, though he was busy studying for his exams. Then I went to some concerts at Vortex and Pizza Express’ . . . Concerts at Pizza Express! That’s the damn jazz place he was always trying to drag me along to! You’re such a pussy, Emil!” ■