One For All

For everything there is a season,
and a time for every matter
under heaven: a time to be born,
and a time to die.
Ecclesiastes, chapter 3

1

23 June 2025

The accident happened a few minutes past seven on Monday morning. Just before that, Kikki Tomren had sat down on the glass veranda. She used to start the day with a cup of coffee whilst watching the village come to life. The sun had long since risen from the sea, the sky was cloudless and the sea had taken on a silvery sheen. Her house was one of the eight on Fjellvegen, right at the top of the village. At the end of the road was a large car park. From there, one could walk in several directions up the mountain. From the top of Losvikfjellet, there was a view of the coastal landscape: islands, skerries, lighthouses, mountains and rocky outcrops, narrow and wide sounds, bridges linking the islands together. And behind them, in the distance on the mainland, she could make out the jagged Sunnmøre Alps.

Three years ago, Kikki had moved to Losvika and started as headteacher at the primary school after having worked in several places and never really settled down. But when she arrived in Losvika, it felt different, as if she'd been on her way here for a long time. The first year, she'd rented a ground-floor flat in a detached house. When the widow who owned this old house died, she had bought it and moved in; it wasn't just about owning her own home or moving from a small flat to a house. It was a bigger choice. She wanted to stay. She was too happy to move on, and too unhappy to cope with yet another life change.

She stood up and placed a vinyl record on the old record player. She'd inherited both it and the LPs when she bought the house, and immediately Roger Whittaker's warm voice filled the room. *Everybody talks about a new world in the morning. I myself don't talk about a new world in the morning. New world in the morning, that's today*.

Five small boats followed one another through the passage between the two piers down at the harbour. She knew the names of the boats, knew the names of their owners, who they were married to, and who their children or grandchildren were. She had settled in, become like most people here. She didn't lock the door when she went to the shop, and it had happened more than once that she hadn't locked it when she went to bed either. Just think, she who had found it so hard to trust anyone.

When she first arrived here, she had no connection to the sea. Now she had her own little boat with an outboard motor that she used to take out fishing. And she didn't miss Trondheim for a moment; she hadn't been there for many years. Leaving had also been a necessary choice.

A large lorry was driving along in Stranda. It was a strange name people used for the only road into the village. It was actually part of Losvikvegen, and there was no beach there at all. For almost two kilometres, there was just a rocky shore on one side, and the highest mountain on the whole island rising steeply on the other.
Storenuten lay right between the two villages of Losvika and Flatbygda. Losvika was on the outermost edge, with its back to the open sea, and at the top of Losvikfjellet the cliffs plunged into the sea.

Her gaze sought out the steep slope high up towards the summit of Storenuten. Last winter there had been so many landslides there that traffic in Stranda had been regulated by warning lights, and on some days the road had been closed. Since then, geologists had been monitoring the mountain section they called Faderen, *the Father*. The movement in the mountain had settled down after the winter, but people were anxious that when autumn arrived with rain and frost, the whole of Faderen might collapse and create a tidal wave.

The lorry turned onto Hamnevegen. The shoreline at Losvika was shaped like a horseshoe, with one end where Stranda began and the other beyond the hotel, at Storeneset. Along the base of the horseshoe lay the harbour with its quays, small boat harbours, boathouses, the Smaragden administration building and the hotel. There were a few houses on Hamnevegen and up Mallabakken, but most of them, including the campsite, were further up the village.

Just as Kikki had planned, the lorry was heading for the Grande Hotel, which had been completed just over a year ago. It was situated a short distance beyond the jetties, not far from the turning point where the path out to the lighthouse at Storneset began. The hotel was built of slate and glass and glistened in the morning sun. The owner, Rune Grande, lived in the village and was one of the wealthiest people in the municipality. A billionaire, it was said.

Kikki stood up, coffee cup in hand, as her neighbour across the road, Mattis Brekke, emerged from the old building that had once been a garage. With his hands in his pockets, he strolled across the courtyard with his dog Balder, passing a couple of car wrecks before climbing the steps to the house and sitting down on the bench outside the front door. He was a few years older than her, probably past forty. She had only spoken to him a few times; he was the taciturn sort. It had been a long time since she'd seen his father; he had emphysema, she'd been told. In the courtyard there were also two gleaming American cars that he was constantly polishing. Otherwise he did very little, being on disability benefit as he was.

Further down, she saw that Else was on her way to Kajsa Coren's house. They were childhood friends. Kajsa had lived here when she was little, and a few years ago she had inherited the house from an aunt. Kajsa lived in Asker, and Else looked after the house for her. She and her family used to come here a few times a year, but it had been a long time since they'd last been here. At the shop, she'd heard rumours that Kajsa's partner was seriously ill.

A light hit the side window of the glass veranda, and she saw a red car drive out from the neighbouring house. Stig Voldsund was rarely seen. Where on earth was he going so early in the morning, she wondered.

It wasn't long before Else came out of Kajsa's house and strolled unhurriedly over to the little supermarket she ran.

Her wristwatch showed five past seven. Kikki leaned forward slightly and glanced down to her left. You could set your watch by Petter Nedrelid, and there he was, rushing out the door. Just as he got into the car, his wife appeared. She shouted and waved to get him to wait. She handed him something through the window before he drove quickly out of the driveway and headed down Mallabakken towards the sea. He was probably off to work; he was the one who ran the restaurant at the hotel. How Margareth put up with being married to such a bloke!

Kikki watched Margareth, who had stayed behind to watch her husband go.

Petter and Margareth's house was at the top of Mallabakken, which ran steeply down, straight as a string for sixty or seventy metres before meeting Hamnevegen. Petter was driving at breakneck speed, as if he'd put his foot down hard on the accelerator.

There were houses with fences and hedges on both sides of the road. Kikki gasped when she saw the car start to swerve from side to side. Right at the bottom, it skidded off the road and hit a stone wall, rolled over, crashed into a boathouse on the shore and came to rest on its roof.

Kikki stared, then took a sip of coffee and slowly sat down in her chair.

It was now two minutes past seven. First, a man came running in his dressing gown from the nearest house; soon more appeared. Kikki grabbed the binoculars sitting on the windowsill. One man was probably trying to alert the emergency services; he was talking on his mobile, whilst two others were frantically pulling at the car doors. Another man arrived; he was carrying a sledgehammer and smashed the driver's side window. His entire upper body disappeared into the car. The others stood motionless, waiting. After a moment, he pulled himself out and shook his head. Kikki moved the binoculars. Margareth was still standing motionless on the steps, her arms hanging straight down.

'New world in the morning never comes,' claimed Roger Whittaker.

It wasn't long before the ambulance's blue lights came into view on the bridge from the municipal centre of Vågen. The lights disappeared as the ambulance drove through Flatbygda on the other side of the island, only to reappear beneath the mountain in Stranda. As it turned onto Hamnevegen, she spotted the blue lights of a police car too.

Mattis had stood up; he was leaning forward with his hands on his knees, staring towards the scene of the accident. When the men down there remained inactive, he slumped back onto the bench. The police car had almost reached the site when Kikki placed her coffee cup on the windowsill and stood up. She put her hand to her chest and took a deep breath.

Margareth had gone inside. She was going to visit her later. Margareth needed her now.

2

Margareth Nedrelid stood in the middle of the living room floor, clinging to the back of a chair as she peered out through the large panoramic windows, her heart pounding. She should do something, run down to Petter's car, scream, cry. But it felt as though her body were made of plasticine; she wasn't sure her legs would carry her.

She had been drawn to Petter the moment she met his brown, lively eyes more than 20 years ago. He claimed he was a descendant of a six-year-old boy who survived the Rotterdam shipwreck in 1629, which was why he looked so southern. The ship had been en route from Spain to England, but had drifted northwards in a violent storm and ended up among the islands here before running aground at Kirkeholmen off Losvika. There were over 200 people on board, but only one woman and the little boy survived.

Margareth went down to the cellar, opened the door to the pottery workshop, stood there breathing in the earthy scent of clay before walking over to the workbench. She opened a plastic box and took out a lump of clay, sat down on the stool, slapped the lump onto the potter's wheel and moistened her hands with water, leaning forward. Working with clay always calmed her.

Should she wake Fia, tell her what had happened? No, that could wait; she couldn't face it. Fia had been furious with her last night. And what could she say? Was Petter dead?

3

Asker, the same day

Kajsa took a cup of coffee with her and went in to see Karsten. When he'd been diagnosed nearly four years ago, he'd made sure to plan his own flat, an extension to their house in Asker. There he had all sorts of aids and space for the carers who took turns looking after him around the clock.

He was sitting in his large wheelchair, and she knew he would have smiled if he could have when he spotted her. "There you are," said the voice on the speech synthesiser.

Karsten's favourite assistant, Karl-Magnus, a burly man with large tattoos, stood up. "I'll sit in the living room," he smiled.

The evenings were Kajsa and Karsten's time alone. She rested her cheek against his and stroked his hair. When she sat up, she saw that his gaze was fixed on the screen in front of him; he controlled it with his eyes, and after a moment the voice said what it said every evening: "I love you, you know that?"

Every time she heard that metallic, unfamiliar voice, she had to force herself to think that inside that sick body was the same Karsten as before.

– "Yes, I know," she smiled, "and you know that I love you."

His eyes sought hers, held them for a few seconds before he turned his gaze back to the screen. "Where's Jonas?"

– "He's in the basement playing computer games with Niklas," she replied.

– "I hardly ever see him."

– "It's just because he's busy with homework, training, friends and all the things 11-year-olds get up to," she said. "The evening news is about to start," she added, switching on the TV.

After the first main stories, a picture appeared on the wall behind one of the newsreaders. Kajsa recognised Losvika before he had said anything about where it was. – The police are investigating a suspicious death in Losvika in Vestøy municipality in Sunnmøre. A forty-year-old man from the village died in a car accident this morning. The man had died instantly.

The report showed amateur footage of the wrecked car, which was lying on its roof and had made a large hole in the wall of a boathouse. The reporter was standing on Hamnevegen with his back to Mallabakken, she saw. He turned halfway round and made a gesture with his hand.

– The car came from the top of this hill and hurtled down at high speed until its journey ended here. The camera panned across the area, and the police cordon came into view. – The car has been towed away, and the police are currently examining the wreck.

As he took a step to the side, a woman in uniform came into the frame.

– "Police Station Chief Nina Garshol, what have you found?"

– "Has Nina moved back to Sunnmøre?" asked Kajsa.

Nina Garshol was wearing the police's light blue shirt. Her short, light hair was slicked back. Her face was serious, her gaze focused; she had a distinct, vertical wrinkle running from the bridge of her nose up into her forehead, which made her look brusque. Nina and Karsten had been colleagues in the Oslo Police for many years. "It's early in the investigation," replied Nina Garshol. "But we are now announcing that we have opened a murder investigation. The accident is linked to the car's brakes failing. This was not due to a technical fault or wear and tear, but because the brakes had been tampered with. Beyond that, there is little else we can say at this stage."

Kajsa quickly realised that Garshol was understating the matter. It wasn't that there was *little* more she could say. There was nothing. She could not disclose the most interesting part – what had been done to the brakes – for the sake of the investigation.

– 'We believe that someone tampered with the brakes between the time it was parked last night and this morning,' she said.

– Do you have any suspects?

– No.

– Do you have any concrete leads?

– Unfortunately, I cannot comment on that.

– What are you doing next?

– We are continuing the technical investigations and are currently conducting the tactical investigation. I would like to emphasise that we wish to get in touch with anyone who may have important information, particularly regarding observations made between 9 pm last night and 7 am this morning. We are interested in any kind of information, and we ask people not to hesitate to contact us.

– Nina's father was the local police chief in Vestøy for many years, the voice from the speaker announced.

– Were there any witnesses to the accident? asked the reporter.

– Only one witness has come forward, but they only saw the crash itself. We have been going door to door in the village today, and no one has seen the car between the house where the driver lived and the place where the accident happened. However, there may be others who have information, people who are not permanent residents, and we urge everyone to contact the police if they have at any time observed the car, or have any other information that may be of interest.

– "Goodness me, who on earth could it be who's died?" exclaimed Kajsa.

She sent a text message to her friend Else in Losvika. It took just half a minute before she received a reply. "It's Petter Nedrelid. How tragic," she said to Karsten.

Both she and Karsten knew who he was, but didn't know him well. Kajsa had met his wife Margareth a few times at the knitting club at Else's. A slender woman with long, brown hair who didn't take up much space compared to the other chatty Sunnmøre ladies.

– "I've been thinking about Losvika," came the voice from the speech synthesiser.

– "Have you?" said Kajsa, surprised.

– "Yes, it's been two years since you were there."

– "How time flies, I hadn't thought of that," she said lightly.

Usually there was a pause between each reply, but now the voice just carried on. He'd written down what he wanted to say in advance, as he sometimes did.

– When I'm no longer here, I think you should take Jonas and go to Losvika. He loves being there; it'll be good for both of you.

He took his eyes off the screen and looked at her.

It was welling up behind her eyelids. She suddenly felt drained and raw. The warmth in Karsten's gaze made the shell crack like a soap bubble. She rested her head against his chest so he wouldn't see the tears.

– Shall we go to bed? I want to lie next to you, she said.

Slowly she stood up and saw Karsten blink once in reply. Yes.

She opened the door to the living room and called out to

Karl-Magnus.

Karsten's carer was there in a moment. Kajsa helped him lift Karsten from the chair and into bed.

Soon Karsten won't be here anymore.

The thought had been with her every day since he was diagnosed. She herself had survived breast cancer, but there was no cure for ALS, and the certainty of the outcome was painful and exhausting for them all to live with. Lately, a new thought had crept in: It was time for him to be released. For the children to be released. For her to be released.

She snuggled up to him, placed her hand against his cheek and closed her eyes.

4

25 June

He knew a great deal about the people in the village—things others were unaware of. About the happy ones, those who struggled with life and with one another, those who had little to spare, and those whose beautiful facades concealed dark rooms within. Summer was not his season; the nights were too bright. But he didn't have far to go, and he could walk across the fields; he didn't have far to go. Besides, it was two o'clock in the morning; everyone was asleep in this village with all the self-satisfied people who lived here. Petter had been one of them. Rich, successful and self-assured. But now he was gone. In death, there was no difference between rich and poor, the successful and those who'd achieved nothing in life.

He put on the mask anyway; he felt different with it on, stronger, braver.

Silently, he inserted the key into the lock of the cellar door, walked up the stairs to the hallway and on into the kitchen before calmly wandering around the house, still wearing the mask.

The lights were on in the hallway and in the kitchen.

In the attic, he went into the bedroom with a double bed, sat on the edge and leaned back, breathing quickly and shallowly.

In the living room, he walked around, stopping in front of a large portrait. The woman in the picture was smiling. He smiled faintly back. The living room contained a mixture of old and new furniture, but the kitchen fittings were new and the lighting modern. The timber walls had a golden hue. In some places, shelves and small niches had been carved out, containing books or old knick-knacks. He ran a finger along the spines of the books and glanced at the titles. On the floor stood a large box of Lego and a box of drawing materials. Amongst the sketchbooks and felt-tip pens was a small toy car, which he picked up and took with him to sit in the wicker chair by the window on the glass veranda. The car was bright red and shiny, but worn on the sides. He held it in his hand the whole time whilst stroking the worn armrest with the other, sitting like that for quite a while before putting the car back in the box. He stopped at the

kitchen door, turned around, stood there for a moment and felt that his head had become lighter, his breathing calmer and the images on his retina had vanished. Then he went the same way out through the cellar.

5

Saturday 12 July

Kajsa and Jonas stood by the railing on the top deck of the ferry. It was the height of summer, mid-July; the waves were choppy with white crests, but the wind ruffling their hair was gentle. “It’ll be lovely to get to Losvika, don’t you think?” said Kajsa, putting her arm around her son’s shoulders.

Karsten died just three days after he’d said she should take Jonas to Losvika when he was no longer there. Had he known the end was so near? Both Jonas and his half-siblings, Anders and Thea, were present when he passed away. The only sound in the room had been that of the ventilator and the monitors tracking his vital signs. When the graph showing his heartbeat became a flat line, the ventilator continued to run. Karsten’s chest rose and fell a few times before the nurse switched it off.

She had tried to stop crying; she didn’t want to break down, not in front of the children.

Jonas had stood completely stiff, staring at his father. Kajsa sat by the bed with her hand against Karsten’s cheek. She turned and reached for Jonas, but he pushed her away and suddenly threw himself over his father’s body, sobbing: It’s not fair! Dad wasn’t supposed to die!

She couldn’t lose control; it was her armour. But when Jonas wrapped his arms around her and shook, and Thea and Anders joined them too, and they stood there in a kind of knot of pain, she let the tears flow anyway and her armour crumbled. But she felt the strength in the embrace and thought that now her children were her shield.

In the weeks that followed, Jonas wouldn’t sleep alone; he lay with her in the double bed and cried himself to sleep every night, and she felt his grief as a physical pain in her own body.

She had mentioned to Jonas that they could go to Losvika during the summer holidays, and the day after the funeral he had asked when they could go.

She herself felt just as exhausted as she had when she suffered from fatigue following her breast cancer treatment. Every task felt like climbing Kilimanjaro. Most

days she sat on the sofa flicking through the TV channels, watching the news, home improvement and reality shows. Or she clicked her way through online newspapers, reading articles that didn't really interest her. Gro Tandstad, with whom she'd made several documentaries after leaving her job as a journalist at Channel 4, had called several times since the funeral. Kajsa hadn't had the strength to answer the phone. Every now and then she thought: What would Karsten have said if he saw me now? She knew full well: Pull yourself together, Kajsa, get a grip on your life.

I can't, Karsten, not yet, she replied to herself.

She saw how Anders and Thea were grieving too, even though Karsten wasn't their father. It moved her, but they were young adults, and both had close friends they could talk to. Thea lived at home; she'd just finished secondary school. In the autumn she was due to start at the School of Journalism, following in her footsteps. Anders was studying at business school and lived in a co-living space in Oslo. The three children organised games or film nights in the basement living room, cooked pizzas or baked buns, and it wasn't just for Jonas's sake, she realised, they were doing it for her too. "You don't have to go through this alone," Anders had said. The compassion in his eyes had almost made her break down. How grown-up he had become. Where had the years gone, he who had only just started school?

It wasn't until five days after the funeral that she'd managed to bring herself to go into Karsten's flat. She'd stood in the doorway, looking at all the appliances, the aids, the wheelchair, the speech machine and the bed. Cognitively, he had been just as he'd been before during these years of illness, just as clear-headed; she'd been able to talk to him, lean on him, ask him for advice. Now he was nothing but ashes.

She had lain down on his bed and cried. Afterwards, she had phoned Karl-Magnus and asked if he could arrange to have all the equipment and aids removed from the flat. She had hired a carpenter and a painter to make alterations whilst they were in Losvika, and in the autumn she was going to rent it out.

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As Kajsa and Jonas drove off the ferry and continued along the road that wound its way along the coast, over bridges and through tunnels out towards the outermost islands, they listened to the afternoon broadcast from Norwegian Broadcasting Møre og Romsdal on the radio.

I will love you by the sea, I will love you in the mountains

Days that come and days that go, life is good in both winter and spring

Here are my roots, here is my home. Here we shall stay, all our days.

She had never heard the song they were playing now before; it was a local band. The voice was soft and rough at the same time. The lyrics hit her like a warm pressure against her chest. She and Karsten had talked about how, once all the children had moved out, they'd spend more time in Losvika, and in the longer term perhaps live here for periods, try a different life.

Karsten had dreamed of buying a sailing boat. Life *had* turned out differently. It had gone completely wrong.

Jonas helped her unload the car. Kajsa paused as she placed suitcases and bags in the bedroom. There was a dent in the duvets. She always used to change the bed linen before they left, making it look neat and inviting for their return. She turned in the doorway and stood there for a moment. How strange; one might almost think something had been placed on the duvets.

Jonas wanted to sleep in her bed, and she stayed with him until he fell asleep. Then she slipped downstairs and went out onto the terrace, breathing in the raw air of earth and sea, and felt a pang of sweet nostalgia. It was quiet in the evening, no sounds of tractors or bleating from the neighbour's sheep. The sky had clouded over and, as she stood there, the first raindrops fell.

In the living room, the basket by the fireplace was full of logs. Karsten always brought in firewood before they left here. He loved lighting the fire, almost regardless of the season. She made herself a cup of tea and sat down in the part of the living room that had been an enclosed glass veranda when her aunt lived here. She turned her chair so she could look out. The house stood high up, and she had a view over a large part of the village across the long slopes down to the sea. A heavy downpour began, but the orange light from the nursery down on the embankment beside the church flickered through the rain as it streamed in sheets down the windows. As she squeezed the tea bag and took it out of the mug, it struck her that something was different. She looked around, but saw nothing that wasn't as it had been before. Yes, there was something.

The chair, wasn't it? She had turned it round to look out. It used to always stand so that she had a view. Now it had been turned towards the living room, whilst the other one was facing the right way. It must have been Else who had moved it. Well, Else could do as she pleased; she who had taken care of the house after Karsten fell ill.

She took another sip, closed her eyes and felt her shoulders relax; there was a special sense of calm in Aunt Agnes's house.

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6

20 July

Kajsa and Jonas woke up to a glorious day in Losvika; the sky was cloudless and it was already over twenty degrees at nine o'clock. It had rained every day for the past week, but now it was perfect weather for swimming, and Else rang to ask if they wanted to come to Kvitsandstranda. It was Sunday and her shop was closed. They fetched their bikes from the cellar and cycled the two kilometres up a gentle slope out of the village towards the south side of the island. On both sides of the road lay flat open countryside only interrupted by marshland once in a while before the landscape rose towards Losviktua on the right and Storenuten, which was even higher, on the left.

We'll see the sea soon, said Jonas eagerly as they approached the top of the hill. Look! There it is.

The road continued gently downhill for a couple of hundred metres to the car park, and far below lay Kvitsandvika.

There's loads of sand this year! exclaimed Jonas enthusiastically.

Kvitsandvika was a large, elongated bay with rocks jutting out into the sea and vast areas of pebbles. The harsher the winter weather, the more of the fine-grained, white sand was washed up from the depths and deposited on Kvitsandstranda among the enormous, black boulders that had lain there since the dawn of time.

Kajsa felt a sudden joy at Jonas's enthusiasm, that he remembered it, how the amount of sand varied from year to year. And she felt her own joy at being here again. It smelled of the open sea. It smelled of childhood.

They left their bikes by the gate, and Jonas hopped and skipped down the sheep track, not stopping until he reached where the grassy slope ended. They found a spot on the sand between the large, black stones, unfolded their sun loungers and beach towels. The summer was never felt in the water out here by the Atlantic, but the breeze was gentle. Jonas wanted to go for a swim, and Kajsa joined him. They swam out to where the seabed began to slope, and they could no longer feel the bottom. A slightly

larger wave came and lifted them outwards. Jonas laughed loudly. His laughter was bright and light. Afterwards, they ate sandwiches and drank coffee and soft drinks. Jonas watched some boys playing boccia with colourful balls. Kajsa recognised a couple of them; they were boys Jonas had played with before. But it had been two years since then, and he seemed shy. After a little while, one of them came over to them.

– Hi, Jonas, do you want to join in?

– Things are going to get better for both of you here, said Else as Jonas immediately stood up.

Kajsa nodded.

– I haven't seen anything in the media about the car crash, or the murder, for a long time. What are people saying?

– It seems as though the police are at a dead end.

– It's always the case that the police know more than they let on. They've probably mapped out Petter's life and checked his digital footprint. They may even have found out that he was in conflict with someone; they may have their suspicions, see possible motives, and might have brought suspects in for questioning, but as long as they don't have evidence or a strong chain of circumstantial evidence, they won't get anywhere.

– That's someone who knows what they're talking about, smiled Else. Perhaps you should look into the case? You've got loads of experience with criminal cases.

Kajsa watched the boys without answering. One of them gave Jonas a high five. She spotted two women walking down from Losviktua. They sat down a short distance away. It was Margareth, Petter Nedrelid's widow, and the headteacher at the school, Kikki Tomren.

- They're friends, said Else. Margareth's daughter is studying in Volda and has a summer job there, so it's good that Margareth has Kikki. She has no other family here. I often see them going for walks together.

Kajsa lay on her back and closed her eyes. The sun was warm, the wind brushed against the bare skin on her arms and legs. She heard Jonas's voice, the boys laughing and shouting, and in the background was the calm, steady murmur of the waves. There was no place in the whole world she loved more than this, whether it was stormy and the waves were foaming as they crashed onto the shore, or on summer days like this when the waves rolled in slowly and caressed the sand.

Karsten was right, she thought. Here I can breathe. Breathe and grieve.

7

20. July

Late in the afternoon, Kajsa, Jonas and Else walked down Mallabakken; they were going to have dinner at the hotel restaurant. There were few traces of the accident, but one of the boathouses had been fitted with a new wall.

The restaurant was on the ground floor with large windows overlooking the guest harbour. Else stopped and exchanged a few words with a man.

– Who was that? asked Kajsa once they'd been shown to a table.

– His name is Johs Kruse. She nodded towards the windows. Do you see that big sailing boat over there? He lives in it, arrived here a couple of months ago, and now he's got a job on a fishing boat.

There were many boats in the guest harbour, and Kajsa noticed a beautiful sloop right in front of the hotel.

It takes guests to Kirkeholmen, Else explained. Petter Nedrelid has renovated the old trading post and runs a summer restaurant there. He certainly saw people coming from far and wide to visit it. Who would have thought Petter would become a successful restaurateur?

– Why not?

– One shouldn't speak ill of the dead, but Petter was something of a troublemaker in his youth, skipping school, caught for both shoplifting and car theft. A youth programme saved him; he trained as a chef, and now he's one of the village's wealthiest residents. Or *was*, anyway.

The restaurant's interior was dominated by concrete, stone and glass, but softened by oak parquet flooring and other light wood elements. The chairs and sofas were burgundy or bottle green, and the overall effect was one of luxury with a modern touch.

The waiter brought the menu, and they ordered a bottle of Crémant.

– They have a fantastic five-course menu, but it might be a bit much, said

Else. The crab risotto is absolutely delicious.

– Then we'll have that, said Kajsa.

Jonas wanted fish and chips. He'd spotted the boys he'd met in Kvitsandvika earlier that day. They were playing volleyball on the new sandy beach next to the hotel, and he went out to join them whilst they waited for their food.

– Can you believe it's been two years since you were here? said Else.

– I've missed it. But tell me, is Petter the only topic of conversation in the shop at the moment?

– Over the last year, the big topic has been Faderen. Last winter, geologists recorded greater movements in the mountain than ever before. People are anxious. What will happen with rain and frost heave this autumn and winter? If the mountain collapses, there's a risk it could create a tidal wave that will hit Losvika.

The waiter brought the wine and poured it into the glasses.

– How are you? asked Else.

– I've been in a state of anticipatory grief for so long, living with the fact that Karsten was slowly and inevitably moving towards the end… and now… now I just feel a huge void.

Kajsa took a deep breath and quickly wiped her eyes with her napkin.

- Sorry, I'm actually quite good at not crying. The last few years would have been much worse, I think, if Karsten hadn't been so composed. He went down to the cellar for three days when he was diagnosed, then he took charge, read everything he could find about the disease, and started planning for the future. He was a realist.

Else picked up her glass. I realise you don't have much to toast, she began, but Kajsa interrupted her.

- Let's toast to friendship. It's lovely to be here, to be with you. To friendship.
- To friendship!

The restaurant was completely full. Else nodded towards a sofa areahere Johs Kruse was sitting with a group of men.

- That's the Thursday Club, men from the village who meet here one Thursday a month.

Kajsa raised her arm and waved to one of them. It was Mattis Brekke. He waved back a little shyly. He was a few years younger than her, but she remembered him from her childhood. She'd often bumped into him in her teens too, when she'd been here on

holiday, after her family had moved away. He'd been in and out of her aunt's house; she'd never married or had children, and had looked after him a lot after he'd lost his own mother when he was little.

Kajsa said that Karsten had had his own circle of friends. It was a whole group of friends and colleagues from the police, who took turns visiting him. They'd been doing so twice a month for the past two years, and they'd taken him on trips both at home and abroad whilst he was still able to manage it.

Else looked thoughtfully towards the bar. Kajsa followed her gaze and saw that she was watching a man who had come in and sat down on a bar stool. He had tattoos on the side of his neck and on the back of his neck.

- Who is he?

Else leaned over the table: It's Stig Voldsund, she said in a low voice. I must say, he certainly isn't one to shy away from coming here.

– How so? Who is he?

– I remember there was a little boy who… She curled her fingers in the air, – 'died in an accident whilst playing' with other children many years ago, a couple of years after you'd moved away from here, in 1992?

– The Lukas case, Kajsa nodded. I only remember it vaguely. Why are you putting that in quotation marks?

– It was Stig who got the blame for Lukas's death. It was never officially stated that it was his fault, but many people know it anyway.

– Wasn't Lukas found up in the woods?

Else nodded. He was from Molde; his family were holidaying at the campsite.

– I know that Mattis was one of the ones playing with Lukas when he died. So Stig Voldsund was in the woods too, but weren't there a whole bunch of them?

– Yes, Rune Grande and Petter Nedrelid were there too. Stig Voldsund hasn't lived here since he was a little boy, but he moved back in April. He was taken into care by child welfare services and placed with a foster family about a year after the tragedy involving Lukas. His parents divorced around the same time; his mother has lived here, but recently moved to Ålesund to be closer to her two daughters and grandchildren. No one knows where his father is. And now Stig has moved back into his childhood home. I don't understand what he's thinking. People are upset. And for

him to turn up here, I have to say... Else took a sip from her glass. – That's asking for trouble.

Kajsa glanced over at him. He had light, short-cropped hair with long fringe and was dressed in a brown leather jacket, jeans and boots. For a moment, he turned and looked straight at her. She looked away. The men in the Thursday Club had also spotted him. They spoke in hushed tones and cast irritated glances in his direction.

The food arrived at the table, and Kajsa fetched Jonas. He wolfed down his fish and chips; he wanted to get back out to his mates. Kajsa and Else had almost finished their risotto when one of the men from the Thursday Club stood up. It was Rune Grande, the hotel owner. He shook off a man who was holding him back and walked decisively over to Stig Voldsund, placed his hand on his shoulder and said something. Voldsund gave an irritated shrug. Grande responded by grabbing hold of his leather jacket and pulling him off the bar stool.

– Get out! he said, pushing him. You're not welcome here.

Stig Voldsund remained standing. The restaurant was completely silent; everyone was watching the scene unfold.

Voldsund took a couple of steps back. – Liar, he said loud enough for everyone to hear before turning on his heel and walking out.

8

26 July

He had the mask tucked under his jacket and zipped it up to his chin as he strolled calmly a short distance across the open land, sloping above the settlement. The fact that he was wearing the mask from *Scream* was a coincidence. He'd found the mask by the roadside. It was perfect; it made him feel strong, invulnerable and unrecognisable.

He knew where the cameras were, one by the front door and one by the stairs leading up to the terrace. The house was built into the sloping terrain above the hotel, a square functionalist block with huge windows. He continued down the grassy slope, keeping to the shadows, stopping when he could see into the kitchen. Rita, the wife of hotel owner Rune Grande, opened a wine cabinet and grabbed a bottle, studied the label, put it back and took out another which she opened and poured into a glass, studying the colour against the light above the large kitchen island. She tasted it and poured some more.

Just then, Rune Grande drove up in front of the house, and not long after, he appeared in the kitchen. His body language was aggressive; he was gesticulating, and it looked as though he was shouting. She said nothing, didn't look at him, just stood there with the wine glass in her hand, shoulders slumped, whilst he continued to shout at her. Suddenly, he snatched the wine glass from her hand and splashed the contents in her face. She flinched and raised her arms protectively in front of her. Grande grabbed hold of her wrists.

He took a few photos with his mobile, switched it to video mode and filmed Grande pushing her backwards against the kitchen island, pulling up her skirt, pulling down her tights, unbuttoning her knickers and pulling down her trousers. His hands gripped her hips, and moments later he saw his bare backside moving rhythmically. When he

was finished, he pulled up his trousers. She slid down from the kitchen island and curled up on the floor. Her shoulders shook, and she buried her face in her hands.

The next house he went to was originally an old house, but there was little to give it away. A new section had been added; there were several bay windows on the façade, both at the front and on the sides. The house had only one camera; it was in the doorbell by the front door. Slowly, he entered the garden on the lower side. He flinched slightly when the living room door opened and quickly pressed himself against the wall on the other side of the corner of the house. After a moment, he peered out cautiously. Fia, Petter and Margareth Nedrelid's daughter, was standing there smoking. Suddenly she turned towards the open veranda door and screamed. – You don't care, I can tell! Her voice cracked on the last word.

Margareth appeared in the doorway. – But Fia, you can't say that.

– Yes, you're glad Dad's dead.

Margareth came out and put her arms around her. – Don't talk like that, come inside now.

Fia pulled away with a sudden movement. Margareth let go of her daughter and went inside while her daughter remained standing there.

9

28 July

Kajsa woke up as a few rays of sunshine brushed her face through a gap in the curtains. Another sunny, warm summer's day. It was half past eight. Had she slept that long? She couldn't remember the last time.

I'm not going anywhere, not in to Karsten to say good morning in a cheerful voice, she thought, and immediately felt a pang of guilt. Because it felt good.

She put the coffee maker on, peered out through the kitchen window whilst she waited for it to finish. A flock of sheep were grazing in the field next door, and a few cows stood outside the neighbour's barn. Mattis Brekke was walking along the road. How is his father doing? she wondered. He'd looked rather frail the last time she'd been here. A magpie came flying by. She followed it with her eyes as it landed in the big tree in the garden.

– Here they go again, Aunt Agnes had said irritably every spring. But she never removed the nest. It's rather nice to see when the chicks turn up, though, even if they do squawk terribly, she had added with a laugh.

Around midday, some boys dropped by and asked if Jonas fancied a game of football, and to Kajsa's delight, he didn't hesitate to join them. As he ran out the door, she called after him that she was planning to go for a run to Losviktua. He always had to know where she was.

Something inside her fought against heading up into the mountains. Another part of her longed for the magnificent nature she'd known since she was little, and all the memories of the walks with Karsten would come flooding back. She wanted to feel the good times that had been, and that would never be again. In recent years she'd barely had the strength to run, even though she loved it, and her legs felt weak as she began the climb up Fjellvegen. The last house she passed was that of the man who'd been thrown out of the hotel by Rune Grande last night, Stig Voldsund. A red car was parked outside, but she saw no sign of life.

Kajsa walked as fast as she could uphill. The lactic acid was already setting in by the time she reached the car park. She stopped and leaned on her knees, catching her breath. Soft, she thought, everything here is so soft. The landscape's lines were rounded, no sharp, jagged mountain peaks. A flock of crows fluttered up and down in a pattern without choreography against the bright sky.

She continued along the path between juniper, heather, moss, stones and grass. After a hundred metres, she reached the forest. The path turned into stone slabs; Sherpas had laid them a few years ago. She heard birdsong; sunbeams trickled down between pine branches and slid down the sloping shoulders of the fir trees.

Somewhere in this forest, seven-year-old Lukas had been found dead.

When she emerged from the forest, out into the light, it was like stepping out of a cathedral. She had forgotten how high the sky felt up here. It wasn't far to the summit—sixty, seventy metres—and then the open sea lay before her. It changed colour with the clouds; sometimes it was bottle green, on stormy days it was almost black, today it was blue. She pictured her father standing there, pointing. – There's Shetland, there's the Faroe Islands, and Iceland is over there, he said, moving his arm with every name he mentioned. – The big wide world, she had thought as a child, it's out there, beyond the sea.

She walked over to the large stone that looked like an altar; it was surely more than two metres long and completely flat on top. It was said to have been a place of sacrifice. Her chest ached and her thighs burned as she leaned against it. Suddenly and unexpectedly, the tears came. She and Karsten had run right up to this spot many times; they used to lean against the stone to stretch out. She sank to her knees, buried her face in her hands and didn't notice the man until he was right beside her.

– Are you all right? he asked.

She looked up, quickly wiped her eyes and got to her feet. – Yes, I'm fine, she said lightly, in the tone she'd grown accustomed to using whenever anyone asked how she was. Just fine. Everything's fine.

It was Stig Voldsund.

– Sit down, he said, placing his hand on the rock. I've brought coffee. And biscuits. Would you like some?

He pulled a flask out of his rucksack without waiting for an answer, poured into the flask cup and produced the packet of biscuits. Marie biscuits. Her father had always brought Marie biscuits on trips when she was little.

There was a silence between them for a moment. He was the one who finally spoke. – You're Kajsa Coren, aren't you? The journalist?

Kajsa nodded and took a bite of the biscuit. – And you're Stig Voldsund, she said, meeting his gaze.

He nodded.

– I was in the hotel restaurant yesterday, she added.

– I saw you.

They drank their coffee in silence.

– Thanks for the coffee, she said. I… well… I mean, I'm fine, but I'm in a bit of a difficult situation, she said. That's all.

She handed him the cup as he stood up. He stood looking out over the sea for a moment, before turning towards her.

– It wasn't me who did it, he said.

– What do you mean?

– It wasn't my fault that Lukas died. He put the flask in his rucksack. It was nice to meet you, he added with a friendly smile.

Then he turned and began walking quickly across the scree parallel to the cliff edge.

The Sherpa trail split at the memorial stone; she couldn't go far if she turned right, only to the summit to the north, so she chose the longest route, to Losviktua. That was the highest point, and from there she could walk down to Kvitsandvika on the south side of the island. She started running; the Sherpa trail made it easy, and it was almost flat up here, with just a few hills providing a bit of variety. She gave it everything she had to Losviktua, stretching out her hands towards the lookout hut, which had been built a few years ago, a replica of the one that had stood here in the old days. The pilots had used it when they were on the lookout for ships in need of help. The visibility was so clear that she could see all the way to Stadlandet, the corner of Western Norway. She ran all the way down to the water's edge at Kvitsandstranda and breathed in the scent of salty sea and wet seaweed.

It was about three hundred metres up from the sea to the car park where the road back to Losvika began. She passed an old barn on the way. Sheep lay along the wall, dozing in the sun. She and Karsten had once sought shelter from the rain here whilst out running, and it was here that she had told him she was pregnant with Jonas. She pictured him as they had raced each other up this final stretch from the sea to the road;

tall, slender, muscular. And sexy.

At the wind-battered gate at the top, she sat down exhausted in the grass and gasped for breath.

I *have* to be able to carry on alone, she thought.

10

31. July

Else was at the till talking to a woman when Kajsa entered the shop. At a small table just inside the entrance, two elderly men were sitting drinking coffee from paper cups. A large thermos flask stood on the table. Two women in their thirties over by the tinned goods smiled at her. Whilst she was standing talking to Else, the bell above the door jingled. It was Stig Voldsund. Else greeted him warmly. Both the men and the two women followed him with their eyes as he walked between the shelves, and suddenly it was completely silent.

Stig Voldsund approached the till with a shopping basket.

– Meatballs for dinner tonight? said Else as he placed the items on the conveyor belt. With cabbage stew. I think cabbage stew is better than pea stew. And lingonberries, of course, she added, scanning the items.

Stig Voldsund nodded and smiled. He's quite handsome, thought Kajsa. But there was something about him, a vulnerability, or perhaps sadness. He glanced at her, she noticed. Then he leaned towards her.

– I've been thinking about you. Perhaps you'll have time for a chat one day; you're welcome to pop round for a coffee, he said quietly.

Kajsa nodded. – I can do that.

– Goodness me, exclaimed one of the ladies as the door slammed shut behind him and the bell jingled cheerfully. What's he doing here? What does he want?

– Losvika doesn't feel safe anymore, chimed in the other.

They stood by the till, both looking at Kajsa as they continued to talk. One of them nodded towards the door. – You never know what someone like him is capable of.

– Now now, it's lunchtime. Off you go, said Else in a cheerful tone.

– Thanks for the coffee, said the men. They put their caps on their heads and shuffled out.

Else locked up behind them, turned the sign in the door, and Kajsa followed her into office. They chatted about this and that whilst Else put the coffee maker on and laid the table with rolls, cheese and jam.

– What was it Stig whispered to you? asked Else.

– He invited me for a coffee.

– Hmm… Why?

Kajsa told her about meeting him in the mountains. – Maybe he wants to talk about the Lukas case.

– I think it's best to leave that case alone.

– Why's that?

– Things are a bit tense around here at the moment. We don't need old dust being stirred up again.

– But that's happened anyway, now that Stig's back.

– Yes, yes, that's true, the rumours are flying.

– Is everyone against him?

– Almost everyone. A few think it's water under the bridge.

– And you?

– Goodness me, he was just a little boy back then, leave the man alone.

– What do you know about what happened in 1992?

– I remember it well, I was twelve, and we stood watching as the police carried the stretcher with the little body down from the woods. The atmosphere in the village was surreal, a feeling that evil had come here to us. The next day, the boys were taken in for questioning.

– You said that Stig was taken away from his mother. Do you know why?

Else said there had been many incidents involving Stig at school in the time that followed; she herself remembered him acting out physically.

– His parents got divorced, and his mother couldn't cope with him, she said. There must be something wrong with him, people said, as if a seven-year-old could be a monster. It was strange, because there'd never been any problems with Stig before. He was a quiet boy.

– When Lukas died, Petter Nedrelid, Rune Grande and Mattis Brekke were there too, you said. How was Stig singled out as the culprit?

– I don't know. But suddenly, several people knew it wasn't an accident, but that Lukas had been strangled.

– What do you mean? Was he strangled? I've read about the case since you told me about Stig, but it isn't mentioned in the reports I've seen.

– No, it was never stated publicly.

– Petter and Rune remained close friends even as adults, I gather?

– Yes, they got on well together; they were proper rascals, both of them.

– And Mattis, was he friends with them?

– No, he was a completely different sort, kept mostly to himself, especially after his mother died. Unfortunately, his father was never much to be relied on. But thankfully Agnes looked after him a bit.

Kajsa nodded.

– Well, it was football that saved Mattis, Else continued. – For a while, at least. He was a talent. He was playing for Molde when a serious knee injury put an end to his career. He was eighteen at the time.

– I know he's on disability benefit. Is that because of his knee?

– I don't think it was serious enough for him to be on disability. No, I think it's more of a mental thing. It's a shame about Mattis, he's a decent bloke who hasn't had an easy life.

Else took a bite of her bread roll, chewing as she looked out of the window.

– People are scared and they are talking. They are talking about everything that's happened since Stig came back.

– Yes, I heard what the ladies at the till were saying.

– Lots of people think he was the one who started the fire in Rune Grande's bin back in May.

– Fire?

– The bin was lit up in the middle of the night. It happened a month after Stig moved back.

Else split a bread roll in two.

– You know that feeling you get when a storm warning is issued because a storm is on its way and you never know how bad it's going to be? That's how it is here in the village now.

She put a slice of brown cheese on the roll and added: In more ways than one. Because who knows what Faderen might get up to when the autumn storms set in.

*

Kajsa decided to go for a jog along what was known locally as the 'Ring Road'. If she turned right at every junction, she would end up back at her house. It was a circuit of about four kilometres.

Most of the houses were well-maintained, the gardens large with rose and perennial beds, berry bushes and fruit trees. Since Kajsa's family had moved away thirty-five years ago, more and more houses had stood empty as older people passed away. Those who inherited them were unwilling or unable to live so far off the beaten track, and it was difficult to sell them. But now she saw that there were fewer empty houses than two years ago. Several had children's bikes and prams outside. As she ran down Mallabakken, she spotted Rune Grande's wife; she was sitting on the terrace reading a book. They lived in a solid functionalist house a little way up the hillside above the hotel.

At the junction of Mallabakken and Hamnevegen, she decided to turn left and ran to the small boat harbour by the hotel. Moored at the jetty was a large pleasure boat with a flybridge. The man who jumped ashore was Rune Grande.

– Well, hello, Kajsa, he smiled. It's been a long time. Then he grew serious. – My condolences, I heard about Karsten. That's sad.

– Thank you. And how are you?

– Fine, just fine. Things are chugging along, you know, he said.

Kajsa nodded towards the large boat. – It looks like things are going very well indeed.

– Yes, I can't complain.

– I can cast off the moorings, she offered.

Rune climbed aboard and she tossed the ropes to him before he manoeuvred away from the jetty. He waved cheerfully as he set off towards Vågen.

She knew he'd inherited his father's fishing boat, run it for a few years, before switching to supply ships and building up a large shipping company. Now he had several companies in various sectors: nurseries, care homes, retirement homes, asylum centres and property. All with the name Grande in front. Five years ago, he had had a new administration building erected that towered over the harbour; it was in the same style as the Grande Hotel and was called Smaragden. Rune Grande had given the village a new lease of life and created new jobs.

She walked to the very end of the floating jetty and stretched out. The sky was light blue, the clouds resembling cotton wool. Out in the middle of the fjord, one of the large purse seiners was hauling its net through the water. A flock of seagulls followed a small open boat with an outboard motor heading towards the pier. The man on board gutted the fish and threw the cut offs into the sea. The seagulls screeched ecstatically and dived into the feast.

– What a lovely day, not a breath of wind, she heard a voice say behind her.

She turned and caught a glimpse of a figure in a sailing boat, and when she shielded her eyes from the sun with her hand, she recognised Johs Kruse, the man who had arrived in a sailing boat and stayed on, taking a job as a fisherman.

– Are you a guest at the hotel? he asked.

– No. I actually live in Asker, she replied, I own a house here.

– Well, you're in luck. I've just made some coffee. Fancy a cup?

Kajsa glanced quickly at her watch and accepted. He held out his hand as she stepped on board and introduced himself at the same time.

She sat down at the weathered teak table. The aroma of coffee wafted up from the galley. Johs disappeared down the stairs and returned with a coffee pot and two mugs.

– I must admit I know who you are, she said after the first sip.

He chuckled. – People talk. What do they say about me, then?

– That you came here in April and stayed. You've got a job on a fishing boat?

– Yes, that's right.

He spoke enthusiastically about what it was like to work at sea. – It probably sounds strange, but I felt at home here from the very first moment, he said, adding with a broad smile: It was meant to be.

There was something easy-going about him; he was chatty, quick to laugh, and his body language was energetic. As he spoke, Kajsa thought he was the sort of person who took life as it came and seized the opportunities that arose.

– There's something familiar about you, he said.

– Well, I've worked as a television journalist, and…

– There we are, he exclaimed. I've seen a documentary you made. Powerful stuff, what was it called? He snapped his fingers a couple of times. – The Farm of Death, wasn't it?

Kajsa nodded.

– Are you working on any new projects?

– No, not right now.

Perhaps he saw that she was closing up; at any rate, he didn't ask any more questions, but instead told her that he loved the nature here, that he often went running in the mountains and cycling around the islands. After a while, she stood up and thanked him for the coffee.

– Do come back, he said. Perhaps for a glass of wine one evening?

He doesn't know I'm in mourning, she thought as she ran home. But now he'll be asking people about me. She became a widow far too young, they'd say. Poor thing.

11

1. August

Stig Voldsund lifted the coffee cup with both hands and took a sip. He and Kajsa were sitting in two Stressless chairs in front of a large window with a small table between them. They had already been talking for a while, and Kajsa was curious to know what he wanted from her, whether it had anything to do with the Lukas case. But he was taking his time getting to the point.

– You haven't lived here since you were eight. Why did you come back? she asked.

– My roots are here.

– Have you spoken to the others who were there when Lukas died—Petter, Rune and Mattis?

– No. Apart from when Rune told me to get lost and go to the hotel.

– But you said up in the mountains that you weren't the one who caused Lukas's death, that you're innocent. Don't you feel the need to prove it?

– I've thought about it a lot, and that's why I wanted to talk to you. A hint of resignation crept into his voice as he added: – But there's probably no point after so many years. It'll just be a shot in the dark, an assertion. I don't know what happened when Lukas died.

– But you were there, weren't you?

– No, actually I wasn't.

– You weren't?

– I know you make TV documentaries.

Kajsa nodded and left it to him to steer the conversation. Stig sat for a moment with his elbows on his knees, rubbing his hands together slowly. Then he stood up and

walked out. Soon he was back with a carrier bag containing some folders, which he handed to her. – Perhaps you could have a look at this?

– What is it?

– Police documents from the investigation into the Lukas case. I realised I had a right of access, as I was a party to the case.

– What was it like reading them?

– You'll have to read them yourself; then you'll probably understand.

Kajsa thanked him for the coffee and promised to read them. But she couldn't promise anything more than that.

12

The police received a call from Lukas's parents at 18:06 on Monday 3 August 1992. At 15:00, Lukas had been allowed to go and play with some boys of the same age. The arrangement was that he was to return to the campsite where the family were holidaying at 16:00. When it was 4.30 pm and he still hadn't turned up, his parents became worried. It wasn't like him. He'd just been given his first watch and was usually reliable. His parents had gone round looking for him. They didn't know the boys he was supposed to be playing with other than by sight, and he'd been told not to stray far from the campsite.

Kajsa sat hunched over the kitchen table, reading the copies of the documents Stig had given her. She noticed that it was the district sheriff at the time, Sverre Garshol, Nina's father, who had written the first report. It was he who had rushed out to meet the distraught parents. He had called in the two other police officers from the sheriff's office, plus the Red Cross Rescue Corps, and a search operation was launched.

At 8.56 pm, a dog from the Norwegian Rescue Dog Association found Lukas in the wooded area above the settlement.

– There is little doubt that Lukas Lindbo choked to death, concluded Garshol, describing how a purée of moss had been stuffed into his mouth. Kajsa turned to the post-mortem report. The coroner agreed with the police chief's conclusion.
The cause of death was asphyxia, suffocation. Lukas had swallowed some of the moss, which became lodged in his throat. Saliva had moistened the moss, causing it to compress and block his airways.

Numerous interviews had been conducted. With the parents, the owner of the campsite, those who worked there and people in the village. The campsite was full of holidaymakers and children playing everywhere. No one knew who the boys Lukas had met were; not even the parents knew them, and no one came forward despite the police going door to door.

The first news report on the case appeared in the daily Sunnmørsposten the day after Lukas was found. Chief Constable Garshol spoke cautiously and said nothing about

the suspicion of murder, only that the death was being investigated as a suspicious death, as was standard procedure. They were awaiting the post-mortem report. He appealed for information about the boys Lukas had been playing with, people who had seen him, and described his clothes: dark blue shorts, a red Liverpool kit and blue trainers with white stripes.

By mid-morning the following day, the police had received information about who Lukas had been playing with. Oda Sævik, who was a teacher at the school, had gone to the neighbouring island to visit a friend at around 5 pm the day before, and had not realised what had happened until she read the Sunnmørsposten when she got home the next day. A police report stated that Oda had seen five boys walking together up Fjellvegen towards the woods at around 3.30 pm. She knew four of them well; they were due to start Year 2 after the summer. They were seven years old, soon to be eight. The fifth was a stranger to her.

Oda, I must speak to her, Kajsa noted. She had been a friend of her aunt's.

The four boys, Mattis, Petter, Rune and Stig, were picked up by the police one by one and taken to the police station in Vågen. An investigator with experience in talking to children had come from Ålesund. The documents showed that a psychologist was also present during the interviews.

She leafed through the papers, eager to read the transcripts of the audio recordings made during the boys' interviews.

INTERROGATION OF RUNE GRANDE

Tuesday 4 August 1992 at 12.15

Rune is accompanied by his father, Eivind Grande, during the interview. The interview is conducted by Police Sergeant Bjørn-Olav Krohn. Psychologist Svein Jordal is present.

– First of all, I'd like to tell you, Rune, that you can tell the police everything. Absolutely everything. Do you understand that? OK, I see you're nodding. What I'm wondering is whether you know someone called Lukas who was on holiday at the campsite?

– Yes.

– Did you meet him yesterday?

– Yes.

– What did you do?

– We played football.

– Just that?

– Afterwards, we went up into the woods to play hide and seek.

– Are you good at hiding?

– Very. I'm almost always the last one to be found.

– Tell me about when you were playing hide and seek.

The father interrupts: – Rune has told me what happened. It was Stig who …

Interviewer: – Let's take this step by step; now let's let Rune tell his side of the story.

Kajsa noted: Rune's father intervenes and names Stig. But the interrogator asks open questions; he invites a free account. Good.

Interviewer: – So tell us, Rune, about when you were playing hide and seek. Who was going to hide and who was going to be seek?

– First, it was Mattis. That was boring.

– Why was that?

– He couldn't find anyone. He's really bad at it.

– And afterwards?

– Then it was my turn to be look, and I found everyone. But then Stig was mean to Lukas.

– What did Stig do?

– He pushed Lukas so he fell over. And suddenly Lukas was completely still, he just lay there. I think he was dead.

– Why do you think that?

– He couldn't breathe. And when you can't breathe, you die.

– Why couldn't he breathe?

– Because Stig stuffed moss into his mouth.

– What did you do then?

– I got scared, and then we ran home.

– All of you? You, Mattis, Petter and Stig together?

– Yes.

The interview ended at 12.32

The interviews with Mattis and Petter followed the same pattern as the interview with Rune. Both had their fathers with them. Even before the police officer had a chance to ask a single question, Mattis's father interrupted.

– My son wouldn't hurt a fly. It was Stig who did it, wasn't it, Mattis? he said.

The police officer asks him to wait and asks the same questions as he did to Rune, and Mattis gives a shorter explanation, with fewer details.

Kajsa noticed that Petter's father also intervened. He said that the fathers had spoken to their sons about it, and all the boys had said that it was Stig who had been mean to Lukas.

– The boys' accounts are largely consistent and do not differ on any significant points, concluded the interrogator.

The crime scene had been documented with photographs. Kajsa quickly flicked past them, unable to bear looking at the small, lifeless body. Apart from the post-mortem examination of the body, no forensic investigations. The boys' clothes and shoes had not been secured for evidence, only photographed. The police had not considered the possibility that someone else might have killed Lukas. They had focused solely on the boys from the very start. And since they were minors, they knew the evidence would never be presented in a courtroom. So they hadn't been too thorough. But this happened thirty-three years ago, and methods, procedures and technology had all evolved. An investigation today could have provided answers that weren't available back then, Kajsa thought, not least because of new methods of analysing DNA material. She noted that the police had on several occasions not appealed to the public asking anyone who might have seen the boys or others to come forward after Lukas was found.

It was simply poor police work. And that was exactly what she would think many times as she read through Stig's interview. He was the last to be interviewed, after the other three had identified him as the perpetrator.

This interview also began with the interrogator telling Stig that he could trust the police and tell him everything. But then things took a very different turn.

Interrogator: – Do you know the difference between true and false?

– Yes, when you speak untruthfully, you're lying.

– That's right. And now you must promise me to tell the truth. Do you promise?

– Yes.

Stig is asked how he knows Lukas, and what they have been doing. But when they get to the game of hide-and-seek in the woods, he has a completely different explanation from the other boys.

– Petter and Rune were mean to Mattis. They're often mean to Mattis.

– How mean?

– They call him 'big mouth' because he has such a big mouth. At school they're also mean to him when the adults aren't looking. They've spilled the milk all over his rucksack, and this winter they pushed him into the snow and stuffed snow into his mouth and down his neck almost every day.

– Were they mean to Mattis in the woods?

– They got angry because it took so long to find us when he was standing there. They called him an idiot and laughed at him. Petter tugged at his hair and pushed him so he fell and hurt himself and started crying.

– What did you do?

– I didn't do anything. I'm scared of them. Everyone's scared of Petter and Rune. No one stands up to them. But Lukas didn't know that, because he's not from Losvika.

– Oh? What did Lukas do, then?

– He told them to stop and stepped in.

– What happened then?

– Rune got angry with him.

– Did he say anything?

– I don't quite remember … but in Losvika, it is him and Petter who are in charge. But Lukas wouldn't back down. They had a proper row and started fighting. Petter punched Lukas in the face, really hard, whilst Rune stood there laughing.

– Where was Mattis?

– He just stood there; he was really scared of Rune and Petter. Once they peed on

him in the school shower.

– And you, what were you doing there in the woods?

– I got really scared that they'd be mean to me too, so I ran all the way home without stopping.

– Are you sure about that?

– Yes, absolutely sure.

– Are you telling the truth now?

– Yes.

Mum: – What on earth is this? Don't you believe him?

Interrogator: – The other three boys have given completely different accounts. Isn't it a bit strange, Stig, that there are several of you boys playing together, and yet three of them say the same thing, while only you say something different.

Mother: – What do they say?

Stig crawled up onto his mother's lap, it said.

Interrogator: – Stig, wasn't it you who stuffed moss into Lukas's mouth so he couldn't breathe?

– Moss? No, I didn't.

– Do you remember what I said at the start, that you can tell the police everything, but you mustn't lie, right?

– Yes.

– We know what's true, and it's not what you're saying.

– Mother: – Can we take a break? I'm not feeling well.

The interview was interrupted at 3 pm because the mother, Lovise Voldsund, was feeling unwell.

The interview resumed twenty minutes later. Kajsa found the police officer's questions more aggressive. At one point, he tells Stig straight out that he must stop lying.

Kajsa got a stomach ache. A seven-year-old is subjected to intense pressure that could have made anyone break down. It was page after page of the same questions, which had only one purpose: to get Stig to admit to the murder.

The mother interrupts and tells her son that he must help the police and tell them what happened. ‘You must tell the absolute truth,’ she says.

She’s acting responsibly; she wants to help the police, as one should, thought Kajsa. But does she trust the police more than her son, and did Stig notice that?

After a few minutes, the interview is interrupted again because the mother is feeling unwell and leaves. Stig cries and calls after her, begging her not to leave him.

He must have felt terribly alone. But was he lying?

Suddenly Jonas was standing in the doorway; Kajsa hadn’t heard him come in.

– Are you working? he asked, coming over to her. She pulled him down onto her lap, and he put his arm around her neck.

– I’m just reading some documents. I’m going to start on dinner; it won’t take long.

– What’s for dinner?

– Spaghetti Bolognese.

– Yes! he said and kissed her on the cheek.

She put the papers aside and Jonas sat down at the kitchen table. Kajsa watched him whilst she fried the mince. He was tall for his age, having shot up over the last year. But she remembered well what he was like when he was seven, a boy trying to look tough, but who was small and vulnerable.

Such a little seven-year-old had been brought in to the police; he’d been questioned in a room with two men he didn’t know. His mother naturally found it awful when she heard what the police were claiming, but she still felt it was her duty to get her son to tell the truth. What a situation for a mother. And for a child.

After they had eaten dinner, Kajsa sat down again with the documents.

Now his mother is sitting in the hallway with the door open to the office where Stig is being questioned. She has agreed that they can speak to Stig without her present. The interrogator explains to Stig that his mother isn’t feeling well, but that she is nearby the whole time. Stig is crying and squirming in his chair, he has noted.

Kajsa looked at the document thoughtfully. His mother is in shock, she thought.

Interrogator: – Now we’re going to talk a bit more, Stig. But you have to tell the truth. Stig: – I will.

Interrogator: – The other boys you were with have told us what happened. They all say you stuffed moss into Lukas's mouth so he couldn't breathe. Isn't that what happened, if you're going to tell the absolute, absolute truth?

Stig: – No.

Interrogator: – Now I think you should stop this nonsense.

Is his voice harsh? wondered Kajsa. Does he sound angry and threatening when he tells this child that he's lying, that the police don't believe him – a little scared boy without his mum.

– I want to go to Mummy.

– No, not until you tell us what really happened.

– Can I go then?

– Yes, then you can go.

There is a long pause. Then the interrogator repeats that if Stig tells the truth, he can go to his mum. There is another pause before Stig says: – I stuffed moss into Lukas's mouth.

– Was it you who did that?

– Yes.

Kajsa leaned back in shock, her gaze fixed on that last word. Yes.
The confession. Stig wasn't allowed to go to his mother until he confessed. You'd be hard pressed to find a more coerced confession. But was it false?

The police had failed Stig on another point as well. It was a fundamental right, when accused of a crime, to have a defence lawyer present. A child also needed professional help; it wasn't enough for the mother or father to be in the room. That protection was the police's responsibility, but they hadn't bothered with it.

Kajsa blinked hard; it was uncomfortable reading. The interrogation had lasted two and a half hours with just one break. The interrogator had noted that the mother had broken down after her son confessed. An ambulance was called because she was having breathing difficulties. Stig was driven home to his father in Losvika in a police car.

Kajsa pictured the little boy sitting in the interrogation, repeating over and over that he hadn't done anything wrong, let down by the police, let down by his mother. Then he gave up. He wanted to go home.

13

The clouds stole the colour from the houses and blurred the contours of the landscape outside the large windows at Stig Voldsund's home. Kajsa had actually intended to wait until the next day, but when Jonas had a friend round, it seemed a good time to visit him again.

– Well, have you read it?

He asked. Kajsa nodded.

– What do you think?

– I'm shocked. What do you remember from the interview at the police station?

– Not much. But when I read the police documents…

He paused, his mouth forming a thin line, and a look of discomfort crossed his face. – I… He coughed into his fist. – That feeling I had when my mother walked out, the feeling of being abandoned and left in the hands of a man I didn't know and who was angry with me, who claimed I was lying and that I'd done something terrible, that overwhelming, paralysing fear, it all came back when I read the documents.

– Do you remember confessing?

– No, but the interview shows that I did.

– What do you think about that?

– That confessing was the only way out. Stig put his hand to his mouth and stared out of the window, saying nothing for a while. It ruined my life, he said quietly at last.

A trauma – what has it done to him? thought Kajsa.

– You claim you're innocent, she said. That means one of the others might be guilty. What do you think about that?

– That they sacrificed me for something they'd done.

– Doesn't that make you angry?

– Of course. I've felt a lot of anger.

– Do you remember the events of that day as you described them when you were seven?

– Yes.

– And Mattis, what did he do?

– I don't know, as I ran home.

– Why were you taken from your family and placed in foster care?

– It's a long story.

Stig picked up a folder from the coffee table. – It's all in here. You can read this too; it's my file from child welfare services. If you're shocked by the police's handling of the matter, you won't be any less shocked by this.

His Adam's apple moved up and down a couple of times before adding: They turned me into the monster they treated me like.

*

Kajsa stayed up long after Jonas had gone to bed. The question she kept asking herself as she read the child welfare reports was: Is that possible?

For the police, the case was closed. Stig was handed over to the health and social services, and child welfare had based their work on the information from the police that Stig had killed Lukas. A child psychologist described him the day after the police interview as quiet and withdrawn. He concluded that Stig needed help to 'prevent a violent, criminal career'. 'It is important that Stig understands what he has done. He does not. On the contrary, he denies it and says it is not true'.

The psychologist recommended specific measures. Stig was assigned a support worker to supervise him both during break times and in the classroom, so that he could not harm the other children.

Kajsa leafed through the reports from the support worker. He described a boy who either withdrew into himself or was very disruptive. He also felt that Stig did not understand how much it hurt when he kicked or hit the other children. In one instance, he described how Stig had punched a boy in the stomach. At that the support worker had done the same to Stig so that he would understand the consequences of his actions, feel the pain in his own body.

– Since the visit to Lukas's grave, things have really gone off the rails. He can't control his temper, he wrote.

What? thought Kajsa, shocked. Did they take him to the grave in Molde? She leafed through the file a little before finding the psychologist's recommendation to take him to the grave, "so that he would understand and take to heart that Lukas was really dead, and that it was his fault," he wrote.

At the very back of the file lay the child welfare service's conclusion. Stig was to be placed in foster care. This happened a year after Lukas's murder, and Stig was now eight and a half years old. His mother described him as completely changed.

– He used to be such a lovely child, as kind as could be. Since Lukas died, he's become more and more disruptive. At other times he seems scared and lies in his room crying, she said. And when he's at home, I can't go anywhere. He wants me nearby all the time.

Child Welfare Services noted that she had two other children, girls aged two and four, and not least for their sake, it was best that Stig be placed in a foster home. The parents separated six months after Lukas died. The mother had initially refused to give up Stig, but eventually agreed, and he was sent to a married couple living on a farm in Nordmøre. They had extensive experience as foster parents. It was recommended that he should not visit the family in Losvika 'to spare the local community', as it was put, but that his mother should instead go to visit the foster parents.

14

8. August

The days had grown shorter; it was overcast and there was a chill in the air, which made the summer evening darker. He felt a faint tingling in his stomach as he walked across the fields. Above Margareth Nedrelid's house, he sat down on a rock. Lanterns and candles were lit in the gazebo in the garden. He heard voices. Quietly, he crept across the lawn and stood at the corner of the fence.

– 'I miss him,' he heard Margareth say.

He recognised her voice; it was choked with tears.

– How on earth can you miss him? said a woman. He realised it was Kikki because of her Southern Norwegian dialect. She seemed annoyed.

– Petter was a bloke.

– But he took care of everything. I don't know anything. How am I going to manage the finances, the company, the restaurants, the cabin and the sailing boat?

– You can sell it all. You hardly need to worry about how you'll make a living. And I'll help you. It'll be fine. Everything will be fine now.

– No, it's all just chaos.

– Yes, it'll be fine. Now you can start living, Margareth, be yourself.

– You think it's all so simple. That you and I… No, it won't work; how do you think people will react? I wish everything were as it was before.

– You can't really mean that, said Kikki, upset. – Now you can do as you please. You can move somewhere else. *We* can move. It'll be a fresh start for us.

– What about Fia? What will she say? And what would I do somewhere else? No, I have to stay here, in this house, in this village; it's the only place I know. After a short pause, she added. – I think you should go now.

– I thought you wanted me to stay the night.

– Well… no, I've changed my mind. Please go, Kikki, just go.

– Now you're being unreasonable.

– Go, I said.

Chairs scraped. He quickly pulled away, took a step to the side, but his foot caught on something and made a thudding sound.

– What was that? Kikki shouted.

He ran, but turned at the corner of the house and met Kikki's wide-eyed stare before he sprinted across the fields. Thank God for the mask. He stopped before he was quite home, thinking it over. The sight of Kikki's terrified face had given him a new idea. He could go further; he could really shatter the idyll of this place. Within half an hour, he went to four houses that he knew had surveillance cameras. He stood there and looked straight into the cameras for a few seconds before strolling calmly away. He smiled beneath the mask as he ran into the darkness. Now he was the one with the power and the control.

15

Margareth stood in front of the bathroom mirror brushing her teeth. Her hand trembled slightly as she held the toothbrush under the tap and rinsed it.

What have I done?

She leaned with both hands against the sink, bowing her head so as not to have to look at her own face. Inside her, she heard Kikki's voice. – Everything will be fine now.

There was something about the way she'd said it that unsettled her. Her voice had been cheerful; she'd been smiling. And she'd called Petter a daft. That wasn't right.

Despite all of Petter's faults, she missed the sound of his voice when he came home and called out 'hi' in the hallway. There was perhaps something superficial about him, but also something jovial; it was as if he worried about nothing. It rubbed off on her. She had felt less anxious when she was with him. And with good reason. Petter had made sure she could buy everything she wanted, do whatever she pleased. Then it was easy to endure the boredom.

Now the house was empty without him.

Kikki saw her in a way Petter hadn't for many years; she had given her warmth, care, attention and passion – the very things she had missed in their relationship.

Now I can be with Kikki. But do I want to?

The way Kikki spoke about Petter unsettled her.

It was as if the gaze she met in the bathroom mirror belonged to a stranger.

Was it her fault that Petter was dead? What had she set in motion when she let Kikki get so close?

She lay awake for a long time, listening for strange noises, but heard nothing. Who was the man in the mask? Had he heard what they were talking about? What had he understood? The thought chilled her to the very marrow of her bones. She pulled the duvet tightly around her body.

What have I done?

16

12. August

– Hi, Kajsa! said a cheerful voice on the phone.

Gro Tandstad had left Channel 4 before Kajsa and started her own film and TV production company, PUNKTUM. Kajsa hadn't seen her since Karsten's funeral.

– Why don't you answer when I call?

Kajsa felt a twinge of guilt. – No, it's…

Gro interrupted her. – I realise you've got little energy for anything after everything you've been through, but you mustn't let yourself go to waste – it doesn't suit you. So I'm on my way to Losvika now.

– Are you?

– Yes, but don't flatter yourself; I'm not coming to Sunnmøre just for your sake.

Kajsa smiled.

– I've been working in Ålesund, and you've raved so much about this Losvika, so now I've hired a car. It's about time I saw the place. Is that alright?

– Of course, it'll be lovely to see you.

– I'm looking forward to it. I'll be there in about an hour according to the satnav. Is there a wine shop out there by the sea? We'll need some bubbly and wine.

Kajsa confirmed that it could be sorted out in Vågen.

*

Gro hadn't just bought drinks, she'd bought dinner and insisted on cooking it herself: pork fillet wrapped in cured ham with roast potatoes and mushroom stew. Perhaps it was the champagne, a Pol Roger that Gro opened before she started cooking; whatever it was, as the conversation flowed and Gro filled the kitchen with delicious aromas, Kajsa felt a lightness in her body—it felt entirely physical, like a cool hand against a warm forehead.

It was a pleasure to sit down to the laid table. The food tasted wonderful, and Gro served an Italian red wine: Barbaresco, which went perfectly with pork with herbs and mushrooms, she said. Jonas ate with them, but his new friends were waiting, and he dashed out the door as soon as he'd finished.

– He looks well, remarked Gro as the door closed behind him.

– Things have gone much better for Jonas since we came here. I'm so glad about that.

– He's got a new best friend too, Elias.

Gro looked at Kajsa with a serious expression. – And you?

– One day at a time. But Losvika has always felt like home, and the fact that Jonas is happy here is the most important thing of all.

Gro was working on a documentary about suicide among young girls in child welfare institutions. Would Kajsa like to work with her on the project?

– Absolutely not, Kajsa replied firmly. – Child welfare is a minefield to get into, and you get up close and personal with difficult lives. I don't think I can handle that right now.

– I understand, but there must be something that interests you. You're usually full of ideas.

– Maybe the well has run dry.

– I don't believe that for a second. It's in your blood. There's a murder investigation going on right outside your front door, and you have years of experience as a crime reporter. It's right up your alley, literally!

– No, I have neither the desire nor the energy to follow an ongoing murder investigation.

But Gro wasn't about to give up. – You're here, after all, she objected, you can keep an eye on how the case develops, and we'll see if there's anything in it. She leaned eagerly across the table. – You have a special talent, Kajsa; you get people to

open up, and you're good at reading faces and body language. You can put all your experience to use now. And you work differently from the police; you ask different questions and can find angles they don't see. That's the very reason for your success in cases you've worked on before. Do the same here, then.

She held Kajsa's gaze. – You'll always live with this grief, but you have to find a way to carry it. Not just for your own sake. Jonas sees you; he can tell how you're feeling. It would be good for him too if you got involved and filled your days with something meaningful.

– You're probably right, Kajsa sighed. But what could I possibly find that the police haven't already discovered in over a month?

– That sort of thing has never stopped you before. On the contrary, it's usually spurred you on.

– But I'm far too close to the people who live here.

– Those are just excuses, Kajsa. That's precisely why you should look at the possibilities. You have an advantage that no other journalist has. You live here.

Gro didn't take her eyes off her, as if she were trying to keep her firmly rooted in her own view.

– There's another case… but it's not in the news right now, said Kajsa hesitantly.

She told her about the Lukas case, the investigation in 1992 and what had happened to Stig Voldsund. – He was manipulated into confessing. His death received extensive media coverage, but the police closed the case after just over a day, and nothing has been written about it since.

– You've been thinking about this for a while.

– I can recognise a strong case when I see one.

– Of course, Gro smiled.

Kajsa twirled her glass between her hands and looked at her thoughtfully before making up her mind and saying: One of the children who was present when Lukas was killed was the boy who died in the collision here in Losvika in June, Petter Nedrelid.

Gro stared at her in amazement. Then she tapped a drum roll with her hands on the tabletop. – Well, you're off then, she said with a broad smile. Mission completed.

She stood up. – We need more bubbly.

17

He tilted his head back. The sky was starry, the moon was almost full. His dream was up there. Literally. He had dreamed of becoming an astrophysicist, researching the universe. He had taken an intelligence test many years ago; it had shown that he had an above-average IQ. At school, maths and physics had been his favourite subjects. He couldn't have been even ten years old when he first read about black holes and became hooked on space.

His life was a black hole, and he found himself in the midst of a singularity, the centre of a black hole. He had crossed what was known as the event horizon. It was a boundary, a sort of point of no return, and anything that crossed it and ended up in the centre could not escape. He had tried to live with it, done his best. But it had got worse recently; all the images in his head had become clearer.

He opened the door and stepped inside, looking at the blackboard on the wall with a smile. There were many who were afraid now. And it was a satisfaction to have such power over people. There were more who deserved to feel fear. He picked up a piece of chalk. On the blackboard was a drawing of Losvika. At first there had only been the roads and the shoreline, but little by little more houses had appeared further up the village, and next to them he had pinned pictures of people and jotted down notes.

The shop was abuzz; now everyone was talking about the Man in the Mask who was scaring the wits out of people. He felt changed since he'd started walking around in the mask, stronger and braver, and the darkness in the black hole felt different. Soft, in a way. Like black cotton.

18

13. August

It was half past eleven, and Kajsa couldn't sleep. Anders and Thea had arrived a week ago. They filled the house with youthful joy; chatter, laughter and music. Yesterday they'd borrowed Else's boat and taken Jonas on a fishing trip. The sounds of the house bore witness to the children's happiness; it framed the grief and made it a little easier to bear. And since the siblings had arrived, Jonas had started sleeping in his own room. She tiptoed down the stairs so as not to wake anyone, fetched a glass of water and sat down in the chair by the window in the living room. The sky was starry. She leaned forward and looked out, spotting the Big Dipper in the night sky. The village was asleep; everyone in the house was asleep.

One lovely summer's day after another had come and gone, interrupted only by the occasional shower of warm summer rain. Stig's fate was in the back of her mind, but she was reluctant to start work, still feeling sad and lacking in energy on most days. Besides, it was more important to enjoy the summer with Jonas. They'd been on several mountain hikes around the islands, they'd gone swimming and been on fishing trips. In the evenings they'd had barbecues, sometimes with Else, and a couple of times she'd invited Jonas's friends and their mothers over.

But soon it would be back to school; they would be going home to the house in Asker, to all the memories, to the emptiness and the longing. Or would they? Earlier that day, she and all three children had walked to Losviktua, and suddenly Jonas had said he wanted to stay here.

– Do you mean you want to move here to Losvika? she had asked, surprised.

– Yes, I don't want to go back to Asker; I think about Dad all the time there. It's better here. Elias wants me to join the football team, and they have an athletics group in the sports club. I can start with running. I think I've got a talent for it. Dad said so.

Both Anders and Thea supported him, and she shouldn't worry about them. If Jonas wanted to stay in Losvika, that was the most important thing.

Kajsa looked out of the window and took a sip of her tea. Perhaps they should try living here for a year?

Over in Stranda, two cars were driving towards Losvika. They turned onto Hamnevegen and swerved up towards Rune Grande's house above the hotel. They were quite a distance away, but in the illuminated entrance area, Kajsa saw two people get out of each car and walk to the door. It took a while before it was opened, and they disappeared inside. After a while, three figures came out; they got into one of the cars and drove off. It was like a scene from a film, when the police come to pick someone up at night. She logged onto Facebook. Rune Grande wasn't there, but she found his wife's profile. The latest photo was their wedding picture. "Porcelain wedding! 20 years with this wonderful man," Rita Grande had written. Kajsa clicked through more photos. They were either of Rita alone or with her husband, no one else. They were toasting the camera, holding each other close, and the captions were all about how wonderful her life was.

Picking up a man so late in the evening had to mean it was urgent. In Losvika, there was only one police matter that was urgent: the murder of Petter Nedrelid. The police had not released any new information since it became known that they had opened a murder investigation. People were talking about it in the shop, saying that the police were at a dead end and that the murder might never be solved.

19

Kajsa walked up Fjellveien, passed Stig's house, didn't see him, but it wasn't him she was going to visit anyway. Oda Sævik looked as if she'd been cut out of a women's magazine from the 70s in her floral orange, beige and brown kitchen apron.

– Is that you, Kajsa? she exclaimed happily. Come in, come in, oh, how lovely.

She led the way into the kitchen. – Have a seat here, I'm making pancakes, would you like some?

Then she looked at Kajsa seriously. – So sorry to hear about Karsten, your lovely husband, that he should pass away far too young. How are you getting on? And the children? It's not easy to be widowed in the prime of life. I know that all too well. I was only a little older than you when I lost Hans. No, I'll put the coffee on now.

She bustled about the kitchen, light on her feet despite being well over eighty.

– Isn't it awful about Petter? It's completely incomprehensible that something like that could happen here, in the most peaceful spot on the planet. I can't believe anyone from around here did it, but if it isn't solved… She gave Kajsa a meaningful look. – And then there's this business with Faderen. Autumn will be here soon; what will happen then?

Kajsa nodded gravely, but almost felt like smiling. There was something comforting about Oda being just as she'd always been. Full of chatter. Just like Aunt Agnes had been.

There was a sizzling sound as Oda poured batter onto the griddle. – I think of Agnes every day, she said, as if reading her mind. Many of my generation are gone now. It's no fun growing old, I can tell you.

Oda took a tablecloth out of a drawer. It was white with blue embroidery, starched and with sharp, crisp folds. Kajsa helped her set the kitchen table, which stood by the window. A curtain was stretched across the bottom, blocking the view whilst also helping to conceal the person sitting behind it, watching the people and cars passing by on the road.

After a while, Kajsa steered the conversation towards the Lukas case. Oda looked at

her in horror. – Why are you asking about that? Are you going to dig up all that awful stuff? Nothing good will come of it.

– Stig is back, Kajsa simply said.

– Yes, can you believe it? It must be better for him to stay well away from Losvika.

– Do you remember anything from the day Lukas died?

Oda had apparently forgotten that there was nothing to talk about. She'd gone away before the search operation, and hadn't known anything about what had happened until she came home the next day. Then she'd contacted the police and reported that she'd seen the boys walking up Fjellvegen in the middle of the day.

– Was that you? said Kajsa, pretending she didn't know anything.

– Yes, it was me, she said, taking a bite of a pancake, chewing for a moment whilst craning her neck and peering over the curtain. – I recognised Lukas by his clothes, because the newspaper said he was wearing a red T-shirt and dark blue shorts.

– And as a teacher at the school, did you know the other boys?

– Yes. There was Stig, Petter, Mattis and Rune, along with a boy I didn't know.

– Where did you see them?

– Over there.

Oda pushed the curtain aside a little and pointed to the road leading up towards the woods.

– What was Stig like before what happened with Lukas?

– A nice lad. Quiet, never any trouble with him. Hard-working and conscientious at school; he was good at maths, I remember, and very interested in physics and chemistry.

– What did you think about him being singled out as responsible for Lukas's death?

– It didn't make sense. But they must have found out something we don't know, since they were so sure, don't you think?

– Tell me about Mattis. He's always seemed very shy.

– He hasn't had it easy. His mother died of cancer a few years after what happened with Lukas, so it was just him and his father. She shook her head. – He has COPD; they say he doesn't have much time left.

– But there was a time when life looked bright for Mattis, she said. There was a lot written about him in the papers when he was 16 or 17; he was predicted to have a great future as a footballer. The whole village was proud of Mattis back then. But then he got injured and never returned to the pitch. – He took it very hard, developed mental health problems afterwards and was apparently hospitalised for a while. He's never done any work other than fixing cars, but is now on disability benefit. It's sad that Mattis never made it. He should have gone away and got an education. He was a bright lad.

– And Rune and Petter, did they spend a lot of time together?

– Yes, they were always together. The fathers of all three were good friends, by the way. They were the same age and had grown up together.

– But not Stig's father?

– No, he wasn't from round here; it was his mother who was. Both the fathers and the sons got up to a lot of mischief, were mean to other children; you'd think it was in their genes. Bullies, as we call them these days. Mattis was particularly targeted. And they persuaded him—or perhaps the right word is pressured him—to join in the mischief. But we couldn't keep an eye on the children all the time, could we? I never thought any of them would turn out to be decent people. It's strange that those two, of all people, became the wealthiest of everyone here in Losvika. But I suppose they have the ruthlessness needed in business.

Oda crossed her arms and shrugged her shoulders so that her heavy breasts jiggled. – But what happened to Petter is absolutely terrible. Who could have done such a thing?

– People don't like the fact that Stig has moved here.

– Well, let them talk. They should mind their own business.

– What do you mean by that?

– Well, there's a lot of insincerity and hypocrisy about.

– Are you thinking of anyone in particular?

– No… She's gone and done it. – Rune, the big shot… I've been thinking a lot about his wife, Rita. Why is she hardly ever seen? I wonder if it might have something to do with what I saw once, when their daughter June was just a little

girl.

Oda had come home late one evening, close to midnight. As she drove along Hamnevegen, she saw Rita and her daughter June going into Rune's boathouse. – What were they doing there in the middle of the night? It was in the autumn, the weather was bad, cold, I remember. Had something happened at home, had Rune locked them out, wasn't he being mean? That's what I thought, because it was very, very strange, she said thoughtfully. – I don't think Rita is doing well. Have you seen how thin she is, just skin and bones? And her daughter went to Ålesund to attend sixth form there. Why doesn't she go to school in Vågen like all the other young people do?

– Are you saying that Rune isn't a good husband and father?

– I don't know. But a mother doesn't take her child out in the middle of the night for no reason.

– Did everyone in the village know that Stig had been identified as the perpetrator in 1992?

– It was only us at the school who were told, but of course word got out.

– What happened to Stig? asked Kajsa.

– Oh dear, it's almost too painful to talk about.

Kajsa waited; if she knew Oda well, she'd end up telling her anyway, and she'd love to hear her version, even though she knew a lot from the child welfare reports.

Oda took a sip of coffee before continuing. – The police handed Stig over to the health and social services. But the most important person was a psychologist. He came from Ålesund every fortnight and had sessions with Stig. At the same time, he was also the one who set the guidelines for how we at school should handle the situation. Stig was never to be left alone with other children.

Kajsa continued to play the part of the unsuspecting one. – So he was being watched? she said.

– Yes, you could certainly call it that.

– And Stig, how was he?

– He was very upset, cried often, and the other children were either afraid of him or mean to him. Especially Rune and Petter. Oda sighed softly before continuing. – Murderer, they shouted at him. He changed, could fly into a rage, kicking and hitting. Naturally, the other children became even more afraid of him, and he became completely isolated; no one wanted to play with him at break times. I also know that the parents of the other children forbade them from spending time with him.

– Stig's parents got divorced, and his mother lost custody of him, I know.

– Yes, but what was she supposed to do? It was probably best for him to be looked after by others and get away from here. And now he's back. People haven't forgotten. Nothing good can come of it. Not for Stig either. That's my opinion.

They chatted a bit about other things. She was going to move into one of the new retirement flats that Rune Grande was building, she said, and the conversation jumped from one topic to another, led by Oda. After a while, Kajsa got up, but stopped in the kitchen doorway on her way out. Something had occurred to her. Did you see the boys coming back from the woods?

– Yes, they ran past at full speed.

– Did all four of them come?

– No, not together. Stig arrived quite a while before Petter and Rune, and Mattis came a bit behind them. He was bleeding from his nose, I think, and it looked as if he was crying.

– Did you tell the police that they didn't come back together?

– Yes, I'm quite sure I did.

– Are you absolutely certain that Stig arrived before the others?

– One hundred per cent.

– What do you mean by 'a good while'?

– Ten minutes, perhaps. At least.

Kajsa walked home, deep in thought. Oda's account didn't match the police reports. What she said undermined the accounts of the other three children. They had claimed that all four of them had run home together.

As she passed Stig's house, he was out in the garden. She walked over to the fence and told him about her conversation with Oda. He just stood there staring at her in astonishment. – What she says matches the statement you gave, said Kajsa. That's interesting.

– But it wasn't in the police documents, he said.

– No, it's very strange, because she's absolutely certain. Well, that takes me a bit further, she added. But listen, I was wondering if you have a class photo from primary school?

– There was at least one. Come in, there are some photo albums under the coffee table, maybe it's there.

Stig placed a red album on the table. – Hmm, he said, it's been many years since I've seen that.

On the first page was a picture of a baby lying on its tummy on a sheepskin. – That's me, he said, turning the pages slowly. Stig in a pram with his mother smiling as she crouched beside him, Stig on a tricycle, in Kvitsandvika with a rubber ring around his waist, on a boat trip with his parents, playing with his sisters.

– Here it is, said Stig when he reached one of the last pages of the album.

The girls in the class photo were wearing dresses and had plaits and ponytails; the boys were in smart trousers and knitted jumpers. Stig pointed out Mattis, Rune and Petter in the back row. Stig was standing next to the teacher on the right-hand side. Kajsa recognised a younger version of Oda.

– I could understand if you came back here for a visit. But to live here, to meet people when you know what they think of you – you saw Rune Grande's reaction at the hotel.

– I've got nothing to be ashamed of. And I shouldn't have to hide, hold myself back, let the Lukas case dictate what I can and can't do. I need to stand tall, and now I'm finally able to do that.

– Finally?

– It's a long story.

– What happened after you were taken from your mother?

He pointed to his forehead. – My hard drive has erased a lot. But there's one thing I've carried with me: the sight of my mother standing on the steps with my sisters. I saw them through the rear window of the car. None of them waved. Then I ended up at a farm in Nordmøre run by a childless couple. They'd had foster children for many

years, but that was because we were free labour. Sometimes I ran away into the woods. Afterwards, I got a beating. But there was a hut in the woods, which some forest workers used. They took me in and gave me food whenever they saw me. I'm actually still in touch with one of them. He understood how I felt. When I finished secondary school, I ran away for good, ended up in a bad crowd in Oslo and started taking drugs. I've been to prison twice. Ten years ago, I spoke to a psychologist there. He managed to get to the root of the problem, got me to talk about the Lukas case, about my time in foster care, all the bad things I'd been through, the hell of drug abuse. I was offered treatment and have been clean ever since.

He smiled briefly without looking at her. – Afterwards, I got in touch with Steinar, one of the forestry workers, again, and he's been a support to me.

– And your biological father – couldn't you have stayed with him?

– He ran off.

– Where is he today?

– I've never heard from him since I was taken away from here. His voice took on a bitter tone. – A son whom the police labelled a murderer at the age of seven – he probably didn't want to acknowledge him.

He sat with his elbows on the armrests, rubbing his palms slowly together, looking at his hands. – Having Steinar has meant the world to me. He's the one I've turned to when things have got tough. Everyone should have a Steinar in their life.

Kajsa looked at him. His face showed no strong emotions, but the brief, matter-of-fact account was a tale of suffering.

– Coming home to Losvika, is that a kind of cognitive self-therapy, then? Stig smiled briefly.

– Perhaps.

– Or do you have some unfinished business?

– I have no need for revenge, if that's what you mean, although I would of course like to be cleared of the charges.

– But the police interviews show that you were manipulated into confessing. That's something nobody knows about, a new piece of information that sheds new light on what happened to you.

– That's all they show. I don't know what happened; there's no evidence as to who killed Lukas, and people are going to think I might have done it anyway. The case needs to be solved if I'm to be believed.

His hands opened and closed. – It's probably too late, and it won't bring back the years I've lost anyway.

– Do you think Petter's murder has anything to do with the Lukas case?

– Do you think so?

– People think that… well, that you're the Man in the Mask, and that you set fire to Rune Grande's bin.

– I don't care.

– Don't you care that they suspect you of Petter's murder either?

Stig looked her seriously in the eyes for a few seconds before turning his gaze out of the window and pressing his lips together into a straight line. – They can believe what they like. I don't give a damn.

20

13. August

The ladies from the knitting club were sitting on Else's terrace when Kajsa arrived. She took a seat between Kikki and a woman she'd been in the same class with during her first years at primary school. Several of them asked how she and Jonas were getting on. She just had to let them know if there was anything she needed help with. Men's work, for example, as one of them put it.

– But how are *you*? Kajsa changed the subject and turned her gaze towards Margareth.

She brushed her dark hair behind one ear and glanced quickly at Kikki.

– Margareth's doing fine, said Kikki.

She was a slim, tall woman with very short chestnut-coloured hair. There was a spring in her step, an energy that made her seem sporty and fit. Her face was dotted with freckles. Else had told them she was in her mid-thirties. – Margareth is stronger than she thinks, she added with an encouraging smile in her friend's direction.

– You know… said Margareth, shrugging her shoulders. One day at a time.

– I wonder what the police are up to, said Kikki. What are they doing? It's been over two months, and Margareth hasn't heard from them in weeks. Isn't that right, Margareth?

Margareth nodded. There was something strangely expressionless about her, as if she were taking part in a conversation that didn't interest her.

– I think they're floundering in the dark, someone said.

The others agreed and voiced their dissatisfaction with the police.

– I've told Kajsa she should look into the case; perhaps that will put pressure on

the police, said Else.

– Are you going to do that? asked Kikki.

– I'm sure the police are giving the case top priority, Kajsa simply replied.

Kajsa stayed by the barbecue with Margareth, and when they were finished, Margareth nodded invitingly towards the end of the terrace. Kajsa noticed that Kikki was watching them. – About you looking into the case – would you be willing to do that? asked Margareth. I've seen other cases you've worked on as a journalist, even murder cases. You've uncovered things the police haven't discovered.

Kajsa thought for a moment before answering. – I'll pop round to see you tomorrow.

Kajsa stayed behind to help Else tidy up once the others had left. Afterwards, they sat under the canopy on the terrace with a glass of wine. Wine was never served at the Knitting Club. Several of the women's identities were deeply rooted in the prayer house.

Kajsa told her that she and Jonas had decided to stay in Losvika; Jonas had got a place at school, in Elias's class. Else gave her an impulsive hug.

– I'm glad to hear that; it's so lovely to have you here.

– But tell me, what's the story with Kikki and Margareth's relationship? asked Kajsa. Else looked at her in surprise before a small smile appeared. – You really do get to the heart of things, I've been wondering about that too.

– Kikki seems caring, of course, but there's a fine line between care and control.

– God, it's good to have you here. Finally, someone I can talk to.

– What do you mean?

– I, being a lesbian myself, can spot a lesbian a mile off.

– Kikki? said Kajsa, surprised.

– Yep.

– Ooh, I didn't see that coming. So you think Kikki's in love with Margareth?

– I think they're in a relationship.

– What? Do you think Margareth… No, she can't be.

– Even though she's married to a man, she might also like women.

– You seriously believe there's something going on between them?

– I’m sure Kikki has feelings for Margareth, and I’ve seen something in Margareth’s eyes that makes me think those feelings are returned.

Jonas came running up the stairs to the terrace. They’d agreed to walk home together, and as they strolled towards Agnes’s house, Kajsa thought about what Else had said. The police must have checked Margareth thoroughly. Violence and murder most often occurred in close relationships. But if Else was right, a person with an unexpected motive had emerged. Kikki Tomren.

21

14. August

The doorbell rang cheerfully, but there was nothing cheerful about Margareth Nedrelid when she opened the door. No smile, just a quiet hello and a limp wave of the hand inviting her in. The living room was large, with walls and furniture in shades of white and beige. Margareth matched the interior, dressed in white trousers and a pale pink blouse. They sat down on the sofa. It stood in front of the large windows that took in the whole village and the landscape down towards the sea, the other islands and the mainland. A thin veil of mist floated like candy floss on the water's surface.

– Would you like some coffee? asked Margareth.

Kajsa declined; she'd already had too much to drink. – You wanted to talk to me?

– Yes… no, I'm not quite sure. It was a spur-of-the-moment thing, but I don't know if it's a good idea after all.

She rubbed her palms together, her gaze constantly shifting away. Kajsa couldn't get a hold of her.

– I need to know who killed Petter, she said quickly, glancing in Kajsa's direction without meeting her gaze. It was as if she were gathering her courage. – I don't understand what the motive could be. He could be quite stubborn and difficult, but for someone to kill him? It's completely incomprehensible.

– How were things between you and Petter?

– Why are you asking? Her voice changed, but there was no irritation in it; it was more as if the question had put her on her guard.

– If you want me to look into this, I need to know more about Petter. How would you describe him?

– Always busy, she said with a smile that vanished the moment it appeared. – He worked; that was his life. Work and training. He trained every day. It was important to him. Fia and he had a close relationship, but … well … if I'm to be honest, it felt more and more as though we were running a company together. The

Nedrelid Family Ltd. with a big house, a sailing boat, a cabin in Stryn and a flat in France. At the same time, it was a comfortable life.

Kajsa decided to be direct. – Did you ever think about leaving him?

– Oh, no, he was the one who took care of the finances.

Kajsa asked no further questions; it was a tactic that worked with most reluctant interviewees. The silence felt oppressive, but Kajsa didn't take her eyes off her.

Margareth twirled her wedding ring and her elbow twitched slightly. – Are you sure you don't want some coffee?"

– No, thank you.

Margareth stood up and walked over to the window, standing with her back to them and her arms around her waist. Kajsa waited.

– I dreamed of a career as a craft artist; I do ceramics, she finally said. But then… She gestured with one hand and turned towards Kajsa. – …then I got pregnant. We had to get married, she said, emphasising the word 'had to'.

Kajsa looked at her face. She saw no anger, nor any sadness. But there was something there.

– Are you afraid of something? Or someone? she asked.

– Something happened earlier this summer. The Man in the Mask was here, in the garden. Kikki was visiting, and we were sitting out in the gazebo. As we were about to go inside, we heard a noise. Kikki ran out and saw him running off. It was terribly unsettling. Perhaps it's the same person who killed Petter. And there's talk that this terrorising began after Stig Voldsund moved back.

– The police are investigating …

Margareth interrupted her without raising her voice. – The police? They seem completely incompetent. They won't find out who killed Petter, and they certainly won't find out who the man in the mask is either. I fear that it's someone who knew Petter that killed him, someone I know. I need to know who did it.

– Surely no one has a motive to harm *you*, do they?

– No, but if the person is crazy enough… you never know.

– Do you suspect anyone in particular?

– Who could it be? she said quickly.

A bit too quick? thought Kajsa as she continued.

– I need to find out if it was someone from around here who did it. I feel unsafe until the case is solved. I thought you could look into it, as you have experience with this sort of thing.

– If I'm going to do that, you have to be honest with me.

For a moment, a guarded look returned to her eyes. – What do you want to know?

– Do you suspect anyone of the murder?

Kajsa repeated. Margareth shook her head.

– I understand that you and Kikki spend a lot of time together.

Once again, Kajsa saw a hint of resistance in her eyes. Then she smiled quickly, just as she had done before. It seems forced every time, she thought as Margareth replied: Yes, she moved here three years ago, and it turned out we had a shared interest: hiking. I actually met her for the first time at Losviktua.

– Are you close?

– We're friends, yes.

– Did Petter tell you that he was there when Lukas died in 1992?

– What does that have to do with the case?

– Did you know that?

– Of course. He told me that many years ago.

– What did he say?

– That Stig killed him, that it was traumatic.

– Have Rune and Petter always been close friends?

– Yes, and a few years ago they also became business partners.

– Mattis was there too when Lukas died; was he friends with them?

– No, he's a completely different sort of person. But I know that both Petter and Rune have helped him out financially from time to time.

– What did Petter think about Stig moving back?

– He never said anything about it.

– Were you and Petter friends with Rune and his wife, Rita?

– No, I've never liked Rune.

– Oh, why not?

– He makes me feel stupid and inferior. And Rita... no, she's completely aloof,

doesn't really mix with people here.

– How did Rune make you feel inferior?

– When we argued, he'd always throw in little jibes like 'I suppose you don't know anything about this, Margareth.' And then he'd laugh at me, rolling his eyes at things I said.

– But Petter spoke up, didn't he?

– He never contradicted Rune.

– Why not?

– Without Rune, Petter wouldn't have been able to set up on his own.

– So it was Rune who helped him get the restaurants off the ground?

– Yes. And Rune was a co-owner of his company; he was the chairman of the board.

Kajsa stood up. – Do you have anyone who can stay with you at night so you can feel safer? Kikki, perhaps?

A faint frown appeared across her forehead, as if she didn't like her friend being mentioned again. But it vanished quickly. – Perhaps, she said lightly before adding. You must promise me to be discreet.

– And I'd appreciate it if you kept it to yourself that we've spoken, said Kajsa. It's easier for me to investigate when no one knows about it.

She left Margareth with a strong sense that she was afraid of someone. It was natural that she wanted answers as to who had killed the man and why. But was it also because she herself had a suspicion that she needed to have confirmed or disproved?

22

14 August

Margareth ran the wire cutter in a calm, steady motion beneath the crooked cup and lifted it off the potter's wheel. Then she threw it down on the floor in frustration. Yet another failed cup. She had been making cups for the hotel, with different colours on the inside, and now she had received a new order.

She hadn't expected Kajsa to ask so many probing questions.

Twice she asked if she suspected anyone in particular.

I should never have spoken to her, she thought, and went up to the kitchen, switching on the coffee machine.

Kajsa had asked, in a seemingly casual way, if perhaps Kikki could stay here, so she'd feel safer. Was it a coincidence that she'd mentioned her? Well, it probably was; she knew they were friends. But then she'd asked if they were close. Close. Why had she used that word?

Kikki kept talking about how she had to make a choice, that she could start living a different life. Living for real, as she put it. What if people found out, if Kajsa discovered it and told the police? Then word would spread quickly, and everyone would look down on her, talk about how shameful it was, and feel sorry for Petter, who'd been married to someone like her. She knew this village.

Kajsa was bound to talk to Kikki, it struck her, and suddenly the room felt cold; she shivered, her hands were ice-cold and she clutched the coffee mug with both hands to warm herself. You never knew what Kikki might say.

It had been a mistake to speak to Kajsa. Now everything was falling apart.

23

22. August

Kikki stood at the window and looked down at Margareth's house in Mallabakken. Why hadn't she answered the phone, why hadn't she called? What if Margareth didn't want anything more to do with her, what if it was all over? Then she'd be left all alone. There was no one else in her life she considered a friend. In Losvika she knew most people; she was in Else's knitting club, spoke to people she met in the shop and in the mountains, and she knew the parents and grandparents of the children at school. But they weren't friends, they were just acquaintances. Margareth was special. She'd seen it in her eyes the very first time they met, that she was just like her. She'd supported and encouraged her, ingratiated herself with her irritating and domineering husband, so that Margareth was allowed to go on holiday with her to the French Riviera last summer. She'd been looking forward to going there again this year, because there, Margareth was a completely different person to how she was here. Whilst they were at their house in Antibes, Margareth had promised to leave Petter. But when they got home, she couldn't bring herself to break away after all. But now, now she had to realise that she could finally be happy, live freely. She couldn't just dump her after everything she'd done for her, everything they'd shared.

– Damn, she whispered.

She spotted a police car followed by a white estate car and a black van. At the junction where Mallabakken, Øvrevegen and Fjellvegen met, they turned off uphill, and as they passed her house, she saw that one of the cars was a Red Cross vehicle. Something must have happened. Mattis Brekke came out of the workshop and wiped oil from his fingers with a rag; his hands were always dirty. He watched the cars until they were out of sight. Then he set off up Fjellvegen.

Kikki put on her walking boots. It was Saturday, and she'd been planning to go for a walk anyway. She went out the back kitchen door, continued straight along a narrow path uphill for a while before turning south and coming down through the woods to the car park. Two men were putting on climbing gear whilst a couple of policemen stood talking to some men in red overalls. Kikki walked over to Mattis. – What's going on?

– Don't know, he replied.

– There are climbers here too. They're probably heading down the mountain on the other side, into the cliffs.

– Maybe so, yes.

– There must have been an accident, don't you think?

– Hard to say.

– Ready? shouted the policewoman, and the whole group started walking towards the woods.

A policeman stretched barrier tape between two trees and blocked the path through the woods.

24

Kajsa had been to the garden centre and bought some autumn heather to replace the summer flowers on her aunt's grave. It wasn't a large cemetery, and afterwards she walked slowly between the rows, looking at the names on the gravestones, recognising many of them. When had Mattis's mother died? She looked at the dates and found the right section with the graves from the 1990s. What was her mother's name? Yes, it was Josefine, and there was the gravestone. She died in 1994. Mattis was only nine or ten at the time. Kajsa remembered him as a quiet boy whom her aunt had brought along when they went to Kvitstranda to swim. On the beach, he sat watching the other boys play; he didn't want to join in, and he certainly didn't want to go swimming. Her aunt had whispered that he couldn't swim. Kajsa, who was five years older, had persuaded him to go in with her, first with a rubber ring around his waist, but then he'd agreed to take it off, and she'd held her hand under his chin in the shallow water. That summer, it must have been just after his mother died, she'd taught him to swim.

On the way home, Kajsa popped into the shop. A woman was standing there, speaking quietly to Else. Her body language was agitated. She paid and nodded to Kajsa on her way out.

– What was wrong with her? Kajsa asked.

– She was woken by a noise outside her open bedroom window the other night, and when she checked the CCTV footage, she saw a person wearing a Scream mask standing by the front door and staring straight into the camera for several seconds.

– Oh dear, how unpleasant.

Else lowered her voice. – It's not the first time this has happened; several people have seen him.

– Are they sure it's a man?

– Yes, because of his height.

Just then, Kikki came in, wearing a thin windproof jacket and hiking boots.

– Hi Kajsa, she said.

– Hi, did you have a nice walk?

– Yes, but it wasn't as quiet and peaceful as it usually is up there in the mountains.

– How so? asked Else.

– It looks like there's a search operation going on.

She told them what she'd seen. – Something must have happened on the cliffs.

As Kajsa strolled home, she checked several news sites on her phone, but there was nothing about what was happening in Losvikfjellet.

The fact that no one else knew, being the first to 'break' a story – that was the sort of thing that used to send a shiver down her spine. She felt it now, that journalistic curiosity that had been missing for the last few years, and since Jonas was out with his mates, she sent him a message before putting on her workout gear and setting off up the mountain. She followed the path leading to the summit to the north. From there she could see straight across to the cliffs where a climber was in the process of abseiling down. Another climber was standing at the top and the rope was secured around the anchor point.

25

Nina Garshol watched the screen intently. The climber moved slowly downwards, stopping when he reached a ledge; the camera wobbled slightly back and forth before the movement stopped.

She frowned, crouched down, shielding her eyes from the sun with her body. – Can you zoom in? she said.

– OK. Can you see it now? came the reply over the radio.

There was no doubt about it, it was a human being. Some fabric was removed and she caught sight of a skull. Most of the skin and soft tissue was gone, but parts of the hair were still attached to the head.

– What about the rest of the body?

It was impossible to say exactly how long the body had been lying there, but no more than a few months, perhaps half a year, Nina thought.

The body lay on its side in a contorted position with one arm out to the side; other she couldn't see; it must have been lying beneath the torso. One leg was slightly bent, the other lay at an unnatural angle. Broken, she realised. The hands were also skeletal. No wonder. Wind and weather, and not least the heat of the sun at this time of year, had hastened the decomposition process, and birds had helped themselves. On the upper body, there were only rags left of what might have been a shirt, and beneath it there were only bones too. The trousers were made of denim. There were large holes torn in them. Eagles, she thought. The holes were teeming with white maggots. It could be that the muscles and soft tissue were so rotten that the DNA had broken down, but perhaps it was possible to extract DNA from the bone marrow. Dental records were the most likely method of identifying the person, she thought.

– Document the site of the find, secure the surrounding area, she said. I'm requesting a helicopter to retrieve the body.

Nina had conflicting feelings. She had moved back to her home town because she wanted a quieter life, didn't want to be caught between two stools any longer, didn't want to live with the feeling that no matter how hard she worked, it was never enough. But now life here was starting to resemble more and more the one she had tried to escape; she was still caught between two stools. And yet, a body found – something that demanded a little more than traffic accidents and domestic disputes – awakened all the instincts honed over many years as a homicide detective. The problem was that she already had a murder to investigate. And that case was at a standstill.

26

The climber pulled himself up with rope clips in calm, measured movements. Kajsa filmed him right up until he was at the top of the cliffs. It was something she'd always done ever since she'd been a journalist. Whenever something unexpected happened that piqued her curiosity, no matter where she was, she took photos or made recordings. You could never tell if it might come in handy. But I don't need it now, she thought, putting her mobile in her pocket. It's the fate of Stig Voldsund I'm here to investigate, not the latest news. She stood up and set off southwards towards the memorial stone at a leisurely pace.

Nina Garshol came towards her with her hand raised. She looked stern, but then her face broke into a broad smile. – Kajsa?

– Hi, Nina.

– Are you living here now?

– Yes, Jonas and I are living here now. For a while, at least.

Nina came closer, placing her hand on her arm. – You… it's so terribly sad about Karsten. How are you both getting on?

– Well, you know… One day at a time. But what's going on here?

– I can't say…

– I don't cover breaking news, Kajsa interrupted. So it won't be on the news in five minutes, as it used to, she added with a smile.

– We got a message from someone filming with a drone saying there was something we should check out in the cliffs.

– There's nothing moving down there, said Kajsa, nodding towards the edge.

Police station chief Nina Garshol shook her head slightly and smiled indulgently.

– Once a journalist, always a journalist, she said. I have to go now.

– Pop in for a coffee one day, then, Kajsa offered.

Nina gave a thumbs-up in reply as she walked back to the others.

27

He sat up straight in his chair as the third headline on Dagsrevyen came on. "Mysterious body found in Sunnmøre," read the screen. The report began with the cameraman walking to the edge of the mountain top and filming down into the sea, whilst the reporter said: It was here in the cliffs off Losvika in Vestøy municipality in Sunnmøre that the body was found today. The police were alerted by a man who was filming the area with a drone as part of a film being made about mountain hikes in Sunnmøre. The man who filmed the footage does not wish to be interviewed, but he tells us that he was filming near the cliffs on the outer edge when he spotted something lying half-hidden behind a ledge. He was shocked when he saw clothes and what he realised could be a human being.

He leaned back in his chair, a slight tremor running through his body. – Bloody hell, he whispered softly.

The scene cut to Police Station Chief Nina Garshol. – We received a report early this morning; we've spent some time analysing the footage taken by the drone. A forensic technician has documented the site, and we've recovered the remains of a human being. They've been sent to the Gades Institute in Bergen for a post-mortem.

– Has the body been there for a long time?

– The weather is harsh out here and there are many birds in the mountains, so we'll have to wait until the post-mortem report is ready.

– Is it a man or a woman?

– It's too early to say.

– Do you have any idea who it might be? Are there any missing persons cases from this area?

– Not in my district, but the remains will be checked against the national missing persons register. We're waiting to see if we can get a DNA profile, but that takes time, so we hope that the dental records will make identification possible fairly quickly.

What will happen when they find out who it is? he thought.

He stood up, but remained standing in the middle of the floor, breathing heavily, feeling as though he were suffocating. He hurried up to the loft and put on the scream mask. Then he could scream without making a sound. Slowly his pulse slowed, he regained control and the images in his head faded away.

28

26 August

Kajsa put the cap on the marker, took a step back and looked at the wall, which was covered in a large sheet of grey paper. That was how she usually worked when she started a new project. First she drew a mind map with Lukas's name in the centre, and the names of the other boys scattered around him. From Petter Nedrelid's name she drew a line to his family, Margareth and Fia. She walked over to the wall again and wrote Kikki next to Margareth's name.

Who would have a motive for killing Petter? she wondered, taking a step back. If Margareth and Kikki were having an affair, that could be a motive for both of them. But it was Stig Voldsund who seemed to have the clearest motive: revenge for a ruined life.

I mustn't forget that, even though I'm deeply moved by the fate of seven-year-old Stig and that it is his story that forms the core of the documentary, she thought.

So she decided to take a broader view of recent events, and on the page she jotted down a timeline and expanded it to include everything that had happened recently:

1992: *Lukas is murdered*

April 2025: *Stig Voldsund returns home.*

May: *Fire in Rune Grande's rubbish bin.*

June: *The murder of Petter Nedrelid*.

August: *The Man in the Mask appears.*

She thought for a moment, then wrote under August: *Rune Grande taken away by the police*. She added a question mark. It was just something she thought, and she hadn't heard anything about it.

Finally, she also noted: *Body found in the cliffs.*

She had scanned the class photo and was just hanging it up alongside a picture she'd found online of Lukas when she heard the sound of a car pulling into the courtyard. She peered out of the window. It was Nina Garshol. She went downstairs and opened the door.

– Do you have time for a chat? asked Nina as she got out of the car.

– Absolutely, it's lovely of you to pop in.

Nina and Karsten hadn't just been colleagues, they'd been friends. – He was an incredibly lovely bloke who is deeply missed by many, she said, adding that she'd been to the funeral. Kajsa hadn't noticed her, but that wasn't surprising; the church in Asker had been packed. Since Nina had met Kajsa up in the mountains, she'd been thinking about her, she said. First and foremost because she wanted to tell her how much she'd loved Karsten.

Kajsa swallowed and felt how good it was to rest in Nina's gaze. She was her age, in her mid-forties, and they had met several times. There was something straightforward and unpretentious about her: no make-up, short blonde hair, sturdy but not overweight; she had an aura of strength and determination that was softened by her gentle gaze.

She'd got divorced a couple of years ago, and it had been eight months since she'd moved back home, she said, at Christmas last year. Kajsa knew she didn't have any children.

– It feels right that this is where I'm going to end my career, she said, and follow in my father's footsteps.

– Is your mother still alive?

– Yes, she's fit and well.

She smiled briefly and looked pensive for a few seconds, as if searching for the right words, and there was a searching look in her eyes. Kajsa got the feeling she was feeling her way. – You haven't just come to offer your condolences, have you? she said.

– Hmm… Well, are you still working on documentary film projects?

Kajsa smiled. – So, you're wondering if I'm going to do something about the murder of Petter Nedrelid?

Nina chuckled briefly and nodded.

– Why do you ask?

Nina looked at her thoughtfully for a few seconds. Can I trust that what I say will stay between us?

– Of course.

– You've worked on many criminal cases, including cases where the police have hit a dead end. Karsten said you had a nose for it, Nina continued. That was the word he used. I need someone with a nose for it. And who also has local knowledge and contact with the people in the community out here in a different way than we in the police do.

– You want me to work with you? said Kajsa, surprised.

– I have to do something. The only thing I'm asking is that you share whatever you find out with me. You have extensive experience as a crime reporter, you've worked closely with sources in the police and have a reputation for being trustworthy; you have integrity.

Kajsa was about to say that she had no intention of working on the murder case, but then changed her mind. – And what do I get in return for such an unofficial collaboration?

– Fire away, and I'll see what I can answer.

– Okay, I'll take you at your word. Tampering with the brakes could mean so many things. How were the brakes on Petter's car damaged?

– The brake hoses had been cut; it's easy on such an old car—it was a 1992 Pontiac Firebird. The brake fluid had leaked out, and the brakes weren't working.

– And he drove straight out of the courtyard and down Mallabakken. He probably didn't use the brakes until he'd picked up speed, Kajsa reasoned. – And only then did he realise they weren't working. You know that Mattis Brekke repairs cars? she added.

– We've brought him in for questioning. And we've found his fingerprints on the car. Not surprising, as he's been helping Petter Nedrelid with the car's maintenance for many years. But there are no fingerprints or DNA traces on the brake hoses. Besides, it's quite easy to figure out how to do it on such an old car; you don't need the kind of specialist knowledge he has.

– Was Petter in conflict with anyone? Who had a motive and the opportunity?

– We haven't found anyone with a clear motive. That applies to Mattis Brekke as well. On the contrary, Petter Nedrelid was a sort of benefactor to him. He is on disability benefit, and Petter has helped him out financially from time to time; they grew up together. A couple of staff members at his restaurants have described Petter as quick-tempered, but there is nothing to suggest that he was in serious conflict with anyone. His wife says they were getting on well and his daughter… well, she is the one who seems most affected.

– I know she's studying in Volda. Was she at home when her father died?

– She came home the night before; her mother had a friend visiting at the time.

– Kikki Tomren?

– That's right. She's also been in for questioning, but had nothing to contribute.

– I saw the police pick up Rune Grande one night. Nina raised her eyebrows.

– So you did?

– Why?

– It's got nothing to do with the murder case. It's about something completely different. Kajsa looked at her expectantly, but Nina didn't continue, so she let it go.

– Petter was murdered. Someone set fire to Rune's bin in May, just over a month before Petter died. They were close friends and business partners. Both were affected. Is that a coincidence?

Nina nodded thoughtfully, but didn't comment.

– You've heard of the Man in the Mask? Kajsa continued.

– Yes, but only yesterday.

Nina ran her hand hastily through her hair with a resigned expression. – That's exactly what I mean, that's why I need you. Nor did anyone tell us about the fire in Rune Grande's rubbish bin until very recently.

She sighed. – We're in the process of gathering CCTV footage from anyone who has recordings of the Man in the Mas. We've really done everything by the book regarding the murder case: spoken to everyone living in Losvika, checked mobile phones against base stations, tracked down guests at the hotel and campsite, and mapped out who was here from the evening before until the morning Petter Nedrelid died. Since Petter Nedrelid also had a restaurant in Ålesund, we've spoken to the staff

there, we've checked his mobile communications, bank transactions, toll booth records and the ferry, to see if any of his staff in Ålesund or other acquaintances might have travelled here. And that has resulted in… nothing, she said, throwing her arms up in exasperation.

– The last thing I needed was another body. Bullocks, that is!

Kajsa decided to take her up to the study. Nina stood in front of the grey paper on the wall with an ironic smile. – So you're conducting your own investigation?

– It's called journalism, said Kajsa, mirroring her smile.

– Why is Petters' wife's friend, Kikki, standing there?

Kajsa said it was possible that Kikki and Margareth were having an affair.

– But that must stay between us, because I have absolutely no proof of it.

– Hmm, said Nina thoughtfully, pointing to Stig Voldsund's name. What do you think of him?

– You know who he is?

Nina nodded. – Several people we've interviewed have mentioned him. They believe he was responsible for Lukas Lindbo's death in 1992. Nina shook her head. – – – But that's probably just village gossip. The police concluded it was an accident.

– Officially, yes, said Kajsa. In reality, Lukas was strangled.

– What?" said Nina, surprised. Wasn't it an accident?"

– Only in the sense that seven-year-old boys don't understand the consequences of their actions.

Kajsa pointed out the seven-year-old boys in the class photo and explained who they were. – Lukas died of suffocation, and Stig Voldsund was identified by the other boys as the perpetrator.

– I didn't know that. It happened when my father was the local police chief. I only remember the case vaguely; I was twelve when it happened, and we didn't live here, but in the town centre.

Nina ran her fingers quickly through her short hair. – Hmm, this is strange.

– What is? asked Kajsa.

– I've received the preliminary results of the post-mortem on the body found in the cliffs. We'll release more information tomorrow. We've identified him. She paused for a few seconds. It was Lukas's older brother; his name was Markus

Lindbo.

– What do you mean?

They'd identified him from his teeth. Markus Lindbo was the eldest of four siblings. He was twelve when Lukas died. There was also a sister and a brother, who were twins. They were two years old in 1992. Markus Lindbo went missing on 31 May this year. He lived in Oslo and worked for a plumbing firm. It was his employer who reported him missing when he did not turn up for work on Monday 2 June, and no one answered the door when they went to his home. He was 45 years old and lived alone, Nina said.

– Cause of death?

– He was shot.

– You're joking. What are you doing now? asked Kajsa.

– We've opened a murder investigation.

– Do you know anything more about the time of death?

– We assume he died either on Saturday 31 May or Sunday 1 June. He hadn't told his colleagues he was coming here.

– Someone must have met him here.

– On Saturday there was a big open-air concert with the CC Cowboys, and Losvika was packed with people; visitors came from all over the district. The owner of the campsite doesn't remember him, and he wasn't staying at the hotel. We'll publish a photo tomorrow and will appeal to witnesses who may have seen or met him to come forward. But what else can you tell us about the Lukas case?

– Here in the village, many people know what the police actually concluded. The case had major consequences for Stig. He was taken from his mother and placed in foster care a year after Lukas died. I've spoken to him; he's let me read both the police reports and the child welfare reports, and he insists he's innocent.

– Do you believe him?

– Have you looked at the 1992 investigation?

– No, I only know the conclusion from the media coverage of the case, that it was said to have been an accident during play.

Kajsa suggested they go to the kitchen for a cup of coffee; she'd baked cinnamon buns for when Jonas came home from school, to surprise him. And just as they sat down at the kitchen table, he came storming in, flinging his bag down in the hallway.

– It smells lovely, what have you baked? he shouted as he came in.

– Hi, Jonas, said Nina.

– Hi, he said, grabbing a cinnamon bun.

– Nina is the police chief here, said Kajsa.

– I worked with your dad in Oslo for many years. I hear you've moved here. Do you like it here?

– Very much so, he replied, his mouth full of bun.

– Did you have a nice day at school? asked Kajsa.

– Yes, our teacher is cool; he joined in and played football during break today. Can I go out again? I'm meeting Elias.

He was out the door almost before Kajsa had a chance to reply.

Half an hour later, Nina leaned back in her kitchen chair and spread her arms wide. She had been sitting intently, listening to Kajsa's account of the Lukas case and the enormous consequences Stig Voldsund faced as a result of the police's conclusion.

– So you mean Stig Voldsund was manipulated into confessing. Was my father present during the interrogation?

– No, he was only involved at the beginning. I have no doubt that Stig was manipulated into confessing.

– So the police report doesn't say that Oda Sævik, the teacher, saw Stig come out of the woods on his own quite a while *before* the other boys?

Kajsa shook her head.

– So Oda Sævik corroborates Stig's original account of what happened in the woods in 1992, said Nina thoughtfully.

– Yes, and there was one more thing I thought of when I was reading through the boys' interviews. The fathers of Mattis, Rune and Petter all get involved in the interviews early on, and they all point the finger at Stig.

– I see, you're wondering whether the fathers might have spoken to each other and got their sons to lie?

– The thought has crossed my mind. I can't imagine three little boys aged seven

coordinating their statements. The three fathers were close friends from childhood. Stig's father wasn't; he was a newcomer to the area. Besides, it was Stig's mother who was with him during the interview.

Nina looked tired, but then she smiled. – Karsten was right. You've got a nose for this.

– It's just standard journalistic practice. But it can't be a coincidence that Markus was found dead in the village where his brother died as a child, said Kajsa passionately. You have to link the death to the Lukas case.

– Thank you, you've given me a lot to think about, said Nina, standing up. And you, this conversation stays between us, right?

– Of course.

Kajsa accompanied Nina to the door. Nina took her by the arm and looked at her seriously.

– We're talking about two murders in the same village; you must be careful. And promise me that if you find out anything important, you'll come to me. Don't do anything on your own. I'd also advise you not to let people know you're conducting an investigation. There could be a killer on the loose in this village.

Shortly after Nina had driven off, the phone rang. It was Johs Kruse.

He asked if she'd like to go on a sailing trip. She was both surprised and pleased, a little flattered, to be honest. But she had to check with Jonas first. It turned out he was at Elias's house. She was free to go on the sailing trip.

Kajsa wasn't much of a sailor; it was Karsten who had known how to sail. But they'd been out with a couple of friends who had a sailing boat in the Oslo Fjord during the summers.

They hoisted the sails off the breakwaters. The sky had clouded over and a chilly north wind was making the sails flutter.

The boat had two tiller handles; they sat in their respective places at the stern, and as they crossed over to the bird cliff on the neighbouring island, they took turns steering and pulling the jib over to the other side. They sailed right up to the bird cliff. Kajsa said she'd often been here with her father as a child. – Back then, the birds were so noisy we could hardly talk to each other. It seems quieter than I remember. Perhaps the impressions seem stronger when you're a child.

Johs shook his head; she was right. The experts were very concerned about the decline in bird populations, he said. – When you were little, there were around 800,000

birds here. Now there are only around 100,000.

He explained that this was linked to a lack of food from the sea. – The state of the mountains here is proof that we are failing to look after the sea.

They sailed along the Losvik cliffs on a single tack, as Johs put it, since they had the wind coming in at an angle from the side. Kajsa didn't know the expression, but he explained that sailing on one tack meant they didn't change the positions of the sails to catch the wind.

Kajsa watched him surreptitiously. He had a beard and medium-length, dark hair, and was dressed in an Icelandic sweater. He could have stepped straight into an episode of Lars Monsen on a hike.

Suddenly he looked at her and smiled. She smiled back quickly, feeling a little embarrassed, as if she'd been caught red-handed. He has a nice smile, lovely lively eyes with a strong gaze, she thought. The thought felt strange, as if it were forbidden. It had been a long time since she'd thought anything like that, noticed a man's gaze in that way.

When they had moored the boat in the guest harbour in front of the hotel, he looked at her questioningly. – Can I buy you a glass of wine?

Kajsa checked the time. – Yes, please, I've got time for one.

He went into the lounge and called out: – Red or white?

– You decide, she said.

He came out with a bottle of red wine. – It's a Grands Échézeaux from DRC, 2009 vintage.

– That doesn't mean much to me. Are you a wine connoisseur?

– Well, I've been collecting wine for a few years.

– Not much room for that on a boat, perhaps?

– Yes, but I have a flat in Oslo.

– What did you do for a living before you came here?

– I was a financial analyst.

– It's a long way from the world of finance in Oslo to a fishing boat in Sunnmøre.

– You can say that again, and that's why I'm here, he said and laughed.

He poured the wine into the glasses. Kajsa took a cautious sip, swirled it around in her mouth before swallowing. – Ooh, that's lovely, what sort of wine is this? She looked at the bottle.

– I can tell you like being at sea, he said.

– I come from a line of fishermen and fishermen's wives on my father's side. I think it's in my genes; something happens to me when I'm out at sea. It gives me peace.

– I don't think you need to have it in your genes. I feel the same way, but there are no sailors in my family.

– What's in your genes then?

– Restlessness.

– Restlessness?

– Yes, don't ask why, he said seriously. – You've recently been left alone, I gather? Kajsa looked down into her glass, twirling it in her hand for a few seconds.

– Sorry, I shouldn't be so blunt, he said quickly.

– I lost my husband early this summer.

– Is that why you've moved here?

– I have three children, and the youngest, Jonas, who's eleven, wanted us to stay on here after the holidays. I think it was a good idea. The other two are grown up.

– Grief is the extreme of life, he said, gazing out over the sea. A pensive look crossed his face. He has experienced grief, she thought. Who has he lost? The woman he loved, a mother, a child? Is that why he has chosen to stay here, in a different life with new people who don't know him, don't know what he's carrying inside? She felt the urge to place her hand on his arm, to say something that might comfort him.

– I've lost both my mother and my father, and in my experience, grief doesn't get any less, she said. It does, however, change over time.

He said nothing, just gazed thoughtfully out over the sea for a few seconds. Then he turned towards her, the seriousness replaced by a warm smile that reached his eyes.

29

1 September

He had heard Kajsa arrange with Else that her son would stay with her whilst she went to Asker for a couple of days. At last, a new opportunity had presented itself. It was one o'clock, overcast and dark; the village was asleep.

He knew perfectly well what the psychologist had meant when he'd said he was traumatised. In serious need of treatment, he'd added. After a few sessions, he'd refused to speak to him. He might have broken down then, and everything inside him would have spilled out. Now his GP gave him the pills he needed without asking any more questions. They'd helped for many years. But now everything that had happened recently had made his thoughts race; it was bubbling and boiling, hurting so much that he had to do something to stop his head from exploding. The mask fit perfectly; it screamed for him, and his head calmed down when he put it on.

What he wanted most in life was a girlfriend. He'd met one of the young Ukrainian women living up here in the mountains a couple of weeks ago. She'd shared a chocolate with him. They'd sat side by side on the sacrificial stone. She knew little Norwegian, but they got by fine in English. When they said goodbye, she had asked: *'We meet again?'*

'Yes,' he had said, feeling his face flush. Her breasts swayed softly as she walked away.

He thought about all this as he sat in the wicker chair in Agnes's house. He stood up, put the chair back where it had been, and it struck him that he might have forgotten it earlier. As he turned in the kitchen doorway to go out, he noticed a pile of papers on the kitchen table. He walked over and picked up the folder on top. *'Interrogation'* was written on it. He opened it, sat down heavily in the chair, stared, and leafed through a

notepad lying there. Kajsa was digging into the events, he realised, for she had noted: ‘Does Petter’s murder have anything to do with the Lukas case?’

He leaned forward across the table, breathing in short, sharp gasps. She was on to it.

30

3 September

Kajsa noticed it the moment she returned and entered the kitchen. The police documents had been lying in a neat pile on the table with the interview transcripts on top. Now they lay askew, and the notepad, which had been on top, lay beside them.

A chill ran through her. Someone had been here.

She'd been in Asker, where a young woman who was a nurse had moved into Karsten's renovated flat. It had felt good. The traces of the sick Karsten were gradually fading, and in a strange way, that made the healthy Karsten clearer to her. The memories of the man he had been – the sound of his voice, his laughter, his hands, his gaze, whether mischievous, teasing or warm with passion – everything that ALS had robbed him of – came back and were present in the house once more. It didn't make the loss any less, but at the same time it felt more manageable. She wasn't grieving because she was waiting for his life to slowly and inevitably draw to a close; she was grieving because she missed the healthy Karsten.

Jonas came storming in and threw his arms around her. – Did you have a nice time at Else's? she asked.

– Yes, it was fine; Else is nice. Did you bring the photo?

– It's on the table.

Jonas picked it up, stood there for a moment looking at it. He pressed his lips together, and Kajsa thought he was about to cry.

He quickly wiped his eyes. – Where shall we hang it?

It had been his idea that Kajsa should bring the photo of Karsten from Asker. It had stood on the coffin in the church, and had been taken in the car park above Kvitsandvika with the open sea and Landego and the sun setting into the sea in the background. They agreed on hanging it on the wall between the windows in the conservatory. Jonas sorted it out himself, fetched a hammer and some nails and hung it up, took a step back and said: It looks good; it can stay there. Can I go fishing with Elias and his dad?

– That’s fine. Remember your life jacket, then.

– Sure, he barely had time to reply before the door slammed shut behind him.

Good, she thought as he dashed out the door; he won’t stay away as long as he used to. And he’s more free and independent of me. Karsten was right; both Jonas and I can find a new foothold here.

Someone’s been here while I was away. The thought still lay like a rumbling in her temples and a faint, unpleasant tremor in her diaphragm. She’d noticed the indentation in the duvets in the bedroom and that the wicker chair was facing the wrong way when she’d arrived here in July. Had someone been here before, had someone slept in her bed? She rang Else and asked if she had the front door key; could she have lost it? No, she had it on her key ring. – Why do you ask?

Kajsa told her what she’d noticed in the kitchen.

– How unpleasant. You must change the locks on the doors.

She felt a growing unease as she walked round checking whether there were any doors or windows that weren’t closed or locked. No windows were open; the patio door was locked and couldn’t be unlocked from the outside. The cellar door had a latch; it could be opened with a key from the outside, but she’d never found that one. There were three keys to the front door: the one hanging in the key cupboard in the hallway, one in the key box outside, and the one Else had. She took the one from the key box.

Could the intruder have had anything to do with the investigations she’d been conducting, with Petter’s murder, Markus Lindbo’s murder, the Lukas case? Had a murderer been in here?

31

5. September

Jonas wanted to race up the 418 steps from Byparken to the Aksla viewpoint. He flew ahead of her; she deliberately fell behind, and when he reached the top, he stood waiting with his arms raised above his head. – Yeah, I won! he shouted.

The weather was clear, Ålesund spread out before them, and the Sunnmøre archipelago stretched as far as the eye could see. The first few days of September had been rainy, but now the weather had cleared and there was no wind. Jonas used the large binoculars and spotted Losvika out at sea; he recognised the mountain formations in Vestøy. When a coachload of tourists arrived, they went into Fjellstua and bought ice cream, which they ate before walking back down to the town. They were going to stay the night at a hotel in Brosundet. It had originally been an old boathouse with a view of the sound and the town. The next day they were going to the Atlantic Ocean Park to look at the fish and animals in the aquarium before heading home.

Stig Voldsund's mother lived in a terraced house in Vegsund, and Kajsa found the address on the satnav. Jonas wanted to stay in the car and read a book whilst Kajsa spoke to her. Lovise Voldsund must have seen them coming, for she opened the door as Kajsa got out of the car. She was small and thin, couldn't have been more than five foot six. – I've been dreading this, she said as they sat in the living room. – It's painful to talk about, but I've seen some of the documentaries you've made, and I know you've uncovered information that has shed new light on cases.

Kajsa asked if it was okay for her to video record the conversation. – It's sort of my notebook. And if I were to find new information that led me to make a documentary about the Lukas case, you'll have the final say on how the conversation with you is used.

She was fine with that, and Kajsa set the camera on a tripod next to her.

– Are you on good terms with Stig?

– Yes, I do now. She smiled sadly. – I've got him back.

– That's good to hear. I've read the transcripts of the interview when Stig was seven years old.

A flicker of resistance appeared in Lovise's eyes. She knows what's coming, thought Kajsa, and continued. – What was your impression of the police officer who conducted the interview?

– Friendly at first. But then he changed when he confronted Stig with what the other boys had claimed. It was very frightening.

– But the transcripts show that he tried to get Stig to speak freely?

– You weren't there, she said. He did at first, he was smiling and friendly, but he changed.

She held her hand over her eyes and swallowed. Kajsa gave her a moment before continuing. – Was Stig anxious?

– More and more as time went on. He was squirming in his chair, couldn't sit still.

His body language said it all. He wanted to sit on my lap, but he wasn't allowed to, not at first.

– And then you left?

The answer was just a breath. – Yes.

Once again, she hid her face in her hand. – I couldn't believe what I was hearing, I was completely shocked, she continued after a moment.

– You felt unwell?

– I went out to protect Stig; I couldn't let him see me break down.

– Did you believe what was said?

– That Stig had killed a friend? It didn't matter what I believed or didn't believe.

– You asked Stig to tell the truth. Even then, he continued to deny it and repeated that he wasn't there when Lukas died.

Lovise Voldsund nodded and swallowed.

– You were sitting in the corridor when he confessed?

Lovise Voldsund fought back tears, pressing a finger to her lips for a few seconds

before saying in a low voice: – Yes, they told me afterwards, when Lukas came out.

– Have you read the transcript of the interview?

– No. But I know what happened; Stig has told me.

She leaned forward and buried her face in her hands. Her shoulders shook. Kajsa went to the kitchen and fetched some kitchen roll, sat down beside her and placed her hand on her arm. – That's not how it should be done. It was an assault on a small child, whatever happened in the woods, she said.

– I'm so ashamed, cried Lovise.

– It wasn't your fault.

– I let my child down. At first, after he was taken from me, I tried to keep in touch. But it was a long way to Nordmøre, and when he was a teenager he ran away. It's only been a couple of years since he got in touch with me.

She wiped her eyes. – There's a lot that needs healing. The year that passed between the police interview and child welfare services taking him into care was terrible for all of us. He came home and lay in his room crying. 'I didn't do it, Mum, you have to believe me,' he said. But it was too late. He was broken; the police broke him, the psychologist broke him, I broke him, and I couldn't cope with him, but you must know that I fought; I didn't want to give him up.

She blew her nose silently. – But in the end, it just wasn't working. It was taking its toll on my daughters, and I thought it would be best for him to get away from Losvika.

– I've read the reports and spoken to Oda, the teacher.

– So you know what he was subjected to, that he was being monitored? Kajsa nodded.

– What happens now?

– It takes a lot for the police to reopen an investigation into such an old case, but we'll see.

Lovise Voldsund took Kajsa's hand, squeezing it tightly between her own. – I hope you find out what happened to Lukas, that Stig is cleared of the charges. If so, you can use the recording; I'll help where I can.

The trip to Ålesund wasn't just to talk to Stig Voldsund's mother, and she hadn't needed to stay overnight to go for a night out with Jonas. It was only a couple of

hours' journey each way. Kajsa had made a plan; she'd bought a surveillance camera and placed it on the kitchen worktop next to the coffee machine, and she'd booked the hotel stay so she could be away at night and see if it lured the intruder into the house.

Kajsa took Jonas to a restaurant serving bacalao and told him what it had been like in Ålesund in the 1800s, when sailing ships from Spain, Portugal, and even as far away as Brazil, came here to collect the dried cod used in the dish. Because of the fire hazard, they couldn't cook on board the ships, but they were allowed to stay with local people and cook in their kitchens. And that's how the women in the town learnt to make bacalao.

Jonas fell asleep whilst reading his book. Kajsa gently took it from his hands and tucked the duvet over him. She stood by the bed and looked at him. Her heart swelled. How lovely he was, so much like Karsten.

She stood at the window and looked out over Brosundet and up towards Aksla. As she stood there, her phone vibrated. It was a notification from the security camera app. She went inside and stared at the screen. The door to the kitchen opened, and a figure appeared. Kajsa held her breath.

It was the Man in the Mask.

32

6. September

It was Saturday afternoon when they arrived home in Losvika. Jonas spotted some friends fishing from the jetty and got out at Hamnevegen. Kajsa hurried to download the footage from the CCTV camera onto her PC so she could see a larger image and make out details more easily when she zoomed in. She froze the image. The mask was eerie, the eyes two dark holes. She focused on the clothes. A dark jacket, a hood pulled tight around the head, dark trousers and dark shoes. The figure was tall and slender.

How had he got in? The only thing she could think of was that he had a key to the cellar door.

She let the recording play. The figure disappeared for several minutes. Was he up in the attic? When he returned, he went into the living room, walked around, paused in front of the portrait of Aunt Agnes for a good while, picked up the bronze statuette of the little boy, and stood there as if weighing it in his hand. He walked over to the bookshelf, ran a finger along the spines of the books, before finding the old toy car in Jonas's box of drawing things. He took it with him, turned the wicker chair round and sat down. She kept an eye on the time; he sat there for over twenty minutes. Why was he doing that? This time he put the wicker chair back where it had been and walked back the same way, through the kitchen. But at the door leading out to the hallway, he stopped. She saw him take several slow, deep breaths, his chest and shoulders rising and falling. Then he went out and closed the door behind him.

Jonas came and asked if he could stay the night at Elias's. It both surprised and delighted Kajsa. It had only been three weeks since he'd started sleeping in his own room, and only once since then had he crawled into her double bed. He packed a small bag with the book he was reading, his pyjamas and his toothbrush, whilst Kajsa spoke to Elias's mother, asking her to ring if Jonas changed his mind, even if it was in the middle of the night.

After he'd left, Kajsa played the recording over and over again, zooming in, freezing the image, rewinding, but she saw nothing that could help identify the man.

She uploaded the footage to her PC and logged the content with timecodes. But all the while she could picture the masked man. It was an unpleasant thought. She found some planks, nailed the cellar door shut again, and decided to sleep on the sofa with the lights on.

She sat there rewinding and freezing the image of the man over and over again. When he came from the living room towards the kitchen, she saw his whole figure from the front. She leaned forward, stared at his hands and zoomed in on one of them.

There was only one person she knew who had such dirty hands with dirt under the fingernails.

33

It was just after nine when Kajsa pressed her finger against the doorbell at Mattis Brekke's house. No ringtone. When she knocked, the door gave way. A Golden Retriever was lying in the hallway. It stood up and wagged its tail happily. She scratched it behind the ear and called into the hallway. – Hello! Is anyone home?

It smelled of bread. She went up the stairs to the first floor, peered into the kitchen and thought that nothing here had changed since Mattis's mother died; it certainly hadn't been redecorated, barely even cleaned.

His father was lying on the sofa in the living room. – Hi, she said and walked closer.

His eyes were sunken, his arms thin as sticks. Next to the sofa stood an oxygen machine.

– Who are you? he asked in a weak voice.

– My name is Kajsa…

– No… home care, he said quietly, trying to prop himself up on his elbows.

– Sorry to barge in like this, but I'm looking for Mattis. Is he here? she said.

– I… don't know, he replied, breathing heavily, and sank back against the pillow.

Kajsa took a couple of steps closer. – Can I ask you something? she said cautiously.

Gudmund Brekke coughed. – What is it?

– I'm your neighbour. Kajsa, do you remember me? She continued when she got no reply. – I'm a journalist and I'm doing some research on the Lukas case from 1992, and I understand that you accompanied Mattis to his police interview…

Gudmund Brekke waved his hand and closed his eyes.

– I'm just wondering how it could be that you were so certain at the time that it was Stig Voldsund who had killed Lukas.

– Get out, he whispered.

– Did Mattis tell you that Lukas was dead and that it was Stig's fault?

Gudmund Brekke just lay there with his eyes closed. If he hadn't just uttered a few words, she would have thought he was dead.

Kasja stood for a moment on the steps, looking up at the Faderen. The council had sent out information to the residents of Losvika with evacuation plans in case the mountain collapsed. For the time being, there was no danger, the geologists reported, but autumn and winter were coming soon, bringing rain, storms and frost, and the residents had to be prepared for the worst.

The light was on in the workshop; she hurried across the square and opened the workshop door. It smelled of rubber, oil and petrol; a car stood high on a jack, and there were tools everywhere – on a workbench, on the walls and on the floor. In one corner lay a large pile of car tyres. Mattis was nowhere to be seen. She continued along the wall and spotted a door at the far end of the room. It was slightly ajar. Mattis was leaning back with his hands behind his head at a desk with a desktop PC. On the wall in front of him was a blackboard. The only source of light was a solitary light bulb hanging from the ceiling. She leaned forward slightly. Another wall, made of concrete, was covered with newspaper clippings and football photos.

Suddenly, Mattis spun round. – What are you doing here? he said, standing up quickly.

– Hi, Mattis. Can I come in? I'd like to have a chat.

– About what?

She stepped inside. – You've been inside my house.

Mattis looked surprised but said nothing, scratching his neck, his face flushed.

– I've installed a security camera in the kitchen, and I recognised you by your handyman's hands. Kajsa pointed at his hands. – Do you have a key to my cellar door? She glanced at him quickly.

He didn't answer.

She wasn't afraid, but thought she should be careful and not provoke him. He was frail and lonely, but there was no malice in him; she couldn't believe there was. – I just want to talk to you, so we can sort out what's happened.

She walked over to the blackboard. – What's this?

Mattis stood a couple of metres away, staring at her with his lips pressed together and deep furrows on his forehead. His gaze seemed distant.

On the board were photos of Petter, Margareth, Kikki, Rune, Rita and several other villagers whose faces she recognised. One of the photos was of Kikki and Margareth kissing. – Why are you going round spying on people wearing a mask, Mattis? You're

scaring people, you realise that, don’t you?

Before she realised what was happening, Mattis snatched the mobile from her hand and threw her to the floor. In a flash, he was by the door and slipped out. She heard a click, then the room was plunged into pitch darkness.

34

Kajsa felt her way to the chair by the desk and sat down. She tried to picture the room. A desk, an old sofa, a light bulb in the ceiling, concrete floor and brick walls, no windows. Taking small steps, she walked straight across the floor from the desk towards the door on the other side of the room. She bumped into the wall and felt her way with her hands. The door was locked and there was no light switch on either side of the doorframe. She turned one hundred and eighty degrees, walked back to the desk, and opened the drawers. They were all empty except for the last one. There was something round and rubbery inside. Could it be a torch? She fumbled about a bit before she managed to switch it on, shone it around, aimed it at the ceiling so the whole room was dimly lit. She sat down heavily in the chair, looked at the board with photos and names placed on a drawing of Losvika, and breathed in and out slowly and deeply through her nose.

Mattis had revealed people's secrets. Rune dragging his wife by the hair in their kitchen. The photo of Margareth and Kikki kissing spoke for itself. A photo of Petter looked as though it had been taken through a window into an office. He was in a passionate embrace with a woman whose face Kajsa couldn't make out. Another was of Margareth and her daughter Fia; judging by their body language, it looked as though they were arguing. Next to it was a note: 'Fia knows', and by the photo of a local fisherman, it was written: 'Sells fish on the black market to Petter'.

The door was solid; she looked for tools she could use to break it down. There was nothing.

Her pulse wouldn't slow down. Mattis is the Man in the Mask. Will he be back soon? What will happen then? Maybe he'll never come? It's no use shouting; no one will hear me through these thick brick walls. Jonas … He's fine, he's with Elias. They'll come looking for me. Nina will find me.

She suddenly felt unwell and lay down on the sofa.

How unwell was Mattis? He was on disability benefit for mental health reasons, Oda had thought. He'd been hospitalised once, but that was a long time ago. Yet here he was, going about scaring people with a scream mask. Why? It was a terrible thing to do.

Goodness, had she misjudged him? Was he capable of murder?

Suddenly her heart was racing, hard and heavy, sweat was running into her eyes, her breathing was shallow and ragged, her hands went numb and her legs trembled. Suddenly there was a sharp pain in her chest, spreading out into her arm, all the way to her fingertips. It went on and on; she tried to control her breathing but couldn't, and a ringing began in her ears.

Was it a heart attack? Was she dying now?

35

Mattis paced back and forth across the living room floor with a glass of whisky in his hand. He pressed a tablet out of a blister pack and washed it down with a large gulp. When the warmth spread through his stomach, he usually felt calmer. Now it was of no use. He waited for the tablet to take effect, but the memories only grew stronger and stronger. Lukas, always Lukas, his voice screaming: 'Mum! I want to go to Mum! Don't do it, please,' before he fell completely silent. More memories flashed by, fast as heavy clouds in the sky on a stormy day, Stig looking at him through the window of a stranger's car as it passed, Petter and Rune laughing loudly and shouting that he'd wet himself, the doctor saying he had to give up football. His mother stood on the stairs with her suitcase, her hair gone. She lied and said she'd be back soon. That had been the last time he'd seen her.

The scenes played out again and again, the voices, the faces, he saw them perfectly clearly, heard them, they flickered across his retina like film clips on repeat.

He slapped his forehead with an open hand to make the images stop, but the film spun and spun, the racing thoughts continued and continued, the skin on his arms, stomach and scalp tightened, his face felt tight, he scratched his throat, his mouth grew smaller and smaller, he couldn't breathe. He was past *the point of no return*, found himself at the centre of the black hole, where he had been for years after crossing the event horizon that day in the woods. There was no way out, but there was an end. He had always known that. What had he thought? That he could get better, that the anxiety would disappear when he saw behind people's facades and knew that they, too, did not lead perfect lives, that the rage could make him stronger, and that the power and mastery he felt because he knew their secrets would change anything? He drew a deep breath; his mouth felt like the hole in a straw. He had to get out, fill his lungs with the sea air, feel it in his blood.

Only when there were no thoughts in his head would he be able to be free.

36

7. September

Jonas ran up the stairs. The door was locked. How strange, hadn't his mother got up yet? He rang the bell and glanced at the clock. It was almost nine. She never used to sleep that late, not even on Sundays. He waited a moment, rang the bell again. When nothing happened, he walked round the house and up onto the terrace, fetched the key from the key box and let himself in. She wasn't there. He rang her; it rang and rang, then her voice came on the answering machine. Where could she be? At Else's, perhaps. He jumped on his bike.

– Hi, Jonas, is that you? said Else gently.

– Have you seen Mum? he asked, out of breath.

– No, not today.

– She's not home. I've been staying at Elias's.

– Maybe she's out for a jog.

– She would have told me. She always tells me, and she's not answering her mobile, he said, biting his lip.

– Come on, let's check again, said Else with a smile, hoping he didn't notice how worried she was getting. Kajsa had told her that Jonas had been very afraid of losing her after Karsten died; she would never go anywhere without letting him know.

Else called out to Kajsa from the top of the basement stairs. Jonas hadn't been down to the basement to check, so she hurried down, peering into every room. Could she have taken ill?

She wasn't there.

– Where could she be? said Jonas in a thin voice when Else came back up.

He swallowed and looked at her with anxious eyes.

After numerous calls to Kajsa's mobile, Else rang Nina Garshol, and half an hour later Nina pulled up outside the shop. She immediately asked the young police officer with her to speak to the neighbours to find out if anyone had seen Kajsa after 6 pm yesterday, when Jonas left home.

– Perhaps she went for a jog after all, thinking she'd be home well before you arrived, and then she fell and hurt herself, Else comforted Jonas.

– Where does she usually go for a run? asked Nina.

Jonas described the route along the cliffs to Losviktua and down to Kvitsandvika.

Nina placed her hand on his shoulder. – We'll find her.

– She'll be here soon, said Else, pulling Jonas close. She's probably just hurt her foot and needs help getting home.

Nina's phone rang. It was the Red Cross rescue team. They were almost there in Losvika, and she gave them instructions to park on Fjellvegen and follow the path through the woods and southwards along the cliffs.

Else pulled her aside, whispering so that Jonas wouldn't hear what she was saying, and told her about the phone call from Kajsa the night before, the suspicion that someone had been inside her house.

Nina went to Kajsa's house. Her laptop was on the kitchen table. She rang Else and got the password from Jonas. A frozen image of the Man in the Mask filled the entire screen when she opened it. She pressed play. Could Kajsa have recognised him? Why had she not said anything? She fast-forwarded and rewound, but there was nothing about the figure that gave her any idea who it might be.

As she walked around the house, the man leading the Rescue Corps' search operation in the mountains called. He shouted into the phone. – There's a man called Mattis at the top of the cliffs, I think he's planning to jump!

– Talk to him, make contact, I'm on my way.

Nina Garshol counted herself lucky for all the hours she'd spent in the gym over the last few years, running in the pouring rain alongside the young police officer up Fjellvegen, through the woods towards the summit. She'd followed a hunch and taken Mattis's dog with her; it was standing in the yard as they passed his house. On the occasions she'd spoken to him during the investigation, she'd thought he seemed very attached to it, and from previous experience with suicidal people she knew she needed

something that stirred emotions in them. It could be information about their life situation, but it could also be someone close to them.

Five or six people were standing in a cluster; a little ahead of them was a man talking to Mattis, standing a couple of metres from the edge of the cliffs. Nina Garshol stopped and handed the dog lead to her colleague.

– Stay here, don't come any closer with the dog until I say so. A woman handed her a bottle of water, and she took a few sips, catching her breath before continuing calmly towards the edge. – Mattis? she said tentatively.

Mattis was standing with his face towards the sea. The sea roared beneath him and the wind made him sway. But he didn't react.

– Why are you standing here?

Now he glanced at her sideways. – I… there's no point anymore.

– Why is there no point?

He didn't answer.

– You've been thinking about this?

– I've long thought that I'll die when I want to. The sea will take me.

– Why is there no point? she repeated.

– Life is meaningless.

He took a step closer to the edge. She moved a little forward and to the side of him, trying to make eye contact. – I understand that you feel that way, but let's talk about it; I'd like to help you.

He glanced to the side. – What can *you* do? No one can do anything.

– I'm sure I can. But then you have to tell me why you're feeling so sad.

Mattis glanced at her briefly again. She held out her hand and took a small step towards him. – Come on, give me your hand.

– Don't come any closer!

– All right, she said, raising her arms, turning her palms towards him and taking a step back. But I can help you.

There was a glint in his eyes that made her think he wanted to believe her. – Trust me, Mattis, she said quickly. We'll figure it out together.

Mattis looked down at the cliffs.

– I've experienced first-hand that life can take a turn for the better when you least expect it. He said nothing, and she continued: 'I lost a child. Nothing mattered anymore, but I got help and got back on my feet.

She took a small step closer to the edge. – Come on, give me your hand. I'll do everything I can to help you, I mean it.

– Nobody cares about me.

– I do.

– That's because it's your job.

She was three or four metres away from him. He hadn't moved any closer to the edge. Should she lunge forward, force him to the ground—was it possible? What was the risk? He could jump, dragging her with him. No, the risk was too great; he had to come of his own accord. She had to find something to talk about that would distract him, play for time.

– Weren't you the one who was a great football talent when you were young? He didn't answer.

– And then you got injured, she continued. That's a shame. Lots of people have their dreams shattered. But they get back on their feet. It's possible.

He bowed his head, gazing down at the cliffs.

– Mattis, do you know where Kajsa is? she said quickly.

He took another step whilst staring at her. – She shouldn't have come.

– You know where she is?

Above them, a flock of seagulls screeched. Mattis seemed distant.

– What's your dog's name? she said quickly.

– Balder, he whispered.

– Balder is here.

She waved to her colleague to come over. The dog tugged at the lead, wanting to go to Mattis. It obeyed when she told it to sit, but its eyes were fixed on Mattis. It whimpered.

– How old is Balder?

No response.

– He looks young, he's got many years left. Who's going to look after him? Your dad? That won't work. Maybe he'll be put down. That would be sad, wouldn't it?

He didn't answer, but the look in his eyes softened as he looked at the dog.

– Come on, Mattis, it's all right, come on, please. Balder needs you.

The seconds ticked by; he stood frozen in the moment, his arms out to the side and his gaze fixed on the dog. It was now barking, as if calling out to him. Then he slowly reached out his hand towards Nina. She took two quick steps towards him and, with a sharp tug, pulled him backwards into her arms. Both fell to the ground; his colleague and the search team rushed over, and Balder licked Mattis enthusiastically in the face.

*

By the time Mattis was driven away in the ambulance, Nina and her colleague were already at his home. It had been impossible to get any sense out of him; he had just cried and talked about black holes. But when he was standing on the edge, he had said that Kajsa shouldn't have come, so she must have sought him out.

Nina got nothing out of Mattis's father; a search of the house proved fruitless. In the workshop, there was a solid door right at the back, but it was locked and there was no key in the lock. Nina knocked; immediately she heard knocking sounds and a voice. She tried to pick the old, rusty lock without success. The door opened outwards, so it was impossible to break it down. In a corner of the workshop lay a chainsaw, and after ten minutes Nina's colleague had managed to cut a hole. She peered inside. The room was dimly lit by a flickering light source. – Kajsa, are you there?

– Yes!

Suddenly she looked straight into Kajsa's face on the other side of the door.

– We're sawing our way through. Step back!

37

Kajsa felt nauseous and dizzy when she was finally out in the fresh air again. One of the men from the Rescue Corps was a doctor. She told him about the pain in her chest, but he couldn't find any physical explanation when he examined her; he thought she'd had a panic attack. She was told to take it easy for a few days.

Jonas came running over with Else. – Mum, he said, throwing himself into her arms. Where have you been?

– There, there, it's all right, everything's fine now, she comforted him, wiping away his tears.

It wasn't that hard to take it easy; she felt exhausted. The care Jonas showed her was touching. Her mobile kept ringing, but Jonas insisted she wasn't allowed to answer it. He'd answered it a couple of times before putting it on silent mode. It was journalists; they were naturally interested as she was a high-profile journalist, but also because of all the recent events in Losvika. She rang Thea and Anders and told them what had happened; they shouldn't have to read about it in the media. Jonas fetched coffee and water, made sandwiches and went shopping. Else came over and cooked dinner after she'd closed the shop.

The next day, on Monday, she had to persuade Jonas to go to school; he wanted to stay at home and look after her. Elias arrived as usual and rang the doorbell; they used to walk together, and Jonas gave her a big hug before putting on his rucksack and reluctantly going with him. Now she discovered that she had been the subject of major stories in both local and national media. 'Well-known journalist found locked up', 'The perpetrator attempted to take his own life' were some of the headlines. 'The suspect has been admitted to hospital. It has not been possible for the police to question him,' wrote VG.

Dagbladet had, in its usual style, splashed a large tabloid headline: ‘Village of horror’, they called Losvika, and wrote not only about what had happened to Kajsa, but also about the two murders, and about a village terrorised by a masked man. Channel 4 had been to Losvika and made a report. Behind the newsreader was a large photo of Kajsa from the time she worked as a journalist for the channel. They had interviewed Nina Garshol in front of the police tape at the workshop shed. She was asked if there was any connection between the man who had locked Kajsa in, the murder of Petter Nedrelid and the discovery of Markus Lindbo in the cliffs.

– I can’t comment on that out of respect for the investigation, said Nina, but the reporter wouldn’t let it go.

– Kajsa Coren used to be a crime reporter and made documentaries about crimes. Is she working on the murder cases?

– You’ll have to ask her that, replied Nina. The journalist pressed her several times with questions about the state of the investigations. Nina kept her cool and answered as evasively as only police officers can. Wasn’t it the case that the police had made no progress at all in either of the two murder cases? And the Man in the Mask who has been terrorising the village over the last few months – do you know who he is? Nina replied by saying that all the recent incidents in Losvika were part of the investigations. That included the Man in the Mask.

The newspaper Dagsrevyen had interviewed people outside the shop. They emphasised that Losvika was usually a peaceful place where everyone knew everyone else and nothing dramatic ever happened. Now many were frightened and several were highly critical of the police; they demanded more information.

The paper had quoted a man asking the police: What are they up to? There have been two murders in our village in a short space of time. Two!

38

11. September

Nina arrived late in the afternoon; four days had passed since Kajsa had been locked in Mattis Brekke's workshop. She flopped down on the sofa. "I thought life here would be quieter than in Oslo."

Kajsa was full of questions. What had Mattis explained? How had he got into the house, why did he do it?

– It'll be a while before we can question him. He's heavily medicated; he's been on addictive pills for years, replied Nina. He suffers from psychotic depression.

– And his father, what does he say?

– He has COPD, is very ill, doesn't have long to live and is now in the nursing home in Vågen.

– Did you find the mask?

– Yes, in Mattis's bedroom.

– Is everything still as it was in the workshop?

– Yes.

– Come with me.

*

Her pulse quickened and her fingers tingled as Kajsa stood in the doorway to the room where she had been locked in.

Nina put her hand on her shoulder. – Are you all right?

Kajsa nodded and walked slowly towards the blackboard. – Mattis has spied on many people, revealing their secrets. Have you found anything else on his computer?

– There are lots of photos. Most were taken in the evening and at night; they're grainy, and it's difficult to identify everyone in them.

– How long has he been spying on people?

– It looks like he started doing it in early summer.

– Have Margareth and Kikki admitted that they are in a relationship?

– Yes, they have, but they deny having anything to do with Petter's murder.

– And why would Margareth ask me to investigate the circumstances surrounding the murder if she herself is involved?

– It could be because she wants you to think exactly that. A diversionary tactic to appear innocent.

– I think it's more likely that she needs to find out whether someone close to her killed her husband.

– Kikki?

– Perhaps.

– To us, she says she has no idea who killed her husband. And Kikki got very upset when I put a tiny bit of pressure on her.

Kajsa pointed to the photo of Rune Grande dragging his wife by the hair. – Is Rune Grande a wife-beater?

– We received an anonymous tip, a video recording, suggesting that Rune is abusing Rita, but both deny it, saying it's something other than what it looks like – a sex game.

– I saw you pick up Rune late one evening. Was that why?

– Yes. Nina sighed and then exclaimed: Damn!We have no concrete leads in the investigation into the murder of Petter Nedrelid, not a single one, no conflicting statements, no significant witness observations. And we don't even know where Markus Lindbo was shot.

– Do Rune Grande and Petter Nedrelid have alibis for the evening Markus Lindbo was killed?

– Both were at the concert; they were seen there. Rune left with Petter, but he can't remember when, sometime before midnight. Rita says she wasn't awake when he came home. Stig was also at the concert, and he was home alone for the rest of the evening and night. Mattis has said he was at home, but his father can neither confirm nor deny it. None of them have a watertight alibi.

– What are you going to do now?

Nina pointed to the photo of a man and the note that read: 'Sells fish on the black market to Petter'. – This could be a case of organised crime. So instead of solving crimes, we've got more to investigate and we're already stretched to the limit. She groaned. – Luckily, I've been assigned another investigator from Ålesund.

– Well, you carry on with yours, said Kajsa. I'm going a different direction.

– Where?

– I'm going to look into whether it's possible to make a documentary about what happened to Stig Voldsund. Maybe I can make sure the police are held to account for that scandalous investigation in 1992.

Kajsa smiled and pulled an ironic face. – Someone has to put pressure on you, because you're not going to do it on your own initiative."

Nina groaned demonstratively. – That's the last thing I need right now.

39

After Nina left, Kajsa went back to the wall of grey paper in the attic. On the desk by the window lay the police reports from 1992. She leafed through to the first interview with Lukas's parents. Sure enough, just as she'd thought, there were their names and address in Molde. Lukas's siblings weren't mentioned by name, only that he'd had three, as Nina had said. She looked up the address in the Yellow Pages, but no one named Lindbo lived there. She couldn't find any Karl Lindbo or Janni Lindbo anywhere in the country, so she sent Nina a text asking what had happened to them. Neither of them are alive; they passed away several years ago, she replied.

Kajsa swivelled her chair round and stared at the wall. It made sense that Markus had come to Losvika because his brother had died here. But why so many years later?

As she stood there asking herself a whole host of questions she had no answers to, the doorbell rang.

Johs Kruse was dressed in trainers. – I was running past, he said, and I just wanted to see how you were getting on.

Kajsa invited him in. – I'm fine. Coffee? Tea?

– Just a glass of water, please.

She cleared away the papers lying on the coffee table.

– I saw on the news what happened to you, he said, and everyone's saying that Mattis is the Man in the Mask, and that he's also been inside your house while you were away. That must have been terrifying. Why did he do it? Is he a stalker?

– No, I could never believe that.

She told him how she'd exposed Mattis.

– Do you think he was the one who killed Petter as well?

– I have no idea, but he's never been violent. How are you? she asked, trying to steer the conversation onto something else.

Johs had been herring fishing in the North Sea. – Have you started a new project? he asked, nodding towards the pile of papers.

She hesitated; there weren't many people she'd spoken to about the research she was doing, but she told him she was looking into whether it was possible to make a documentary about the Lukas case.

– The big topic on the fishing boat is that Petter Nedrelid's wife was having an affair with the headteacher at the school. He threw his arms out wide. – You know, there's a lot of bloke talk on a fishing boat, you can just imagine.

– How do people know about that?

– Yes, go on.

– Did you know Petter Nedrelid? she asked.

– I met him at the Thursday Club and visited him at home once. The whole club was invited to a garden party in June, just a few days before he died.

– What was he like?

– Nice. He smiled: You're gathering information for your documentary, I see. It's not just going to be about the Lukas case, is it?

– We'll see. I've spoken to Margareth Nedrelid and I'm wondering if she suspects anyone of the murder. Do you know her?

– I met her at their home. We stood there chatting for a while. She was sweet, charming. And then I bumped into her at the marina one day; we had a glass of wine.

Sweet and charming? thought Kajsa, I hadn't noticed that. Maybe she was different before her husband died.

– Do you invite all the ladies in the neighbourhood for a glass of wine?

Johs chuckled. – No, just you and Margareth.

– The body found in the cliffs is interesting, she said. Because Markus Lindbo was Lukas's brother.Do you think there's a connection?

– It's a hypothesis, at any rate. You've probably heard in the village that people think it was Stig Voldsund who was responsible for Lukas's death?

– Yes, the one who was thrown out of the hotel by Rune Grande the first time I saw you.

He'd noticed her even then, she thought. And now he knew where she lived; he must have made enquiries.

– Stig claims he's innocent, she said.

– In the Thursday Club they say that Stig Voldsund strangled him. Was it really murder?

– Yes.

– How can you be so sure?

– I've read the police files. But the 1992 investigation doesn't hold water. Stig was manipulated into confessing.

– That badly? Who do you think did it, then?

– I don't know. But I'll try to find out.

– You must be careful, we're talking about murder, it's no joke, he said, standing up and gazing at her thoughtfully. – If anything happens and you need help, don't hesitate to ring me.

– My very own bodyguard? smiled Kajsa.

He smiled broadly and spread his arms wide. Don't you think I'd be up to the job?

– Absolutely.

Kajsa walked him to the door.

– By the way, I've bought a house here, he said, pointing out which one it was – one of the old ones that had stood empty for a while, just across from Kajsa's. – It takes me less than a minute to run over here, he said. I'm moving in in a couple of days. He looked at her seriously. – Promise me you'll be careful.

He looked as if he was hesitating, but then he leaned forward and gave her a hug.

– It would be nice if what I've told you stays between us, she said as he stood on the steps. I don't want any village gossip about what I'm up to.

He promised, and she felt confident that she could trust him. He inspired confidence, and someone with his background in finance was surely trained to keep inside information to himself. She stood there for a moment watching him go, still feeling his stubble against her cheek.

40

1 October

The road from Losvika to Molde took her over bridges, along fjords and lakes, over mountains and across two ferries. It was raining when she left home, and on Ørskogfjellet a thin layer of mist covered the landscape, but it lifted as she crossed the summit. There was something hopeful about the way the sun broke through and the autumn colours emerged, transforming the mountains, hills and fields into shades of ochre, orange and purple.

This first day of October was cloudless as Kajsa drove off the ferry almost right in the centre of Molde. The journey from Losvika had taken three and a half hours. Jonas was going to Else's when he finished school; she wouldn't be home until late in the evening.

She found the address on her satnav and parked next to a fence with a tall hedge, so the house must be fairly new. A little further down the road, she struck up a conversation with a woman out walking her dog. She explained that the modernist houses on either side had been built in 2016. Four older houses had been demolished.

– Do you live in this area yourself? asked Kajsa. The woman pointed towards the end of the road.

– Did a family called Lindbo live in one of the houses that was demolished?

– The Lindbo family, yes. Here in this street, everyone knew and knows each other. Why do you ask?

Kajsa introduced herself and explained that she was a journalist. A sceptical look appeared in the woman's eyes.

– Have you heard that the eldest of the children, Markus, was found dead in Losvika in Sunnmøre recently?

The lady nodded.

– I live in Losvika. The police haven't found out what happened to Markus, and I know he was the brother of Lukas, who also died there.

The lady nodded. – Are you going to write about it?

– No, I make documentary films. I don't know if there'll be a film about Markus and Lukas, but I'm looking into the possibility.

– I remember well what happened in 1992. Little Lukas, such a lovely boy.

– I know his parents are no longer alive.

– It's a sad story.

This was exactly the sort of neighbour Kajsa had hoped to meet, someone who could tell the story of the Lindbo family.

– Could we perhaps have a coffee somewhere?

– I'm not quite sure…

– You don't need to be nervous about talking to me. All I want is to get to know the Lindbo family. It's not a big ask, is it?

The lady thought for a moment. – All right, you can come back to my place.

Her name was Live Olsen and she lived alone. Kajsa thought she was in her late sixties. She'd lost her husband about a year ago; it was a heart attack, she said as she made coffee and fetched cinnamon buns from the freezer, which she defrosted in the microwave. Like many people Kajsa had met through her work, Live was sceptical of journalists who dug deep and asked questions, so she made a point of commenting on how much she was enjoying herself. Was the kitchen new? It was so fresh and modern, and what a lovely colour on the walls.

They sat down at the coffee table in a living room that suggested Live must be a wealthy lady. A light grey sofa, colourful oriental rugs on dark parquet flooring, and on a console table with a mirror, Kajsa recognised a glass sculpture by Nico Widerberg.

Kajsa gave her time; they drank coffee and ate pastries, and Live told her she had three children and six grandchildren, all living in Molde. Her face lit up when she spoke of them. – Do you have a husband and children?

– Three children, replied Kajsa, not really wanting to say any more. But at the same time, she was asking this woman for trust, and it was she who had to build it. So she added: I lost my husband this spring.

Live looked at her with sympathy. – I'm sorry to hear that.

– Thank you.

Kajsa asked if she could film the conversation, and after an assurance that it wouldn't be used unless Live later agreed to it, she said yes.

– How well did you know the Lindbo family? asked Kajsa.

Live explained that Janni and Karl Lindbo were the same age as her and her husband. They met at the playground with the children, and later their children also attended the same nursery and the same school. Live's eldest son was the same age as Markus Lindbo; they became good friends, were in the same class and both played football.

– Markus was a regular here.

Both Janni and Karl worked full-time; Janni in a furniture shop, whilst Karl worked as a typesetter at the Romsdals Budstikke printing works. – With four children eventually, said Live. I don't know how they managed it. But they were capable, hard-working and decent people, religious, and went to church every Sunday. And they were outdoor types, she explained. At weekends and on holidays, they went on camping trips in the mountains and out to the islands. They weren't very well off, and I think it was the first time they'd gone to a campsite where they had to pay to stay the night. Markus was so excited he couldn't stand still; he was jumping up and down when he came in and told us they were going to Losvika on a camping holiday.

She smiled sadly and shook her head. Her gaze grew distant, the wrinkles around her eyes deepening as she thought back. – I heard on the local NRK broadcast that a little boy had been found dead in Losvika, and of course I immediately thought of the Lindbo boys.

– When did you find out it was Lukas?

– It took a couple of days before the police released the name, but I knew late in the afternoon on the same day the death was in the news. We knew someone who worked in the police. I… She paused for a moment. – That… that lovely little boy.
How are his parents and siblings going to cope with something like that?

– But surely they got help?

– The local authority's crisis team stepped in. And the police quickly concluded that it was a tragic accident.

Kajsa didn't comment on it; there was no need to explain what had actually happened – the whole thing was painful enough for her as it was.

– And how were *we*, who knew them, supposed to handle it?

– What did you do? asked Kajsa, and wasn't surprised by the answer. Live struck her as both caring and decisive.

– A couple of days after they got home, I decided to be there for them. I made a stew and took it over. Karl thanked me, but Janni sat completely apathetic in a chair. The twins were playing on the floor; Markus wasn't there. I offered to look after the twins, took them back to our place, fed them, gave them a bath, and rang Karl late in the afternoon to say they were welcome to stay the night with us. He got angry. Did I think he couldn't look after his own children? He'd calmed down by the time I dropped them off, and we agreed that I could come over the next few days to take the twins to nursery.

A few weeks later, Janni was admitted to a psychiatric ward. She came home to visit from time to time, but she didn't get any better, and a year later she took her own life. – That's when things went completely downhill with Karl, she said. I had to do something.

– What did you do?

– I reported it to child welfare services. And don't think it was easy, but someone had to be the meddlesome neighbour who cares. The children were left to fend for themselves.

– Speaking of the children. There was Markus; he was 12 in 1992. And then there were the twins?

– Yes, Johannes and Sara; they were just over two years old when Lukas died.

– What happened to them?

– Karl lost custody of them in the autumn. And six months later, Markus was also placed in a children's home. Afterwards, Karl Lindbo was frequently seen drunk in town, he lost his job, and five years after Lukas died, he was killed in a car accident. He was driving drunk. But I want to make it clear that Karl wasn't a bad person. It was the grief; it became too much to bear.

– Do you know what became of the children?

– In the early days after Karl lost custody, he had some contact with them. But that couldn't last when he had no control over his life. The twins were placed with foster parents and later adopted. And now they've found Markus dead, that good boy. How many tragedies can befall one family?

Before Kajsa left, Live dug out a photo album and pointed out everyone in the Lindbo family. Kajsa filmed the albums and also took photos of the pictures with her mobile. Several of them had been taken at a garden party the year the family went on a camping holiday in Losvika. One showed a little girl in a summer dress and a little boy in shorts, playing together on a blanket on the grass, taken in June 1992. In one photo, Janni and Karl Lindbo sat close together, his arm around her shoulders. They smiled broadly at the photographer, just a few weeks before they lost a child. Not in an accident, but killed by another child. They must have been told what had actually happened; the police must have told them the truth. The story of Stig Voldsund was about to change. What happened to Lukas's family expanded the narrative of the tragedy in Losvika in 1992.

41

20 October

Kajsa raised her camera and filmed as she walked into the woods. So far, she had been conducting research to see if it was possible to make a documentary about Stig's fate. After her trip to Molde, she had made up her mind. The story of these people had to be told. The fate of the Lindbo family had moved her just as deeply as that of Stig Voldsund. But for the time being, there were many gaps to fill in the story. The biggest was the question of what actually happened when Lukas died. But even though she didn't find the answer, she began to see the outlines of a sensational story, and she had already thought out the opening lines. – One summer's day in 1992, five seven-year-old boys went into this forest. One of them didn't come out alive. His name was Lukas, she said quietly as she filmed.

The autumn air was crisp; the ground was covered in pine needles, twigs, roots, moss and ferns. Kajsa felt a sense of eagerness, an old, familiar feeling when she was on the trail of a story that felt important, a revelation. She had been working on an editing plan and had plenty of footage to be cut together by an editor at Gro in Oslo, but Stig Voldsund hadn't decided whether he would agree to an interview.

Fortunately, Oda Sævik had said yes, and both Live Olsen in Molde and Stig Voldsund's mother were willing to consider it. It wasn't impossible to tell the story of Stig's fate without his involvement, but it would be a major weakness if he himself didn't contribute. Of the four boys' fathers, only Mattis's father was still alive, apart from Stig's father. She had checked with the NRK TV archive, and there were interviews in which the police investigator who led the interrogations in 1992 and the psychologist who was present had commented on the case. She intended to use them, she had said when she rang them.

Moreover, she had new information on which she wanted their comments. Both had immediately made it clear that they did not wish to contribute, and quickly ended the conversation.

She continued filming as she made her way out of the woods, up to the edge of the cliffs, and turned around at the top. – Here, a stone's throw from the woods, Lukas's brother was found dead 33 years later, she said to herself as she slowly turned the camera towards the sea and angled it towards the waves at the foot of the cliffs.

A short while after Kajsa had passed the shop and was approaching Agnes's house, she spotted a woman standing, leaning against an old milking ramp, with a carrier bag in her hand. As she got closer, she saw that it was Rita Grande. She hurried over to her. – Hi, are you feeling unwell?

– I… just felt a bit dizzy, she replied.

Kajsa took her by the arm. – Come home with me, it's not far.

Rita sat down on the sofa. Kajsa fetched her a glass of water. Does she suffer from an eating disorder? she wondered as Rita clutched the glass with her thin fingers. – I've baked bread today, she said, and I'm hungry. Shall I make a slice of bread for you too?

Rita shook her head. – There's no need.

– Oh, come on, it's no bother. Freshly baked wholemeal bread with brown cheese – there's nothing better, said Kajsa, heading into the kitchen without waiting for a reply. When she placed the plate in front of her with a glass of milk, Rita just sat there staring at it.

– Listen, said Kajsa, how are you feeling?

Rita bit her lip without looking up, and suddenly let out a short sob. Kajsa fetched a napkin for her. – Is there anything I can do for you?

– No… She blew her nose. I don't think so. She looked up at Kajsa. – This is very kind of you. I was just… touched that you care.

– It's the least I can do, said Kajsa, taking a bite of her sandwich. I'm a journalist, she said, and I…

– I know who you are, said Rita.

– And as a journalist, I'm used to talking to people in confidence, keeping what I know to myself. You can talk to me. Maybe that will help?

– There's no point.

Kajsa looked at her silently for a few seconds, thinking of the picture of Rita and Rune Grande in Mattis's workshop. – Are you not feeling well, Rita?

Rita looked at her with frightened eyes. – What… what do you mean?

Just then, the doorbell rang. Outside stood Rune Grande. – Is Rita here? Someone saw her go in.

– Yes, I bumped into her on the way; she was feeling dizzy.

– Can I come in? he asked, walking past her without waiting for an answer. – So this where you are? he said to Rita, smiling at Kajsa. Come on, let's go home.

He was smiling the whole time, but the smile didn't reach his eyes. He walked over to his wife and held out his hand. – Come on, darling.

What do I do now? thought Kajsa. Nothing. I can't interfere in their marriage

– Would you like to pop round for a glass of wine one evening? she asked Rita.

But she just looked at her husband, who replied: – That would certainly be nice.

The timing wasn't ideal, but she'd tried to get in touch with Rune several times. – I'd love to have a chat with you one day, she said. I've sent you a couple of text messages without getting a reply.

– Sorry, he said. I've been busy with a lot of travelling lately. What do you want to talk about, then?

– The Lukas case.

His jaw muscles tensed, and he seemed less at ease. – So it's true, what people are saying, that you've started digging into that old case? Is it Stig who's asked you to do it?

– No one can ask me to…

– Even though it was a very long time ago, that case is still painful for me, he interrupted, standing there staring at the floor for a few seconds before adding: – It was horrible, poor boy, no, I can't bear to talk about it. Sorry, he said with an apologetic look.

He beckoned Rita over. At the door, she turned and raised her arm. Kajsa thought she was waving goodbye. But then she bent her thumb into her palm and curled her other four fingers around it. Kajsa had seen it in a campaign on Instagram, a Reels video featuring female politicians and other celebrities doing the same. The sign meant 'Help me'.

42

Kajsa tapped her mobile against her palm and let her gaze drift over the village through the small-paned windows of the glass veranda. She had told Nina about the sign Rita had shown her. It was noted, but there were other matters of greater urgency for the police. It had been a month and a half since Mattis had attempted to take his own life. He was still admitted to the psychiatric ward in Ålesund, but not in a secure unit, and he was no longer considered suicidal. The problem was that he refused to speak to the police, but today he had asked to speak to Kajsa. She had agreed to meet him.

After Nina had learnt of the police reports from 1992, she too had retrieved them from the archives. Her mother had told her that the case had haunted her father his whole life. – It all went completely wrong, he had said, but he had never elaborated.

Stig, why had he actually come back after so many years? she wondered. Why now, and were the events that had unfolded in the village afterwards merely coincidences?

She popped in to see Rita Grande on her way to Stig's, but no one answered the door. Stig invited her round for coffee again.

She got straight to the point. – Markus Lindbo, she said, meeting his gaze.

– The body in the cliffs, he nodded.

– You'd moved here when he was killed here.

He didn't answer, but she didn't take her eyes off him. He looked out over the landscape with an expression that gave her the feeling he was recalling something with unease. But then his face changed; he gave a short, silent laugh. – You're like a terrier, or perhaps more like a badger. You really sink your teeth in.

– I think that's a lovely comparison, she said with a smile that made the silence less oppressive. – Markus was 45 years old. He was 12 when Lukas died. Why would he go to Losvika so many years later? Something must have happened.

Stig rested his forehead in his palm, propped his elbow on his knee and looked down at the floor, thinking for a moment, as if carefully weighing up his reply. – Yes, he said at last, I met Markus Lindbo.

– But you said you hadn't met him.

– I didn't meet him here.

– When did you meet him?

– In January, three months before I moved to Losvika. I was out in Oslo with a mate. Markus was at the same place with a colleague of my mate's. My friend knew Markus too, and we invited them to join us.

– How did you end up talking about Lukas?

– Later in the evening, my friend said that Markus's brother had died 'up there in Sunnmøre, where you're from', and Markus told us about Lukas. I was shocked. Lukas's older brother was sitting right in front of me and asked where in Sunnmøre I was from.

Stig pursed his lips tightly, as if something were pressing on him from within. – When I said I'd lived in Losvika as a child, Markus asked me if I knew about the death, when I'd lived there, how old I'd been, and if I remembered what happened.

– Did you tell him that you were one of the boys who was with Lukas that day?

– No, but a little later Markus picked up the thread again, saying that the whole family had been destroyed after Lukas died in 'that accident', as he called it. He clearly didn't know the police's conclusion.

By this point they were quite drunk, and Markus became very emotional; he told me, with a lump in his throat, that his mother had taken her own life and everything had fallen apart for his father.

Stig put one hand over his eyes for a few seconds. – That was hard to hear. But I thought that the price I myself had paid was just as high; I became upset, angry, and it almost slipped out of me that the case hadn't just destroyed his family, it had destroyed mine too, and my life. I think I also blurted out that Lukas didn't die in an accident, that he was strangled.

– You could have chosen not to say anything.

– Yes, but I was drunk, I had no filter, and everything I'd been through came flooding back. Besides, I'd got hold of the police documents; I could prove I'd been

manipulated into confessing, and I wanted him to believe me – Lukas's brother *had* to believe me. So I told him that the police had blamed me for something I hadn't done.

– How did Markus react?

– He was obviously very upset, didn't believe me, he asked questions and got angry, became aggressive. In the end, I left. But then he rang me the next day and wanted to meet again. I brought the interrogation transcripts with me and he read them. Afterwards, he thanked me and apologised for getting so angry the night before.

– And four months later he went to Losvika, said

Kajsa. He held back, avoiding her gaze.

– I didn't meet him. We had no further contact, so he didn't know I'd moved back here.

– What do you think about the fact that he was found shot, dead in the cliffs?

– I think it's logical that it has something to do with the Lukas case.

– Then we're on the same page. Kajsa smiled briefly and lifted her chin. – There's one more thing I've been thinking about. You said you haven't sought out Mattis, Petter or Rune. They know the truth about what happened in the woods; that seems illogical to me. And given the enormous impact it's had on your life, I really can't believe you haven't confronted them since you came back.

There was no longer anything forced about him; he seemed trusting, almost intimate.

– Rune flew into a rage, Petter told me to get lost and leave.

– And Mattis?

– He ran into the workshop and locked the door.

– Why haven't you told me this before?

– I don't want to get involved. I haven't come here to cause trouble.

Kajsa looked at him thoughtfully. He had failed to provide important information to both the police and her. It was striking.

Is there more he isn't telling us? Is he lying about why he's come back?

43

23. October

Kajsa was prepared to meet a man who was dazed by the medication he was on, but to her surprise, Mattis's gaze was alert; it was only in his movements that a slowness could be detected. Kajsa had discovered that the diagnosis of psychotic depression was a serious condition where a person, in addition to being deeply depressed, could lose touch with reality, and that it could involve several other symptoms, including feelings of worthlessness, a lack of joy and self-confidence, and suicidal thoughts.

He didn't say anything straight away, just swallowed and shifted uneasily in his chair. It wasn't easy for him to face her, she realised, but she left it up to him to take the initiative. He rubbed his thumbs together and glanced at her sideways a couple of times, searching for the words.

– I'm sorry. I… I'm sorry. His gaze was heavy and sad, like that of a Basset hound.

Kajsa placed her hand on the table and leaned towards him expectantly.

– I'm sorry for locking you in, he continued. I wasn't myself; I don't understand what came over me.

– No, your father said you wouldn't hurt a fly.

– Have you spoken to him? he asked, surprised.

– No, he said that during your interrogation in 1992.

Mattis nodded slowly several times. – You had the police interviews in your kitchen.

– Yes, but let's wait to talk about that. How did you get into my house?

– I knew Agnes had a key to the cellar door lying about; I've had it ever since she died. I didn't mean to frighten you. I'm sorry.

His gaze became distant. – It always smelled nice at Agnes's, often of baking; I used to get slices of warm bread with brown cheese. The sort of thing I never got at home.

He looked at her, searching, questioning. Did she understand?

– And it was Agnes who got me into football, he continued.

– Was it? said Kajsa, surprised. Agnes had never been interested in sport.

– Yes. She practically forced me, made sure I went to training, and she washed my kit and my football boots. When I was picked up by the neighbouring club and had to travel further, she often drove me there for matches and training sessions. That was the best time of my life, not least the year I lived in Molde and played there. I mattered, and I got away from Losvika.

The shattered dream of becoming a professional fitted into his life, he said, because nothing that had been good in his life had lasted. It was as if it had been predestined. He'd often thought of ending it all.

– I panicked when you came into the workshop and exposed me; everything fell apart. That's not really the sort of person I am, and certainly not towards you. I haven't forgotten that you taught me to swim. And you used to take me to the shop to buy ice cream. Do you remember that?

Kajsa nodded, and at that very moment, right there, a tenderness grew within her. For she had been angry, he had frightened her, she had thought she was going to die when she was locked in the dark. But now she recognised the young, shy boy her aunt had looked after, the one who wouldn't play with the other children and who was afraid of the water. She felt sorry for him.

He needed to visit Agnes, he said. That was how he saw it, that he was visiting her. Ever since she died, he'd felt at peace when he was in her house. He'd kept doing it after Kajsa took over, but only when she and her family weren't there.

– I suffer from anxiety; I've had it ever since I was quite young. When I can't switch off the constant stream of thoughts, going to Agnes's has helped. It still helps, even though it no longer smells of either cinnamon buns or her perfume.

– Why were you spying on people, and what were you going to use the photos for?

– Nothing. Knowing people's secrets, knowing that many aren't as perfect as they pretend to be, gave me a sense of… of balance.

– Did you panic when Stig came to see you too?

He looked at her in surprise. His gaze darted around the room for a moment before

he replied. – Yes, it was unpleasant, he said at last. All that business with Lukas, all the memories came flooding back. I don't want anything to do with Stig, I just can't handle it.

– And Markus, did you meet him when he came to Losvika?

– No.

– I realise you've had a hard time, but I don't excuse what you did to me, don't get me wrong.

– No, of course not.

A muscle twitched by his right eye.

– I think you know a lot more than you've told me, Mattis.

She looked into his eyes when he shot her a quick glance, and he realised she wasn't referring to spying on people in the village. – Do you know who killed Petter? she asked.

– No, he said quietly, staring at his hands.

– But you know who killed Lukas?

His gaze wandered around the room. He tugged at one earlobe.

– I don't think it was Stig, she said.

Mattis tilted his head slightly to one side, as if he'd suddenly grown tired.

– There's no point in talking about that. I just wanted to apologise for locking you in, and explain why I've been going into the Agnes House.

– You said it was Stig who killed Lukas during the interrogation in 1992. Why did you say that? It wasn't true.

Mattis stood up so abruptly that Kajsa jumped. His jaw muscles were working.

– What are you afraid of? *Who* are you afraid of, Mattis? Is it Rune? Are you afraid the same thing will happen to you as happened to Petter?

– Stop! I can't bear to talk about it.

The door was almost closed when she called after him: – Wait, Mattis, what does Fia know? It was written on your board in the workshop.

– You'll have to talk to Fia about that. Ask her what happened the night before Petter died.

44

31. October

– Mum, Mum, you have to come, there's someone at the door!

Kajsa woke with a start. Jonas was leaning over the bed, shaking her. – The doorbell's ringing! Her wristwatch showed it was five past half past twelve. She could hear it now too, a persistent ringing and knocking, and a voice shouting – a woman's. She grabbed her mobile from the bedside table and ran down the stairs.

– Open up!

Kajsa turned the key, and Rita Grande practically fell into the hall. – Rita, what's happened?

She was lying on the floor, sobbing. Blood was trickling from her lip. Kajsa only just managed to help her to her feet before she noticed a movement in the outdoor light. There stood Rune Grande in the doorway.

– Get out of here! Kajsa shouted at him. She dragged Rita towards the living room. At the same moment, she noticed that Jonas was standing, terrified, on the loft stairs. – Get hold of Johs, she shouted at him.

For a moment Jonas looked hesitant; Rune was blocking the front door. Kajsa pointed to the cellar door, and Jonas slipped past just as Rune lunged at her; she caught the stench of alcohol on his breath before he landed a blow on her jaw. It hurt, but she wasn't knocked out. Nevertheless, she lay down on the floor, lying completely still, as if she had fainted. Rune stepped over her. – You filthy bitch, he hissed. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw him grab Rita by the hair with one hand and her arm with the other, pulling her to her feet. She whimpered.

He dragged her towards the front door. By the chest of drawers stood Aunt Agnes's 'trelapper', as she'd called them – a dialect word for wooden clogs.

Slowly, Kajsa reached out her hand.

Rita was now clinging to the banister in the hallway, screaming, kicking and struggling. Rune struck her with the flat of his hand. There was a moment's silence before Rita continued to wail. Her nose was bleeding; the blood ran into her mouth; she coughed and spat.

He stood with his back to Kajsa. Slowly she got up on all fours, tensed her muscles, grabbed a clog and raised her arm as she lunged forward and smashed it into his head. Perhaps it was the surprise, perhaps she'd landed a good blow; in any case, Rune let go of Rita, swore, bent forward and clutched his head. – Run, Rita! she shouted. But Rita just stood there, her gaze as blurred as window panes on a rainy day. Kajsa grabbed her and dragged her towards the living room door. Just as Rune came towards Kajsa with his fist clenched, a figure appeared behind him, and before she realised what was happening, he was lying face down on the floor. Johs was sitting on his back. He bent Rune's arms so hard up behind his back that he roared in pain.

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When the police patrol arrived with their blue lights flashing, Rune Grande was still lying on the floor in the hall. Johs had tied his hands behind his back with a rope. He was furious and put up a fierce struggle as he was led out to the police car. An ambulance had also been called and examined Rita first, then Kajsa. Rita was told that if she felt dizzy or nauseous, she would need to see a doctor the next morning. She would be formally interviewed the next day, said Nina. It was the middle of the night, and she couldn't be sent home alone in the state she was in. Nina looked at Kajsa with a questioning expression.

– It's fine," replied Kajsa.

Jonas had been sitting in her arms the whole time. "But first I have to take care of Jonas.

They lay down in the double bed and talked about what had happened.

– Were you scared? she asked.

– Yes, it was scary.

– I thought so too. But you were so quick to run up and grab Johs. I'm proud of you.

– I'm going to be a policeman when I grow up.

– You're going to be a super-fantastic policeman, just like Dad was.

Jonas asked why Rune had hit his wife. Kajsa tried to answer as best she could, explaining that violence existed everywhere, between adults, and sometimes even children were subjected to violence by their parents. Yes, he knew that; Karsten had told him when the father of a girl in the class next door had been arrested for hitting her mum. – It's called domestic violence, he said.

– Yes, and that's the situation with Rita. She has to stay with us tonight.

– Yeah, someone's got to help her, he said, sounding all grown-up.

The conversation died down, and Kajsa lay there beside him until she could tell from his breathing that he was asleep.

– This time you have to report it, Kajsa heard Nina say when she came back into the living room. You should know that we're going to investigate your husband on our own initiative anyway.

She took photos of Rita's face. – Have you documented injuries from previous incidents of violence?

Rita had saved photos on a USB stick. She always deleted them from her mobile, as Rune used to check it. She had taped the USB stick under a shelf in her wardrobe.

– Get some sleep. We'll come and pick you up at ten o'clock tomorrow morning, and then you can give a formal statement about what happened.

Nina put her notepad in her pocket. – We'll take the USB stick as well.

Kajsa followed Nina out into the hallway. – When you picked up Rune Grande in the night, you said it was based on an anonymous tip. What sort of tip?

– A USB stick with a recording of them.

– Was it Mattis who sent the recording on the USB stick?

– We've found the video clip on his mobile.

Kajsa sat down next to Rita on the sofa after Nina had left. – How are you doing?

– Not so good.

Her face was swollen and covered in red marks.

– How long has it been like this?

Rita wiped under her nose with her jumper sleeve. – Rune saved me at first. And then he ruined me afterwards, she whispered.

– How so?

– He found me at an escort agency. Maybe that's why he's like that, why he treats me… like this.

Kajsa handed her a napkin, and she pressed it against her nose. – I grew up with my mum and an older brother. We moved around a lot; I never put down roots, never fitted

in. It was only when I started counting calories that I felt a sense of control. I weighed all my food, planned my meals, and exercised extra to compensate when I'd consumed too many calories.

While Rita was talking, Kajsa thought of Mattis. He'd also had a need to feel a sense of control. His way of feeling better was to spy on people and discover that other people's lives weren't perfect either.

– When I was sixteen, I moved away from home to go to sixth form in Oslo. There I finally made friends. There were parties every weekend, and it's a shame to say it, but the alcohol helped me. I became outgoing; I was happy with my body when I drank. And the alcohol made me feel limitless.

– When did you meet Rune? asked Kajsa.

– When I was nineteen.

For the first time, she met a man she really wanted to be with. – Rune took me on trips and taught me about food and expensive wines, she said. I got to live a different life with him. Rune came to Oslo a couple of times a month, and after just six months he proposed. I'd visited him in Losvika, but I didn't realise what I was getting myself into. He promised to buy a flat in Oslo so that I could commute and continue my studies there. That never happened. As soon as we were married, I was trapped in the role of wife, housekeeper and mistress.

– When did he hit you for the first time?

– A couple of months after the wedding.

– Rune is going to be punished. It's not just up to you anymore. You heard what Nina said. The police are investigating the abuse anyway. Now there's evidence.

– I suppose I'll have to testify, don't you think?

– Yes, you can count on that.

– I can't do that.

– Listen to me, Rita. You have to tell the police everything. Give them the photos. The evidence is strong; both Johs and I are witnesses. Besides, there's the recording that was sent to the police on a USB stick. And Oda Sævik actually saw you and June heading into the boathouse late one evening when June was little. She's also a witness who can back up your statement.

– So Oda saw us? she said, surprised. I thought nobody knew. The boathouse was our refuge when things got too bad.

– Rune must be brought to justice for what he has done to you, and as a victim of violence, you will receive help to build a new life for yourself.

Rita shrugged her shoulders in resignation.

– There's a bed ready for you.

– I won't be able to sleep; I'll sit here for a while. You don't have a glass of wine, do you?

Kajsa went into the kitchen and poured her a glass from the box of white wine in the fridge. She went and lay down next to Jonas, breathing in the scent of his skin and hair.

46

1. November

Cascades of rain poured down the windows on this first day of November, just as they had for several days. Kajsa lit the fire and sat down with a book in the chair in front of it. Rune Grande was in custody, charged with domestic violence and violence against Kajsa. The arrest had been all over the media, but no one mentioned him by name. The headlines were along the lines of 'Well-known business leader arrested' and 'Business celebrity suspected of serious violence'. The paper VG had the most details. They wrote that the man lived in an island municipality in Sunnmøre and owned an investment company involved in various sectors. It wasn't very difficult to work out who it was. There had been no mention in the media of the two murder investigations in Losvika for many weeks. But that didn't mean Losvika had disappeared from the news. Now the focus was on the fact that the village could be hit by a tidal wave if the Faderen mountainside collapsed.

Her phone pinged. It was a video snap from Johs, who was on the sailing boat to move it to a safer harbour, as everyone in Losvika was in the process of doing because of the risk of landslides and tidal waves. A rope was repeatedly slapping against the mast and there was a scratchy sound in the microphone; she could only catch snatches of what he was saying. The rain was lashing his face, but he was smiling from ear to ear. What she managed to make out was: I love a proper storm – and a happy laugh.

She smiled; Johs had that effect on her, he often made her smile, and she never felt sad when she was with him.

She took a photo of herself with the fireplace in the background and sent it back. So he'd come home from the sea, then. That was good, she thought, in this weather.

He'd sent her several snaps over the last few weeks. They were selfies in various work situations and with colleagues on the fishing boat. In the last one, he'd kissed a mackerel.

Before he set sail, he'd invited her to dinner at the restaurant, and then he'd asked her for help choosing colours and a style for renovating the old house he'd bought. She'd gone home with him to get an idea of what needed doing, and had once again been served expensive wine. At the restaurant, she'd noticed that many of the locals were glancing their way. She had said that perhaps it wasn't such a good idea to meet often at the hotel; it just gave people something to talk about. He had agreed. –We can't have any of that, but I'd like to be friends, he'd said, looking at her questioningly.

–That's fine, she'd replied. Just friends, she'd added, thinking at the very same moment that it was a strange thing to say, completely unnecessary in the situation she was in, and he'd never suggested he was after anything more than friendship.

Rita had moved on to a crisis centre near Ålesund. It would be a few months before the case against her husband came to court. The same applied to the case against Mattis. He had confessed to the abduction of Kajsa and to being the Man in the Mask. He denied having anything to do with the murders and the vandalism at Rune's house. The court had concluded that there was no risk of reoffending, and he had been released from custody on the grounds that he had suffered from a serious mental disorder and an impaired grasp of reality. According to the experts who had assessed him, there was no evidence to suggest that he posed a danger. It also played a part that he had no previous history of violence. He was, however, subject to compulsory mental health care. He had returned home to Losvika, but no one had seen him, apart from Else, who delivered goods to his door. But she had barely exchanged a few words with him; he rarely opened the door when she knocked. She left the shopping bags on the steps. Once he had asked her if she could do his shopping for him at the shop in Vågen, but she hadn't had time. He hadn't visited his father either, they said at the shop. There were several people from Losvika working at the care home in Vågen. Else said there was less and less talk of the murders at the shop. It was as if people had given up hope of getting answers.

Kajsa realised that Nina was distraught at the lack of a breakthrough. Kajsa had told her that Stig had met Markus before he moved to Losvika, and she had questioned him. Both he, Mattis and Rune denied having met Markus in Losvika.

She had a feeling there was something she should have thought of, something that kept slipping her mind.

She looked at the photo of Karsten.

If you'd been here, you'd have seen what I can't see, she thought.

After a while, she went up to the attic, stood in front of the grey paper wall, and looked at the mind map, the names, the questions and the assumptions.

She sighed. Hypotheses, flights of fancy, theories.

She looked at the class photo, pausing at Mattis's face.

When her aunt broke her femur a couple of years before she died, Mattis had been an invaluable help; she wouldn't have managed without him, she'd said, her eyes warming. An old memory surfaced; it must have been just after his mother died. Kajsa had come down from the attic, but on her way into the kitchen she had stopped in the doorway. Her aunt was sitting with her arm around Mattis's shoulders. He was leaning his head against her and crying.

Is he protecting someone? she wondered. Or is he afraid of someone?

Mattis had had Aunt Agnes, but had he had anyone to talk to, to confide in, after she died? He must be the loneliest person she knew; he had only his old, sick father. He had told Kajsa that she reminded him of his aunt. How could she become someone he would trust?

She was good at talking to lonely people. The vulnerable, the outsiders, those who hadn't had an easy life, who'd been mistreated and hadn't fared so well, those who'd been let down by their parents, by school, by the support system, by the welfare state.

Mattis was one of those people. She pictured him as a child, thought about the diagnosis, the symptoms: worthlessness, lack of joy and self-confidence, suicidal thoughts, and she felt sorry for him. I have to be the person Mattis needs. Someone who becomes 'an Aunt Agnes' to him. Someone he'll open up to. He needs that. And I need him; he can fill in many of the gaps in my research, I'm sure of that.

47

2. November

The next day the rain had stopped, but there was a stiff gale. It had been a long time since Kajsa had been to Kvitsandvika on a 'blow-away day', as her father had called it. The first year Karsten had come here with her, during the autumn half-term, she'd taken him to Kvitsandvika. He'd thought she was mad. It was a full-blown storm. But he'd got the hang of it straight away, and whenever the weather was bad, they'd often gone to Kvitsandvika.

As she stood in the car park above Kvitsandvika, she looked up towards Storenuten. The peak wasn't visible from this angle. The geologist had upgraded the hazard warning to yellow level that morning. It didn't mean there was any immediate danger of a landslide, but people had to be vigilant and keep an eye on things. She turned her gaze outwards, letting it glide from headland to headland along the vast bay with its white sand at the innermost point. The Atlantic rolled foaming towards the shore with waves as big as boulders. Landego lay far out there, barely visible beneath the cloud cover. She often thought of the story of her great-great-grandmother when she was here. She had been married three times. All the men had been lost at sea. So much grief she must have had to bear, Kajsa thought as she walked through the gate and felt the wind tugging at her body. But her great-great-grandmother had managed it, moved on and found new meaning.

As she jogged down the path, she spotted two people. They were wrapped up in rainwear; she couldn't see who they were, but she thought that at least one of them was a woman, as she was wearing a yellow raincoat and red boots. They were arguing, she realised; both were gesticulating, their bodies tense. Suddenly, one of them raised her arms and shoved the other, who fell backwards. Kajsa picked up her pace. –What's going on? she shouted. Both turned round. It was Margareth and Kikki.

– Sorry… sorry, stammered Kikki. I didn't mean it.

Margareth stood up and immediately started walking up the hill. Kajsa ran after her, grabbing her by the arm. – Margareth, what's going on?

– Kikki… she's no good. I don't want anything to do with her. Leave me alone.

Kajsa could tell from her breathing that she was choking back tears. She hurried back to Kikki. –What was that about? she asked.

– Margareth doesn't want to… anymore. She sobbed.

Margareth has broken up with her, thought Kajsa, trying to comfort her. –I know it hurts, but you'll be all right.

– That's easy for you to say, Kikki replied sharply.

Kajsa felt that her self-pity was irritating her. Come on, let's head home.

They walked side by side in silence, and when they reached the gate, Margareth was far ahead of them on the road.

– Perhaps you'd like to come in for a cup of tea? Kajsa asked Kikki as they stood outside her house.

Kikki hesitated a little before accepting. Jonas had some friends over; they were in the living room, so Kikki and she sat down in the kitchen.

– I'm so sorry I pushed Margareth. But she… I was provoked.

And sorry.

– For what?

– No, it was… She breathed heavily, – just something she said. It was hurtful.

– It can't have been easy for her. I mean… their relationship, the fact that she was married.

Kikki shot her a quick glance.

– And you, how has it been for you? Have people treated you kindly here in Losvika since your relationship with Margareth became public?

Kikki smiled. – That's how people say you are. Straight to the point.

– Oh really, do they say that?

– No one's treated me any differently since it came out. She took a breath and added: Not here.

– What do you mean?

– I grew up in a church where homosexual feelings were considered a sin. My whole network was there – my family, all my friends. I didn't know anyone outside the congregation.

– But?

– I reached a point where I had to break away to survive. Since then, I haven't belonged anywhere. Not until I came here and met Margareth. But she was married, and very dependent on her husband, unsure of herself. She didn't dare do a thing without Petter's approval. Only with me could she be free and true to herself, she said so herself. But she didn't have what it took to break out of the marriage.

As she spoke, Kajsa thought about what Mattis had said. Something had happened the evening Petter came home.

– Kikki, what happened the evening before Petter was killed, when you were at Margareth's? she asked.

– For a moment, Kikki looked surprised. Then a distant look came over her face, as if she were thinking of something else. – Nothing. No, I suppose it's time to get home.

She stood up, went out into the hallway, put on her raincoat and boots, and made a sweeping gesture with her hand, as if there was something she wanted to brush away. – Nothing special happened, not that I can remember, she said. Thanks for the tea.

Kajsa noticed that it had started raining again as she stood in the doorway watching her go. She scanned the horizon towards Faderen, but the mountain was shrouded in clouds.

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3. November

Margareth stood in the doorway without inviting Kajsa in. – You haven't found out anything about Petter's murder. I don't think it's any use; I want you to give it up, she said.

– Give it up?

– Yes, stop digging into things. Nothing good will come of it.

Kajsa saw a look of resentment in her eyes that was unexpected.

– I'm a journalist and I'm free to dig into whatever I want.

– Yes, but now everyone knows about me and Kikki. How did people find out about it? Can you tell me?

– I haven't said a word. You know how it is, the source of gossip is rarely traceable here in the village.

– What do you want?

– I'm wondering if anything in particular happened when Petter came home the evening before he was killed?

– Sorry, but I'm so tired, we'll have to talk another day, she said. Her face was pale and her gaze vacant as she closed the door.

On her way home, Kajsa knocked on Mattis's door. He didn't open it, and the door was locked. She called out to him. – It's Kajsa, I need to talk to you! Then she heard the key turn, and his face appeared in the narrow door crack.

– I heard you needed something from the shop, said Kajsa. I can do the shopping for you, if you like?

– Er… a bottle of Johnnie Walker, perhaps?

– OK. I'll pop round to see you later."

– Thanks.

*

She spoke to Else and sent a message to Jonas telling him to go to the shop when he'd finished school. Then she got into the car and drove to Volda. It took just over an hour, over bridges, along fjords again, but she didn't need to take the ferry as the island municipalities were connected to the mainland by an undersea tunnel. She had phoned the man who was a senior lecturer at the Department of Journalism and arranged a meeting without saying what she was there for. She'd found Fia Kvalsund's mobile number in the directory enquiries, but she feared she'd turn her down. It was always easier to say no on the phone than face to face. She knew the pro-dean, Kåre Folkestad, from before; he had a background in the TV industry.

– What a distinguished visitor, he said warmly, shaking her hand with a firm grip.

When she told him she'd like to meet Fia Nedrelid, he grinned. –Oh, so you're working on a new documentary? Yes, I know you have a house out in Losvika. One keeps up with things. Then he grew serious. – It was tragic, what happened to Fia's father. She hasn't had it easy.

Kajsa confirmed that she was in the early stages of research, but added that a documentary was a long way off. Folkestad showed her around the media studies department. She could tell from the students' expressions that they recognised her.

– Would you be interested in coming back to give a lecture to the students? he asked.

Kajsa replied that she'd be happy to, and he took her into the department where the practical lessons were taking place. Fia was in the TV studio. –You've got a visitor, he said.

Fia looked up at Kajsa in surprise from the camera in front of her.

– Hi, Fia, my name is Kajsa Coren. Can I have a word with you?

Fia didn't look too keen, but she suggested they go to the canteen anyway.

Kajsa bought them some coffee, and they sat down at a table by the window.

– What have you found out? Fia asked before Kajsa could say a word.

Mum told me she's spoken to you.

– Not much regarding your father's murder, unfortunately. But I'm looking into a few other cases. Did you know your father was involved with Lukas, the seven-year-old who died in Losvika in 1992? she asked.

– No, not until after Dad died. I'd never heard of the Lukas case.

– Was it your mother who told you?

– No, she never said anything, nor did Dad. It was a friend who told me when Lukas's brother was found on the cliffs.

– How is your relationship with your mother?

Kajsa sensed a hint of scepticism in her gaze. Then she sighed. –I see where you're going with this. I suppose everyone knows about her and that teacher now. Her voice took on a bitter tone on the last word.

– Did anything happen at your house the night before your father died?

Fia didn't answer. Instead, she said: We watched one of the documentaries you've made at university, *'You Shall Honour Your Father and Your Mother*'. We analysed it.

– Right, and what did you think?

– That you're completely uncompromising; you hunt for the truth no matter what it costs you or others.

– That's what journalism is all about: finding the truth.

– Do you have to be just as uncompromising when it comes to the truth about your own life?

– That's your choice.

– Or Mum's.

She held Kajsa's gaze firmly. Her eyes were hard to read, a mixture of hurt and anger. – Mum lived a lie.

– Why do you think she did that?

– Because it was convenient for her.

– Maybe you shouldn't be so hard on her. It can't have been easy for her. Was she supposed to leave your father? Put up with everything that would follow – the gossip, the scandal and his reaction.

Fia sighed silently.

– Do you like Kikki? asked Kajsa.

– No.

– Why not?

– I think she seems fake.

– In what way?

– No… it's probably because I thought she was just a good friend of my mum's, and then it turns out to be a lie.

Kajsa leaned towards her. – Fia, what happened the night before your father died? she repeated. Will you tell me?

Fia looked at her thoughtfully for a few seconds. Then she nodded.

– It was Dad who found out, she said after a moment.

Fia had gone home on impulse. A friend who had a car, and who was also from Vestøy, was going home, and Fia had got a lift with her. She wanted to surprise her parents, and when she arrived around 9 pm, she heard angry voices coming from the living room.

Her mother and Kikki were sitting on the sofa. Her father was standing in the middle of the floor, shouting at them.

Fia clutched the coffee cup with both hands; it trembled slightly as she lifted it to her mouth. – Dad was furious. When I came in, he said: 'Your mum is having an affair with Kikki'. He showed me a photo on his mobile. It was of Mum and Kikki hugging and kissing. Mum started crying. Kikki stood up, stepped in front of Dad and hissed: 'Yes, I'm having an affair with your wife'. I thought Dad was going to hit her, but he pulled himself together, grabbed her by the arm and dragged her out into the hallway, opened the door and literally threw her out.

– What happened next?

– I asked Dad who had sent the photo, but it had been sent from a hidden number. He kept raging, he poured himself a large glass of cognac which he downed in one go, whilst Mum cried and cried. It was complete chaos. I felt I should comfort her, but I couldn't manage it; I was far too shocked. And upset. I tried to calm everyone down, but in the end I went to bed. As I was going up the stairs, Dad came out into the hallway. He put on his jacket, and when I asked where he was going, he said he thought he knew who had taken the photo.

– He wasn't driving?

– No, he'd just been drinking.

– And the next day?

– When I got up, Mum told me that Dad had died in a car crash. She was completely distraught and not herself, as if she were in some sort of shock. It all happened so fast; it still hasn't quite sunk in that Dad is gone for good, and I've been so angry with Mum.

Fia pulled the sleeves of her jumper over her hands and quickly wiped her eyes. – I have a friend who's a lesbian, that's not it. I've been in the Pride parade several times. It's that she's been lying to Dad all these years. And to me. She's not the person he thought she was, not the person I've known for as long as I've lived. I've always been a daddy's girl; we had a close relationship, and he was a good father. Mum has always been more distant. Now I understand why.

Fia sniffed. – I've been thinking about Kikki, picturing that hard look on her face, the coldness in her voice when she told Dad she was in a relationship with Mum. She seemed completely unmoved. Maybe she was the one who killed Dad?

– Have you told the police this?

– No, Mum was afraid that her relationship with Kikki would be exposed. She asked me not to. But now everyone knows about it anyway, it seems.

– You have to tell them what happened that evening.

– Because if you don't, will you?

– This could be important.

Fia nodded. – Yes, I understand.

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Mattis opened the door before she had a chance to knock, as if he'd been waiting for her. She handed him the parcel.

– Why don't you go out? It doesn't help to isolate yourself, Mattis.

He shrugged. She looked at him for a few seconds, then acted on a sudden impulse. — Perhaps you'd like to have dinner with us tonight. We're having lasagne. Do you like it?

– Er… yes… well, thanks.

– Great, come round at six, then.

Else was at the till when she popped into the shop. There were lots of customers there, and Kajsa noticed that several of them were buying lots of tinned food. – The weather warning has been raised to orange and warning lights have been switched on in Stranda, said Else.

– Yes, I noticed that when I was driving home just now, said Kajsa.

– And they're considering closing the hotel and moving all the guests to other hotels.

That was all anyone was talking about, Kajsa heard. How high could a tidal wave get? Could they trust the geologists' assessments and estimates?

Kajsa invited Else to dinner as well. It wasn't because she was afraid of being alone with Mattis. His excuse had been genuine; he'd been ill, and now he was receiving treatment and being monitored. She felt mostly sorry for him. But with more people around the table, the atmosphere became more relaxed. Mattis wasn't exactly a master of small talk. On her way home, she bumped into Johs, who was out jogging, and she invited him along as well. Mattis needed to meet people. And she needed Mattis if the documentary was to turn out well. Somehow she had to get him to tell her what happened when Lukas died. She knew Nina had tried, but he claimed he couldn't remember; he'd repressed it.

It was a simple dinner: a tray bake of lasagne, salad and garlic bread. Both Johs and Else were people who found it easy to talk, and the conversation flowed easily around the table. Although Mattis said little, he seemed to be enjoying himself.

– Rune's come home, said Else.

– What? said Mattis. Why?

Kajsa looked at him. He suddenly looked worried.

– His lawyer objected to the extended remand and won the case, said Else. – But he's got a restraining order against Rita.

– That's only to be expected, said Kajsa. – What do you think, Mattis?

– Me? Nothing.

– Listen, Kajsa, said Else, are you afraid of him turning up at your door?

– No, he's not that stupid.

– I'm permanently employed as a bodyguard, said Johs with a grin, helping himself to more lasagne. I heard on the news that the movement in Faderen is bigger than ever. Why is the mountain called Faderen, by the way?

– There are two such sections, one slightly smaller than the other. Both resemble human faces, and the smaller one is reminiscent of Jesus, people believed that at least hundreds of years ago, said Else. – They called it the Son, so the larger section was named the Father.

– I've received information from the council with a map showing how far up the village they think a flood wave could reach. We're well above the line, thankfully, said Stig.

– Yes, most of the houses are above it, but the whole harbour area, the hotel and Smaragden, plus the houses along Hamnevegen, will be hit, as well as those a bit further up Mallabakken, said Else. There have been landslides in Stranda every year. We've lived with the knowledge that the whole of Faderen could collapse for many years, but now it looks like it's getting serious.

– There's a chasm at the top that's widening due to erosion, Mattis interjected. – And there's been a lot of rain this autumn. They should just blow the whole lot up, and the government must step in with promises that everything that gets destroyed will be rebuilt. Then we'd be rid of the problem. We can't have this uncertainty hanging over us year after year.

– Sounds sensible, nodded Johs.

Johs and Else were both very keen on football. The teams they supported in the Premier League were due to face each other in a match, which was to be broadcast on TV2. Else was a Tottenham fan, whilst Johs supported Manchester City. So did Jonas, because of Erling Braut Haaland. Whilst Kajsa tidied the kitchen, everyone settled down in front of the TV. She watched them through the doorway. Johs and Else were commentating and cheering, and when Erling Braut Haaland scored, Jonas jumped up and down on the sofa. Kajsa saw that Mattis was smiling – not a broad smile, but a smile nonetheless. – Are you a City fan too? she asked him, sitting down next to Jonas.

– No, but you've got to support the Norwegians, he said.

– Who do you support then?

– It used to be Liverpool, he said.

– And now?

– No, I don't really follow it that closely anymore.

– Mattis was brilliant at football when he was young, said Kajsa to Jonas. – He was a real talent.

– You were? said Jonas, looking at him with wide eyes.

– I played for Molde, he said, looking proud for a moment.

– Then you must have been bloody brilliant, said Jonas.

Wasn't there a boyish joy on his face? Maybe I'm starting to find a way in to him, thought Kajsa.

50

Mattis was sitting up watching TV when he got home. He had a feeling in his body that was unfamiliar and hard to put into words. But something had eased. He hadn't had such a good time in years; in fact, he couldn't remember the last time he'd been with people around a dinner table or in front of the TV. Apart from with his father, that is, but that was something else. It was good that he was in the care home. Now he didn't have to look after him, cook for him, wash his clothes, or give him a shower. That was the worst bit, washing his own father and brushing his teeth. Not to mention the irritating, repetitive coughing and the gurgling of the phlegm he constantly had in his throat.

No one at Kajsa's had made a fuss about him being there; they'd just behaved completely normally, as if they liked it, even. He pictured Jonas's eyes when Kajsa told him he'd been good at football. When had anyone last looked at him like that? It was generous of Kajsa to invite him after what he'd done to her.

How could he have been so stupid as to lock her in? He didn't understand it. To tell the truth, he didn't remember much of what had happened before he sort of woke up on the cliff's edge when the policewoman spoke to him. He saw the dinner invitation from Kajsa as a gesture of forgiveness. She'd said he could trust her. It was difficult, but then she reminded him of Agnes, had some of the same charisma, a calmness and strength. And she'd been kind to him when he was little. He'd always liked her. Perhaps he could manage to trust someone again.

Rune had come home. It wasn't good news. Soon he'd be at the door. He had to remember to lock the door.

He was watching an American true crime series on Netflix about a twenty-year-old murder of a married couple, committed by their two sons. He shouldn't be watching that sort of thing; he used to avoid it. But there was this lightness in his body, a feeling that he could handle anything. Perhaps it was possible to have a different life after all?

He took a good swig from the bottle, felt the warmth spread, relaxed. A life with a girlfriend, that would have been something, perhaps the Ukrainian woman he'd met in the mountains. A normal life, that was what he wanted. But then he'd have to do something about it, not just sit and wait while the days and months went round and round, until life became unbearable again.

When no one saw him, when no one noticed him, he was nobody. But this evening he had been someone who was seen and included.

Kajsa had said he was harbouring secrets, that he had to tell her what he knew. He wished she was right, that all he had to do was tell her everything he was carrying, get rid of the murk and step out of the singularity, into the light.

51

6. November

The beach had been closed since the previous evening, and Kajsa was on her way to the shop when she saw the police boat mooring at one of the quays on the inside of the pier. Two people were walking up Mallabakken, and she recognised Nina. They were heading up to Margareth's. Kajsa had contacted her and told her what had happened at Petter Nedrelid's house the evening before he was killed. She knew that Fia had spoken to Nina that morning, and now she had come to Losvika to talk to Margareth and Kikki about how Petter had exposed their relationship, she realised.

Last night, on the advice of the geologists, the local council had issued a warning asking those living in the houses at the bottom of the village to be ready to evacuate. The danger alert was still at orange level, and people were following developments hour by hour. The council sent out updates via text message, and Kajsa jumped every time her mobile beeped. The sea route was now the only way in and out of Losvika. The council had set up a boat service to Vågen so that people could get in and out of the village; there were many commuters, and all the boats had been moved from Losvika to other harbours.

The shop was packed with people. In the storeroom, people were queuing to buy firewood that Else had had transported to the village, and she had stocked the shelves with extra supplies. The windows were fogged up, and steam rose from people's rainwear.

– Can I help you? asked Kajsa. Else shook her head. Put the coffee on, will you? I need a break. Linda can help the customers, she said, pointing to a young girl.

Fifteen minutes later, they were sitting at the table in the office. – I've never seen anything like it, she said. Have you been stockpiling?"

– I've got some tinned food and soup packets, and we've got plenty of firewood, and I've fully charged a power bank.

– I've got myself a battery-powered DAB radio, said Else. If anything were to happen, and we were left without power, mobile network or broadband for a long time, I want to be sure I can get information about what's going on.

She fetched the jug of coffee from the coffee maker and poured two cups.

– But tell me, did you get anything out of Fia?

Kajsa had no qualms about telling her best friend what had happened the evening before Petter Nedrelid died.

– Do you think it has anything to do with the murder? wondered Else.

– No idea. Kikki isn't the sort of woman who'd kill someone just because he gets on her nerves.

– No, goodness me, you can't believe that.

Else turned on the radio and shortly afterwards the Dagsnytt news bulletin came on. At that very moment, their mobile phones vibrated. Both looked at the message.

– In Losvika in Sunnmøre, the risk of landslides from the Faderen mountain range has increased, and the danger warning has been raised to red level, said the newsreader. Everyone living there is urged to evacuate immediately to higher ground in accordance with the plans previously received by the local population, and not to remain near the sea. Parents must collect their children from school and nursery. In addition, the Norwegian Meteorological Institute has also raised the warning for Storm Edna to extreme weather, with gale-force winds for the entire West Coast.

– It's happening now, said Else.

Kajsa stood up. – I have to pick up Jonas from school.

There was an impatient queue at the till in the shop. Else started the conveyor belt and scanned the barcodes at breakneck speed.

When Kajsa came out of the shop, she saw Nina and her colleague running down to the harbour and boarding the boat. It was heading full speed towards Vågen.

*

Jonas had brought his friend Elias home. They were playing computer games and laughing and shouting as if it were a perfectly ordinary day. Kajsa peered out of the living room window. In the light of the streetlamps along the roads, the rain was lashing sideways. At both ends of Stranda, she caught glimpses of the red warning lights through the downpours.

Perhaps Petter's murder and what happened to Markus are the sort of cases that were never solved, or only after many years when someone can no longer keep a secret? she thought.

From the photo on the wall, Karsten looked at her; the wind ruffled his hair, and he smiled with lively eyes. It stabbed at her chest. She had always sought his advice when making documentaries, and more than once he had helped her sort through her thoughts and information. He had compared her job to his as a police investigator. The side road, she thought. It referred to a metaphor he had used. On a road there are many side roads; is there a detour like that you've passed? he had said. Perhaps you should go back and see where it leads?

Have I passed one without realising it? she wondered.

As a documentary filmmaker, she had found that the heart of the story was often located somewhere other than where she had first thought. It wasn't necessarily something logical to investigate; it could be people who were on the very fringes of her research. But there was always something or someone connected to the main characters. Who was on the fringes this time? A thought struck her and she sent a message to Nina, asking if she knew where the Lindbo twins lived. She received a reply straight away, one word: No.

52

Fia hadn't been home for weeks, and when she rang her, she answered curtly and tersely, or didn't answer at all. I've ruined my relationship with her, thought Margareth.

What have I done?

She'd been in love with girls both at secondary school and at sixth form, had felt different and an outsider, had been terrified that someone would expose her, and had suppressed and denied her feelings. When she was seventeen, she'd started dating a boy and had sex for the first time. It hadn't felt wrong; on the contrary, she was in love with him. What a relief. She was just like everyone else; it had just been a 'teenage thing'. Afterwards, she'd locked everything she'd felt away in a separate room in her head, and she rarely went in there after she married Petter.

Then Kikki moved to the village. She'd felt it in her gut the first time she met her gaze, a lovely tingle. She fought against it, but it was no use, not after Kikki said: 'You're just like me'. She didn't feel exposed; she felt seen. They set off on a journey together, sharing a secret; it was a game, a dangerous game, thrilling, exciting, a high she became addicted to. The boredom vanished; it was as if she had come to life after a hibernation, as if she had been lying in a den, merely existing for years.

Would Petter still be alive if I hadn't been unfaithful? she wondered. Is there a connection, was it Kikki who… no, that was an impossible thought.

Kikki had been both furious and upset when she said it was over between them. She understood that she would be sad, but that she would get so incredibly angry came as a surprise. They'd had an argument and Kikki's reaction had provoked her.

– What did you think? she'd said. That I'd leave everything behind, give up a comfortable life with a good income for you?

Kikki had lost control, and when she pushed her so hard that she fell, she saw her in a new light, more clearly. There had been something in her eyes that she had never seen before. Was it contempt?

Afterwards, she was glad of the confrontation. The relationship was over. Completely over. She'd looked up the definition of bisexual, and there was something in the text she'd read that surprised her.

'A bisexual person may be equally attracted to all genders, but it need not be to the same degree, at the same time or in the same way. The extent and nature of attraction to different genders varies. One may be more attracted to one gender than others, for example 70 per cent towards men and 30 per cent towards women.

It varies. That was exactly how it was – and had been – for her.

Was it that 30 per cent of feelings that had cost Petter his life and her her relationship with her daughter?

Her mobile vibrated. She glanced at it quickly but didn't answer it; she put it on silent, let it ring out, sat in the dark and heard the storm more than she saw it.

Something had to be done; she couldn't go on like this, walking around afraid of Kikki. It rumbled and crashed outside, as if nature had created a soundtrack to the chaos inside her. Her throat tightened.

A message came through. She didn't reply to it, but when another one came through a little later, she got up and went out into the storm.

53

Just before nine o'clock in the evening, the doorbell rang. Mattis was standing on the steps in the rain. – You said I could come anytime, he said quickly, wiping raindrops from his eyebrows.

– Come in, said Kajsa.

He took off his raincoat and kicked off his boots. Jonas had gone to bed, but now he appeared in the doorway. – Can I stay up a bit, please? he asked.

– OK, for a little while then, said Kajsa.

She took the dishes out of the dishwasher and saw that Mattis was happy when Jonas sat down next to him. – Where on the pitch did you play? she heard him ask.

– I was a striker, said Mattis.

– So am I, said Jonas.

– Do you know what's the most important thing for a striker?

– Scoring goals?

– Of course. But the most important thing for scoring goals is what's called positioning.

– Being where the ball is going?

– Exactly. You have to be good at reading the game, anticipating where the ball is going.

– Like Haaland. But how do you get that good?

Kajsa sat down on the sofa and switched on TV2. On the news, Trump had to take a back seat to the attention being paid to Faderen. 'Losvika isolated indefinitely', read the headline. The risk of Faderen sliding remained high, said a geologist. A map was shown with a line drawn across it, dividing the village in two. – Everyone living in houses below the line must evacuate immediately, said the mayor of Vestøy. The newsreader switched to interviewing a meteorologist. The extreme weather system Edna was set to hit the Norwegian coast during the night.

With such strong winds, there was a risk of trees toppling, streams and rivers bursting their banks, landslides, and roofs, garden furniture and trampolines being torn up and blown away. All loose objects should be secured along the entire West Coast. Mountain passes were closed, and ferries and flights cancelled. The warning wasn't just about the wind; heavy rain was expected, and people had to be prepared for damage to vital infrastructure such as the electricity grid, broadband and mobile networks.

– Jonas, it's bedtime now, said Kajsa, switching off the TV when the report had finished.

– Can't I stay up a bit longer? Please.

– We can talk more about football another day, said Mattis.

Jonas shuffled towards the door. – Do you want to come and play a football game with me on the PlayStation one day? he asked.

– Yeah, that would be fun, replied Mattis. Goodnight, Jonas.

Mattis turned the wicker chair round and sat with his back to the window. Kajsa tidied up the kitchen before going upstairs to Jonas. He had already fallen asleep. She tucked the duvet over him and turned off the light.

She sat down in the other wicker chair. – I'm in the process of making a TV documentary about the Lukas case, she said, trying to sound reassuring. Her fingers, which had been stroking the armrest, paused for a moment.

– I'd like to interview you, she said.

– That's out of the question.

– Stig was wrongly branded a murderer. The truth must come out, Mattis. He remained silent. – I'm going to tell you what I know, and it's actually quite a lot, she continued, thinking at the same time that she had to be careful not to press him too hard; he was fragile.

He glanced at her out of the corner of his eye.

– I understand you don't trust the police, but you can trust me, she said, leaning forward in her chair. Will you tell me what happened in the woods?

She waited, letting him think. Then he nodded. – The truth is, I don't know; I don't remember anything. I've blocked it out, and I probably ran and hid, just like I

used to when Petter and Rune bullied me.

He pressed his lips tightly together. – Yes, he said thoughtfully, that's what I did, I hid; that's why I don't remember anything.

– Oda saw you running with Petter and Rune down from the woods past her house. You were a bit behind them. You had a nosebleed and were crying. Where was Stig?

He blinked rapidly several times, scratched the back of his head, thinking. – Didn't he run with us?

– Oda says she saw him quite a while before you did.

His gaze went distant, as if he were trying to conjure up the memory. – So Stig had run home and I hid. Then you're right, it must have been Petter or Rune. Or both of them. They were always together for everything.

Kajsa felt a faint shiver run down her spine.

That was when it happened. A violent crash, the sound of shattering glass; they both flinched and threw themselves to the floor. A brick lay on the floor in front of the fireplace. They sat in shock for a few seconds before Mattis ran out. After a short while, he came back. He hadn't seen anyone.

The wind was blowing rain in through the hole in the window. – Do you have anything I can cover it with? he asked.

Kajsa's legs felt wobbly as she went down to the cellar and found a fibreboard panel, a hammer and some nails. It was quiet in the loft. She was relieved that Jonas hadn't woken up.

– You have to document it, take photos, said Mattis.

Kajsa fetched her mobile from the kitchen. She had to take several photos of the stone and the window because her hands were shaking so much that the pictures came out blurry. Afterwards, she found some plastic gloves and a cardboard box.

– There's something written on the underside, said Mattis as she lifted the stone. Kajsa peered underneath and spotted letters in red paint.

– What does it say? he asked.

– DIE! with an exclamation mark.

– Someone's trying to scare you, said Mattis once he'd put the wooden board in place.

– This is no joke. I can sleep on the sofa. You two shouldn't be left alone.

She was about to say it wasn't necessary. But she changed her mind. He wanted to be there for her; she had to show him trust if he was to trust her. And she was scared.

It felt safe to have someone in the house.

– Maybe you should drop that documentary, he said.

– I'm not going to give up. The truth must come out. Mattis scratched his chin.

– Who's trying to scare you?

– I don't know. It's terribly unpleasant to think about. But it must have something to do with my job, someone who feels I've got too close.

– Are you on the trail of something?

– I'm on the trail of a good documentary, but whether I'm on the trail of a perpetrator – or several – is impossible to know.

– What have you found out?

– That what you, Petter and Rune explained when you were seven isn't true. Why did you say it was Stig when you didn't see what happened to Lukas? Why did everyone point the finger at Stig?

– Rune and Petter said it was him. And I trusted them.

54

Kajsa couldn't sleep. DIE! It was a threat. Who had thrown the stone, who was after her? There was one thing she was certain of. Someone was watching her, and this someone was afraid of what she had found out. How far would they go to stop her?

Outside, the wind was picking up, rattling loudly under the roof. A knot of unease, like a premonition of something she didn't know what was, formed in her stomach.

Mattis had hidden himself; he hadn't seen what happened to Lukas. Stig had run home. That left Rune and Petter alone with Lukas. The thoughts and questions kept sleep at bay, and she was still awake when the phone lit up on the bedside table just before midnight. Thea? Anders? she thought instinctively. Who else would call so late?

– Hello? she replied breathlessly.

– Hi, it's Fia. You have to help me, Kajsa.

– What's happened?

– I can't get hold of Mum. She's never failed to answer when I've called. I must have called her a hundred times tonight.

Kajsa heard the panic in her voice. – I'm afraid something's happened to her. I can't get home; Stranda's closed. Can you go and check? If she doesn't open the door, there's a key hanging in the garage, she said, explaining where it was.

– OK. When did you last speak to her?

– This morning, around 11 o'clock. She was at home then.

– I'll go and check and ring you back. Maybe her mobile's run out of battery; she's probably just asleep.

In the living room, she woke Mattis and told him about the call from Fia. He wanted to come along, but she asked him to stay in the house in case Jonas woke up.

– I should go, he insisted.

She looked at him thoughtfully for a few seconds. – No, I promised Fia I'd do it myself, she said.

Kajsa put on a cap and pulled the hood of her raincoat tight around her face before opening the door and running down the stairs. The wind was already so strong that she almost lost her breath when she opened her mouth. There wasn't much rain yet, but that was only the beginning.

Has Margareth fallen seriously ill? she wondered as she fought her way through the gusts of wind.

Her car was in the garage. But nothing happened when she rang the doorbell. She waited and tried again, pressing the button quickly several times. In the kitchen, which had a window facing the entrance, only the extractor fan was on.

The key was hanging where Fia had said. She stood in the hallway for a moment, listening. Puddles were forming on the floor. She took off her raincoat and boots, then took a deep breath and went into the living room, prepared for the possibility that something might have happened to Margareth. Only a wall lamp was on. She switched on the spotlights on the ceiling, walked slowly around, moving from room to room, her body tense, steeled for whatever she might find. If Margareth had taken ill, she might even be lying dead somewhere. The bathroom was empty, and in a bedroom with a double bed, the bed was neatly made. She continued up to the attic, where there were three large bedrooms; one of them must be Fia's, as there was a dressing table with jewellery and hair clips in a bowl, and a couple of dresses hanging on a valet stand. Finally, she went down the stairs and came to a basement room. Behind four closed doors were a gym, a laundry room, a storage room and a pottery workshop.

Everything looked normal; nothing was out of place. She did another round, looking for Margareth's mobile phone, but couldn't see it anywhere. There were no raincoats or boots in the hallway either. She must have gone out. When she went to ring Fia, she realised there was no mobile signal.

On her way home, she stopped at the junction where Fjellvegen went uphill. How could she not have thought of that? Perhaps everything had worked itself out between

Margareth and Kikki? Yes, that must be it.

Kikki's house was one of the top ones on Fjellvegen, and she was panting for breath when she arrived and rang the doorbell insistently. After a short while, which felt like an eternity, the door opened. Kikki stared at her in shock; she was wearing a long white nightgown. – Is Margareth here? Kajsa called out, wiping the rain from her face.

– No.

Kajsa leaned against the doorframe and panted.

– What's wrong with Margareth? asked Kikki. Has something happened?

Kajsa told her about the conversation with Fia, and that Margareth wasn't home.

– I spoke to her on the phone around 4 o'clock. She was on her way home from a walk then. The beach is closed, she must be somewhere in Losvika. I hope she hasn't done anything stupid.

Tears suddenly welled up in Kikki's eyes. – You know, when you met us in Kvitsandvika, she said all sorts of strange things. She wasn't herself. I've tried to talk to her since, but it's no use. She threw her arms out wide. – What do we do now?

– The mobile network's down; we've got to launch a search operation.

– I'll come with you, I'll just get dressed and I'll be right there.

Kajsa checked her mobile as she ran. Still no signal. Johs, I must tell Johs; he knows what we should do. And Else. The wind picked up, and then the heavens opened; the rain was like a wall in front of her. It didn't take long before Else arrived at the door. Kajsa explained the situation and asked her to come round to her place whilst she notified Johs.

Fifteen minutes later they were all together. Else had made coffee and they sat down around the kitchen table. Fortunately, Jonas hadn't woken up. When Kajsa checked the online newspapers to see if there was any news about Faderen, she discovered that the broadband was down too.

Margareth had popped into the shop around two o'clock, Else said.

– Kikki spoke to her around four o'clock; she was on her way home from Kvitsandvika, Kajsa interjected.

– We need to talk to people, see if anyone has seen her since, said Else.

– We need more resources, but it's the middle of the night, people are asleep,

said Johs.

– I can drive through Stranda and alert the police, Mattis offered.

– No, you must*n't*, said Else. There's a reason why Stranda is closed.

– I've got it! exclaimed Johs, standing up. – Of course, why didn't I think of that straight away? I've moved the sailing boat to Vågen and installed the VHF at my place; I can call the Joint Rescue Coordination Centre.

He hurried out.

– I'll run and fetch the battery-powered DAB radio; we need to be able to keep up with the news if the power goes out, said Else, following Johs.

*

7. 1 November at 01:00

Else was back after ten or twelve minutes, but it took half an hour before Johs returned. There had been several large rockfalls from Faderen, he said. The Joint Rescue Coordination Centre was to contact the police in Vestøy and inform them about Margareth, and they were considering deploying both a rescue boat and a rescue helicopter.

– We can't just sit here and wait, said Else, tossing her hair in exasperation. Several people in the village are in the Home Guard; we need to wake people up and get the search underway, she said passionately. – It's only three degrees outside; imagine if Margareth is lying injured somewhere in this weather. I don't care about the warnings against being outdoors; we have no time to lose. And if I know the people in the village at all, they'll turn up. We're used to bad weather.

Just then, the doorbell rang. It was Kikki. Else grabbed a notepad and a pen lying on the table and jotted down names. After a short while, she had a list of twenty names. – Come on, Mattis and Kikki. She tore the list into three pieces; they each took one and set off into the storm.

Kajsa lit some candles and stoked the fire. The minutes dragged by as she and Johs waited. They spoke little; there was nothing to say, speculation was pointless. The radio played music, but suddenly the news bulletin came on.

– This is NRK News. A woman is missing in Losvika in Vestøy municipality in

Sunnmøre, the police report. The weather is hampering a search operation for the woman in the village, which is completely cut off from the outside world. Due to the risk of landslides from Mount Faderen, the only road to Losvika is closed, and the village has no mobile phone coverage or broadband. However, contact has been established with residents via VHF radio. Police Station Chief Nina Garshol in Vestøy tells NRK that the emergency services have procedures and plans in place for what to do if the landslide occurs, and the police, the Rescue Coordination Centre, the Red Cross, the Civil Defence and the Home Guard are all on full alert. There are hurricane-force gusts. The rescue boat is based in Vågen in Vestøy, but in addition to strong winds and high waves, the risk of the Faderen mountain section collapsing and triggering a tidal wave means they are monitoring the situation. The rescue centre states that they are continuously assessing whether they can send a helicopter with a thermal imaging camera to search for the woman. For the time being, this is not possible as the wind is increasing. The Norwegian Meteorological Institute reports that gusts could reach speeds of over 40 metres per second during the night.

– What's happened to the window? asked Johs. Kajsa told him about the stone.

– What? he said, startled. There you go. I've told you that what you're doing isn't without risk.

– Yes, some people feel threatened. I'm glad you're here. My very own bodyguard, she added with a wry smile.

At that very moment, the power went out and the village was plunged into pitch darkness.

After about half an hour, people started turning up at the door, braving the weather and the warnings. It was Johs who took charge; they were to go out in pairs, and everyone was to use Margareth's house as their base. Afterwards, he went home to keep in touch with the Rescue Coordination Centre on the VHF. Because of Jonas, Kajsa had to stay at home.

She stood at the window and watched the torches disappear into the darkness. Usually, the orange lights from the nursery would illuminate the rain showers no matter how bad the weather was. Now she could only see her own face in the glass. She lay down on the sofa with a blanket, listening to the storm howling and the rain hammering against the windows.

She had been convinced that Petter's murder was linked to the Lukas case. The

discovery of her murdered brother in the cliffs had reinforced that theory.

The truth about who killed Lukas would shed new light on the murders of both Petter Nedrelid and Markus Lindbo. But Margareth's disappearance didn't fit the picture.

Not everything fits together, she thought, dejected.

55

6.30 am

Kajsa had fallen asleep and was woken by her mobile beeping. Signal, she had signal! It was a message from Johs saying that the rescue boat and helicopter still couldn't reach Losvika. Kajsa hurried to call Fia in Volda.

– What do we do now? asked Fia, distraught.

– We're in touch with the police. You'll hear from me again; I'll update you when I know more. We*'re going to* find your mum; there are lots of people looking for her.

Half an hour later, another text message arrived from Johs. The search parties had gathered just outside his house, and he'd invited them in to warm up. The power was still out, and a new message came through saying the school was closed. Kajsa waited until half past seven, then she rang Elias's mother. They agreed that Jonas could come over to their place.

By the light of many candles, people were sitting both in the kitchen and in the living room at Johs's house. He stood in the doorway and went through where they had searched and what remained to be done. They discussed whether to head to Kvitsandvika and follow the mountain trails, but concluded that a helicopter search would be more effective, and they agreed to wait in the hope that the rescue helicopter from Florø would arrive soon. If it took too long, they would form search parties in the terrain once there was more daylight. In such stormy weather, it never got fully light, but it was now almost nine o'clock, and one could sense a break in the clouds. Whilst waiting for the helicopter, they would search through outbuildings, barns and other structures, as well as knock on doors and ask people to check their properties. A few would enter boathouses and harbour buildings. The risk of a flood wave meant they were on high alert, with a car standing by to transport them to higher ground if the alarm sounded.

Even more people had volunteered to join the search once it became known that Margareth was missing. One of the men received a message from his wife saying that several women had taken the initiative to set up a base at the prayer house. They had provided food and drink there, and the teams moved to that location.

Kajsa received a text message from Nina; it was almost an order. – You're not to join the search; you must be my eyes and ears until I arrive.

She replied with a thumbs-up.

She and Johs stayed put and finished their coffee. Kajsa noticed that he'd bought a new oak dining table and had started to strip the old wallpaper. A couple of pictures had been hung on the wall above the TV. One was of a boy in shorts with a rucksack on his back, smiling broadly at the photographer; the other was of two babies lying on their tummies on a sheepskin rug.

– Is that you with the rucksack on your back on your first day at school? she asked.

– That's me, yes.

– Who are those two babies?

– That's my sister and me. She died when I was little.

– Oh, how sad. What happened?

– Meningitis.

– How old are you in that photo?

– Six months.

– So you're a

twin. Johs nodded.

– When did your sister die?

– Autumn 1992. She was only two years old.

Two small children, one in a dress, one in shorts. Born in 1990. The Lindbo twins were also born that year. Their parents had been religious and had given their children biblical names: Sara, Mark, Luke and John. Three of the four evangelists. Johs was short for John.

She felt a tug at the nape of her neck.

– I just need to go to the loo, then we'll head to the prayer house, said Johs and

went out. Kajsa quickly lifted her mobile and took a photo of the picture.

– I'm coming, she replied when Johs called from the hallway.

He stood with his hand on the door handle, smiling briefly. When she thought about it, she realised she knew very little about him.

The rain had let up, but the wind was just as strong, and Kajsa scanned the horizon. When will the police arrive, when will we get help? she thought, feeling a moment of panic. Breathe, she told herself as she walked alongside Johs towards the prayer house. Breathe.

*

10.00

Kajsa watched Johs as he walked around talking to people. The large prayer hall looked like a Catholic mass with candles and battery-powered lamps. He had a natural authority; she noticed it clearly when he gathered the search parties in front of the stage and everyone listened attentively to him. Stig Voldsund was one of them. She didn't see Rune Grande, but he hadn't been out among people since he was released from custody, apart from at work. People had been talking about him at the shop. There were several there who took his side.

– That Rita's never been quite right, someone had said. Kajsa had fought hard against the urge to say something.

She met Johs's gaze. Was there nothing new in his expression? Had he been puzzled by her interest in the photo of him and his twin sister? No, his answer when she asked when they were born hadn't been evasive, not at all; on the contrary, he'd seemed straightforward. She smiled back quickly and grabbed a coffee pot.

The ladies streamed through the door with buttered rolls, and the smell of freshly brewed coffee wafted from the kitchen. It reminded Kajsa of the Christmas tree parties of her childhood, when they came in from the cold and the scent of coffee hit them as they changed from winter boots to indoor shoes in the freezing hallway and stepped into the warmth of the hall with the huge Christmas tree that reached all the way up to the gallery.

Johs was a twin; he was two years old in 1992. The thought wouldn't let go. She had told him much of what she had discovered, but she hadn't told him about the visit to Molde, about the twin brother and twin sister of Lukas and Markus. He didn't know that she knew the whole family.

The sky was overcast and grey, as if it were dusk in the afternoon, even though it was only 10 o'clock in the morning. The trees swayed as if they were thin sticks, the waves crashed against the pier and the sea spray rose high. They had been told that the weather was still too bad for the rescue helicopter to take off, and people were getting ready to search the area on foot.

11.10

Two women arrived, each carrying a field kitchen, and pots of food were heated up. Kajsa had seen before that the women here always stepped up in crisis situations. They had always done so. At that very moment, all the mobile phones in the room began to vibrate, just as the Civil Defence alarm system started to wail. The sound was so piercing that Kajsa thought the loudspeakers must be mounted on the chapel roof. The chatter stopped; people dropped what they were holding and rushed to the windows. The rain had paused again and the village lay grey before them as the clouds raced across the sky. Johs came and stood beside her.

– It's happening now, he said quietly. A flash of lightning split the air, so close that everyone flinched. It was completely silent; everyone held their breath as they looked towards Storenuten. The car carrying the search party, which had been at the harbour, came racing up Mallabakken at full speed. The summit of the mountain, where Faderen lay, was shrouded in clouds, but out of them came a cloud of dust that grew larger and larger. A collective groan went through the crowd; they heard a deep rumble, like distant thunder. Huge boulders tumbled like pebbles down the mountainside and struck the road in Stranda; the mass rolled out into the sea, it went on and on, the dust cloud grew larger and larger, spreading across the water's surface, and out of it came a wave rolling towards Losvika whilst the mountain continued to crumble in the background.

– How high is it? whispered someone.

– I don't think it'll be that big,' said another hopefully. Parts of it will hit the breakwaters; they'll probably take the brunt of it.

Water sprayed skywards as the wave struck the breakwaters. People stood with wide eyes and hands pressed against their open mouths. For a moment, Kajsa thought with relief that they'd been right; the breakwaters were taking the brunt of it. She was one of several people filming with their mobile phones. But the wave rolled over the breakwaters, and in the gap between them the water was compressed into an even higher but narrower wave. Inside, it spread out in a fan shape and rolled in all directions, crushing the small boat harbours, smashing boathouses and sheds on the foreshore, before rolling over Hamnevegen, hitting the houses at the water's edge, and demolishing parts of the glass façade of the Smaragden. At the same time, the wave struck the hotel on the outer side of the breakwaters; shards of glass were carried away by the wind, and fragments flew in all directions.

The torrent of water reached its highest point some way up Mallabakken before retreating. It cascaded down the slopes, dug into the ground, forming rivers of mud that flowed out into the sea between the remains of boathouses and jetties, leaving behind twisted metal on the foreshore and large quantities of timber and scrap in the sea.

Johs's phone rang. – Yes. It just happened now, he replied. The wave went a long way up onto land; I'm not sure how far, but the harbour looks like a disaster zone. Yes, the hotel was hit too. What do we do now?

He looked at Kajsa. It's Nina, he mouthed. – Yes. OK. That's fine, he said.

– What did she say, when are they coming? Kajsa asked Johs.

– We need to check if there's anywhere the rescue boat can dock or if all the quays are destroyed. The rescue helicopter is still waiting.

– What about the search operation?

– The only sensible thing to do now is to get an overview and check that no one has been injured before we carry on.

After Johs had left, Kajsa rang Jonas.

– Did you see the landslide and the wave? Did you see it? It was like something out of a film, he said excitedly.

Good, thought Kajsa. She could tell from his voice that he was more excited than scared. He wanted to stay with his friend. Then she rang Anders and Thea, told them what had happened and reassured them that she and their little brother were fine.

On her mobile, she found the photo she'd taken of Johs and his twin sister.

The Lindbo twins were called Johannes and Sara. She should have asked what Johs's

sister was called. Now it would seem conspicuous if she did.

*

A train of thought took shape as she walked, hunched against the wind. Fragments of facts, theories and assumptions scattered about; some found their place in the jigsaw puzzle she was trying to piece together, others didn't fit at all. People had been saying that the vandalism had happened after Stig arrived in the village in April. But there was someone else who had also moved here at the same time. Johs.

She went home and sent the photo of Johs and her sister from her mobile to her own email. The broadband was still down, but she connected her PC to the internet via her mobile. Then she found the photo of the twins from Molde and placed the two images side by side on her PC desktop, zooming in and out, comparing the mouths, noses, eyes and face shapes. The six-month-old babies had only downy hair on their heads; the two-year-olds both had light hair. Johs's hair colour was dark, but that meant nothing; it often changed with age. It was impossible to tell whether or not they were the same children. Johs had said that his sister died in the autumn of 1992, aged two. That was around the same time that the twins in Molde were taken from their father and later given up for adoption.

Was it just a coincidence, or could Johs be the brother of Lukas and Markus?

56

12 o'clock

Johs's house was just two doors down from Kajsa's on Øvrevegen, but on the other side of the road.

'What might I find? What should I look for?' she wondered as she placed her hand on the door handle. The front door was locked. 'I need to look for personal belongings, family photos, letters, documents – things that reveal something about his background, where he comes from, who he is.' Is he Markus's younger brother? Has he found out who killed him, made the connection with the Lukas case? If Johs is someone other than who he's been pretending to be, could he have something to do with Margareth's disappearance, the murder of Petter? Oh, no… She'd told Johs that she thought Margareth had a suspicion about who'd killed her husband.

She tipped over a large jar and peered underneath. No key. The cellar door was locked too; she lifted stones and felt along the sill before checking the windows. They were all shut. It was common for people to leave a spare key somewhere, as Aunt Agnes had done. Often the neighbour knew where it was, as a precaution in case the owner was away and a situation arose that made it necessary to get in, such as the smoke alarm going off, for example. She couldn't see a key box anywhere either.

Oda's house was just above, on Fjellveien. She hurried through the back garden and spotted a path between the houses.

Johs had asked her about Lukas and Markus several times. He had said little about himself. Was it a coincidence that he had settled here? Perhaps she had mistaken the calm he exuded, his decisiveness and authority, for something else – a kind of aloof control, something guarded and calculated.

– No, but is that you coming in the storm, Kajsa? Oda exclaimed as she opened the door. Come on in.

– Are you all right?

– Yes, I'm fine. Did you see the landslide and the wave? It was terrifying. Is there any news about Marga …

Kajsa interrupted her. – No. But listen, I need to ask you something. Do you know if Anton, your neighbour who Johs bought the house from, had a key lying around somewhere?

– Why do you ask…

– I don't have time to explain it now, she said quickly.

– Anton, yes, he had a key to the garage door.

– Where in the garage?

– Just inside the door, on the right-hand side.

– Thanks, I'll pop round later.

In the garage, she shone her mobile phone on the wall next to the garage door. There! There it was. She unhooked it from the nail and ran back to the house.

In the hallway, she switched on her torch, walked through the kitchen and into the living room. There was a laptop on the dining table. She opened it, but it was password-protected. She tried 1234, the factory setting, but it wouldn't open. Next to it lay a pile of papers. She understood little of them; they looked like financial analyses with tables and graphs. She opened drawers and cupboards, but the only personal item she found was his passport; there were no photos of his family, of people close to him, nothing that revealed anything about his background or past. Just the two pictures on the wall.

She hurried up to the attic. Two of the rooms were just as they must have been when he took over the house, with old beds and chests of drawers; they had wall-to-wall carpets. In the last room, new parquet flooring had been laid and the bed looked new. So did a large wardrobe with a few suit jackets on one side and shelves on the other. She stuck her hands inside, but there were only clothes there.

Kajsa went back down into the hallway and opened the cellar door. A musty, sour smell hit her. She stood there for a moment, listening, but heard only her own breathing. Slowly she made her way down the stairs, shining her torch ahead of her and feeling her pulse thudding in her throat. There were three doors there in addition to the exit door. The first door led to the laundry room. The light from the torch flickered around the room. On the floor next to the drain stood a new washing machine and a tumble dryer, and in one corner there was a large washbasin. It smelled

of damp and washing powder. She paused with her hand on the door handle to the next room. Had she heard a sound? She stood motionless for a moment, her pulse pounding in her throat, but she heard nothing more; it was probably just a branch hitting the wall. The next room was a storeroom; it contained only a freezer and some shelves with bottles of juice and tinned fruit. She stood in the hallway listening again before opening the door to the last room. It was a workshop with a large lathe and tools on the walls. It smelled of tar and oil. Kajsa stood in the hallway for a moment, listening, but it was completely silent. Then she went up the stairs. The cellar door was ajar; she pushed it open. As she stepped up from the last step, an arm wrapped tightly around her neck.

57

12.35

It was Johs who had asked if he could take charge of the volunteers who were to search some of the paths up in the mountains. He'd been on the verge of saying no, of making up an excuse. But then he heard himself say, yes, of course, he could do that. He had no experience with search operations, but Johs had briefed him. So now here he was, leading eighteen people – he who had never taken or been given responsibility for anything at all, apart from on the football pitch a lifetime ago. In the middle of a storm that made it dangerous for them all to be outdoors, he was the one entrusted with the responsibility of leading them, looking after them and deciding where it was safe to go.

Mattis brushed raindrops from his eyes and licked his lips. They had reached the car park at the end of Fjellvegen; now they were heading towards the forest. A tingling sensation along his collarbones spread to his shoulders, down his arms, all the way to his fingertips. He should have said no. He did sometimes go into the mountains, but he never took the path through the woods. Losviktua and Kvitsandvika were his spots. Back when he'd played football, he'd trained in that area several times a week. He'd loved it when his lungs burned and he collapsed at the top. Perhaps he should start doing that again, training, rediscovering that unique joy when his pulse pounded through his body and he became one with nature.

When they reached the forest, he split the team in two, one on each side of the path, whilst he himself walked in the middle. He did not look towards the spot where Lukas had been lying; he remembered exactly where it was. The treetops rustled. The light from their headlamps illuminated the forest floor and the tree trunks; they walked at the same pace side by side in a single line with logs in their hands, their eyes fixed on the ground, calling out Margareth's name. They lifted bushes, fallen branches, ferns and heather; they were not just looking for a person, they were also looking for clues.

I did it, he thought as they reached the edge of the forest, feeling a sense of accomplishment. Lately, he had been experiencing several unfamiliar, positive feelings. And it wasn't just down to the new medication. Just a few weeks ago, it would have been unthinkable that he would walk through this forest, that he would be part of a team and take on such responsibility. But something had happened to him. Kajsa had happened. A person he'd behaved terribly towards, but who'd met him with generosity and wished him well. That evening he'd had dinner at her place, when Jonas had looked at him with admiring eyes, that was when it began. And afterwards he'd been allowed to visit, sit in the wicker chair, meet Agnes's gaze on the wall and talk to Jonas about football. He thought about it every day; it was almost unreal, this feeling of being part of something, like a football team, a family, a group of friends.

Kajsa was sometimes a challenge to talk to; she was like a terrier that never gave up. But at the same time he liked her; she was pushy, which was uncomfortable, but at the same time she was friendly, and he liked talking to her when she wasn't nagging about Lukas. Then she created a small opening where a sliver of light seeped into the darkness. He'd never thought anything like this could happen. But did he have the strength to go through a change, to reveal all the secrets, both his own and those of others? Would he be able to tell her more? No. 'Oh, so that's what he's like,' people would say if they knew. 'Yes, yes, there's always been something odd about Mattis.

It wasn't my fault, he thought, but no one's going to believe me.

They gathered around him at the edge of the forest; he pointed southwards and told them to continue in a single line, side by side, with about two metres between each person. They weren't to go up to the top; the wind made it too dangerous.

The rain lashed the faces wrapped in hoods around him. He noticed that Kikki was wiping her eyes and biting her lip. Was she crying? As they began to walk on, his hand on her shoulder. – We'll find Margareth.

Kikki nodded, a small sob escaped her, and he thought: Am I really the one comforting another human being?

58

Kikki appreciated the rain; it hid the fact that she was crying as she walked in the long line of people up the mountain. But Mattis had seen it, and he had shown her kindness, encouraged her. It had almost made it worse; she wasn't used to it. No one in this village had ever encouraged or comforted her. Only Margareth.

She had dreamed of being someone whom everyone saw for who she really was, of feeling free and living together with Margareth. That was never going to happen.

Margareth, why did you change? she thought. How am I supposed to live without you?

'To everything there is a season,' it said in the Scriptures. Of course, she knew her Bible; she'd grown up with Bible verses. 'A time to weep, a time to laugh. A time to love, a time to hate.'

She didn't want to cry. She wanted to love, dance and laugh – together with Margareth.

59

Kajsa lay on her stomach with her face to the floor and a heavy weight pressing down on her back. She screamed in pain as her forearms were pulled back and up her back. Suddenly, the pressure vanished. – For God's sake! Is that you, Kajsa?

The light from a torch blinded her. Johs pulled her to her feet. – What are you doing here?

His voice sounded more puzzled than

angry. – I… I…

What was she supposed to say?

Johs took her by the arm and led her into the living room.

– Explain, he said.

– Weren't you going down to the harbour? she said, realising how silly it sounded.

– I had to go home to change, I'm wet and cold. So… tell me why on earth you've let yourself into my house.

Kajsa looked at him silently.

– Speak up, for God's sake!

Kajsa pointed at the photo of the twins on the wall. – What was your sister's name? she asked. Was it Sara?

– What's that got to do with anything?

She expected thathe would look surprised, but his expression was one of incomprehension. – No, her name was Ellinor.

– Prove it.

– And why should I?

– Can you?

Johs walked over to the photograph, opened the frame, and handed her the picture. On the back, *'Ellinor and Johs, August 1990'* was written in beautiful cursive.

– We're staying here until you tell me what's going on, he said angrily.

– I'll tell you when Nina Garshol arrives, she said.

– No, I want to know now. Call her.

She put the phone on speaker. – Hi, Kajsa, replied Nina. I can't talk …

– Give me five seconds. There's something you need to know.

The wind was blowing into the microphone on Nina's mobile, and the sound was crackling. – What did you say? she shouted.

Kajsa looked at Johs's face as she said: I… I think Johs Kruse might be the brother of Lukas and Markus. One of the twins. He's a twin, born the same year as the Lindbo twins.

– What? came the reply from the mobile.

Johs stared at her with a deep crease at the bridge of his nose and a surprised expression. – He's with me, we're at his place, Kajsa said quickly.

– She's wrong, Johs interjected in a loud voice.

– I'm on my way, the helicopter will be here any minute, Nina shouted.

Johs stood there looking at her. For a long time. The silence hung heavy between them. It was Kajsa who broke it. – Lukas and Markus's twin brother was called Johannes, she said. Johs is short for Johannes.

– That's right, but Johs is actually my name. I'm named after my grandfather.

She met his gaze and saw that he was deeply upset. – You seriously believe that I'm involved in… God knows what… murder? Margareth's disappearance? It's absolutely unbelievable! He threw his arms out wide. How can you believe such a thing? You know me, Kajsa.

– I've only known you for a few months. Can I go?

– Of course.

He walked ahead into the hallway, opened the front door and let her past with an exaggerated gesture, saying sarcastically: You needn't be afraid that I'll do anything to you.

1.00 pm

Kajsa was on her way to the prayer house, but when the power came back on, she changed her mind and went home. The broadband was up and running again too, and

she sat down with her laptop on her lap on the glass veranda. From there she could see when the helicopter arrived; it wasn't far as the crow flies from Vågen out here.

On the Oslo City Council website, she found the Funeral Services' grave record database. The name popped up before she'd even finished typing it. *Ellinor Kruse, born 21 February 1990. Died 3 October 1992.*

She had been wrong. Johs had no connection to Lukas and Markus. No wonder he'd been furious and upset. Their friendship had suffered a serious blow. She had to talk to him, apologise. Just then, she heard the sound of the helicopter. It flew right over the house and landed in the school playground.

*

1.30 pm

Nina was briefed by Johs before she went up onto the main stage at the prayer hall. She introduced the four men standing with her. They were from the Home Guard and the Civil Defence; the Red Cross man had a large dog with him, and the last one was a colleague from the police.

Because of the noise from the helicopter taking off, she had to pause her briefing. She looked out across the hall. It was packed to the rafters. Everyone who had been out searching for Margareth Nedrelid had been called in.

Is there a murderer among these people? she wondered. And what is the connection between Margareth's disappearance and the murder of her husband, and the murder of Markus Lindbo? What is it I'm missing? Afterwards, she told herself: One thing at a time, the most important first. Are we dealing with a voluntary disappearance, a suicide, has there been an accident, or is this yet another crime? She quickly ran her hand through her short hair, feeling a rush of adrenaline. Despite not having slept for a day and a half, she felt wired and ready. This is the moment that counts, she thought. It's my responsibility; we have to find Margareth no matter what.

She cleared her throat and said that the rescue helicopter was searching with a thermal imaging camera. As for the risk of further landslides, the alert level had now been lowered from red to yellow. Almost the whole of Faderen had been swept away, but there was still a risk of smaller landslides. As soon as more crew were in place,

they would start assessing the damage caused by the wave.

The weather was improving, but it was still a full-blown storm.
The rescue boat was ready to transport crews into the village as soon as they received the go-ahead. She asked people to be particularly mindful that there were many loose objects, especially in the area closest to the sea. – There is still a risk that roof tiles and building materials could come loose, she said. We need volunteers who can go round to all the elderly people living alone and check that they are all right.

The helicopter had a doctor on board, and if anyone needed medical assistance, they should contact her. No injuries had been reported, but there was extensive damage to property in the harbour area and to houses and other buildings at the lower end of the village. Cellars were full of water, infrastructure was destroyed, and a fallen tree was blocking the road to Kvitsandvika.

– But the most important thing now is to find Margareth. If anyone has any information, however insignificant it may seem, I urge you to contact me or my colleague from the police.

Large parts of the village had already been searched, apart from along the coast.

She swept her gaze over the crowd and thought: If Margareth has been there, she is dead.

– The police would be working with the Home Guard and the Civil Defence to organise the continued search for Margareth whilst they awaited the results of the helicopter's aerial search, she added.

– We need people both at the hotel and at Smaragden, a voice called out from the back of the hall.

Nina spotted Rune Grande just inside the door. He stood there shouting

as if he had some sort of authority, just as arrogantly as he had behaved during the interrogations about the abuse of his wife, about his relationship with Petter and about the Lukas case. She disliked him; he was a wife-beater, but that was all they had on him.

– Right now we can't spare … she began.

– It's a complete crisis, he interrupted in a loud voice. We have to salvage whatever valuable equipment we can.

– Unfortunately, we don't have enough people to prioritise that right

now, said Nina calmly. We need to devote all our resources to finding Margareth.

– Is anyone willing to volunteer? shouted Rune Grande.

–

There was complete silence; no one came forward, and suddenly he left the room, the door slamming behind him.

– Remember that you're also looking for clues about Margareth, such as her mobile phone; she may have lost it, said Nina. And I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you all for stepping up. Take care of yourselves and each other, she concluded before handing over to the three men from the Civil Defence, the Home Guard and the Red Cross and stepping down from the stage.

She stood next to Kajsa. – What was that about Johs? she whispered questioningly.

– I was wrong.

– OK. You can tell me more about it later. She waved to her colleague. We're investigating at Margareth's house; we'll start there.

Kajsa walked with her towards the exit. – And if you think of anything, or hear anything new, report it to me *without* taking any action on your own, said Nina said with a stern expression. But she couldn't help smiling when Kajsa replied: – Yes, Ma'am!

60

4 p.m.

The wind had died down a little and over the next few hours rescue crews poured into the village. The rescue boat was bobbing in the waves outside the piers, ferrying police officers, Civil Defence and Home Guard personnel ashore in a dinghy that shuttled back and forth to the beach by the hotel. Everywhere you looked, there were lights from torches and searchlights, and in the sky above Losvika, the lights of the rescue helicopter were flashing. People popped into the prayer house to warm up and get food and drink. Later in the afternoon, the meteorologists reported that the storm would ease off the following day. There were barely eight hours of daylight, and by four o'clock it was starting to get dark. Then there was another briefing at the prayer house. The rescue helicopter's search had been fruitless.

As Kajsa listened to Nina, she noticed that Kikki was sitting on her own in a corner. Her hands were clenched tightly in her lap and her gaze wandered restlessly around the room without settling on anything.

– It's impossible that Margareth could have left Losvika, Kajsa heard Nina say. I understand that many are tired and that some may need a break, the search operation is exhausting and risky in this weather. The Home Guard, the Red Cross and the Civil Defence are continuing the search.

She said that the police had set up an operations base at the school, where there was Wi-Fi, and anyone wishing to get in touch could go there. The prayer house would still serve as a warming centre for the crews.

The silent gathering parted like the Red Sea for Moses as she walked towards the exit. Kajsa noticed that everyone stayed put as she followed her. No one went home. Can I have a word with you? she said.

– Come with me to the school.

In one of the classrooms, three police officers had set themselves up with laptops.

On the wall hung a large map of Losvika. It was divided into sectors, and Kajsa noticed that many buildings were marked with a cross. That must mean they'd been searched. Names and telephone numbers were written on the blackboard.

– There's something I need to tell you, said Kajsa.

– What is it?

– Someone threw a stone through the window of my living room last night. The word 'DIE' was written in capital letters with an exclamation mark in red paint on it.

Nina pressed her lips together with a resigned expression. – Do you suspect anyone?

– I've no idea who would do something like that. Rune Grande? He's probably furious with me.

– You need to be careful, this isn't good. She sighed. Let's take things one step at a time; right now, it's all about Margareth.

– Just one more thing, said Kajsa quickly. I think it was Rune Grande or Petter Nedrelid – or both – who killed Lukas.

– Why do you think that?

Kajsa told her what Mattis had said to her, that he'd been hiding. – And since Stig ran before the others, so…

– You realise I'm not in the right frame of mind for this right now, don't you? interrupted Nina, running her hand quickly through her short hair. She looked tired, her face glistening with sweat.

– Of course, I just wanted to mention it.

Just then, there was a knock at the door. It was opened by a policeman, and Kikki appeared behind him. Nina waved her in.

– What do you want with me? asked Kikki.

– I've got a couple of questions, since you were the last person to have contact with Margareth, said Nina.

– I don't think I can help, said Kikki.

Kajsa looked at Nina with a questioning expression. Nina nodded briefly, and Kajsa sat down at the first desk by the window.

– What were you doing last night? asked Nina.

– I was at home.

– Were you with anyone?

– No, I was on my own.

– You spoke to Margareth on the phone at 4 pm?

– Yes, but it was just a short call.

– What did you talk about?

– Well… yes, I mean, our relationship has been complicated since Petter died. I asked if we could meet up and have a chat, sort things out, get back together.

– And what did she say?

– She didn't want to.

– What do you mean by complicated?

– Margareth won't talk to me.

Kikki wiped her eyes on her sleeve, searching for the right words.

She's about to break down, Kajsa thought as she leaned forward and pressed her hands against her stomach, as if she'd suddenly been struck by severe pain. – I'm afraid of what Margareth might have got up to.

Her shoulders shook, her breathing came in short gasps. Kajsa went over to the sink and fetched some tissues for her.

– I… I…The words turned to air.

She blew her nose and wiped her eyes.

– Can I go? Nina nodded.

Kikki walked towards the door. – Something must have happened, she said. But there's a time for everything. She glanced at Kajsa before walking out and closing the door behind her.

– A time for everything, said Kajsa, what a strange thing to say. Isn't that a Bible quote? I can't make head nor tail of her.

– How so?

– I don't know, just a feeling that something's off. She doesn't strike me as the sort of person who'd have a breakdown. Quite the opposite.

– You don't know her that well, do you?

– No, that's true. I'm probably overthinking it.

More men came into the room. – We're having a staff meeting, said Nina. Go home. We'll have to deal with the stone later. You'll hear from me if anything happens.

*

It was now five o'clock, and another shower of rain was sweeping through the village, but the wind had died down noticeably. Outside the school, Kajsa met Mattis. He was going home to change, and they walked together. On the way, she received a call from Jonas asking if he could have dinner at his friend's house, and they agreed that she would pick him up at seven.

She and Mattis said goodbye outside her house. Suddenly she thought of something, turned round and ran after him. – There's something I've been thinking about. In 1992, you boys were brought in for questioning, one by one. Both you and Petter and Rune said it was Stig who stuffed moss into Lukas's mouth, and you mentioned that you said that because you believed Petter and Rune. But how did you know they'd singled him out?

– What?

– How did you know what they'd said? Did you talk to each other?

Mattis shielded his eyes from the rain and stared at her. – No, it was Dad who said it, he finally said. I get it now; they blamed Stig, but it was them who did it.

Kajsa took a hot shower and ate a couple of crispbreads before sitting down with her laptop on her lap in front of the grey-paper wall covered with all the names, questions and hypotheses.

Dad said it. No, that would have to wait. Margaret first. She hadn't found Margaret's mobile at her house; she must have taken it with her, gone somewhere, gone to see *someone*. She pictured the look on Kikki's face as she walked out of the classroom. In that brief moment, it had been as if the vulnerability had vanished from her face and been replaced by… well, what was it? A resolve, perhaps. 'A time for everything'. Did she mean to say that she accepted that her relationship with Margaret was over? Kajsa searched online, and chapter 3 of 'Ecclesiastes' came up. She skimmed quickly through the text, staring at the words: 'To everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. A time to die. A time to kill. A time to throw stones. A time to love, a time to hate."

Throwing stones.

It had to be Kikki who'd thrown the stone; this couldn't be a coincidence.

Something else was set in motion in her mind, something that had fleetingly brushed past her thoughts without taking hold, like a seed carried away by the wind.

She drew a resigned breath, tapped her forehead with her index finger, as if to knock it out. A glimpse of something red. Boots! A pair of boots she'd seen when she'd stood in the doorway and asked Kikki if Margareth was there. Ilse Jacobsen brand, red and black with laces at the front, eye-catching. They'd been standing on the floor in Kikki's hallway. When Kikki had come home with her, she'd been wearing boots. She couldn't remember what colour they were, but they hadn't been bright red, she was sure of that. But when she met Margareth and Kikki in Kvitsandvika, hadn't Margareth been wearing red boots? She grabbed her mobile.

– Hi, Fia, it's Kajsa.

– Any news?

– No, unfortunately. But I have a question. Do you remember what sort of boots your mum has?

– They're red.

– Ilse Jacobsen boots?

– Yes. But what…

– I don't have time to explain, but we'll speak soon, said Kajsa and hung up. She quickly skimmed the entire text of the chapter in Ecclesiastes: 'A time to die. A time to kill', she scrolled down and stopped at verse 19. 'For man's lot is the same as that of animals; one is just like the other: both must die.'

She leaned back as she contemplated the words and pictured the determination in Kikki's gaze as she left the classroom.

To kill. To love. To hate.

Both shall die.

61

6 p.m.

As Kajsa put on her rain gear, she glanced into the living room, met Karsten's gaze on the wall and could almost hear him say: Don't do anything stupid now, Kajsa. Do you hear me? Yes, I hear you, Karsten, I'll be careful. As she walked up Fjellvegen, she called Nina several times, but got a busy signal every time. So she called Johs; she trusted him. She did now.

– Is Nina near you?

– No, I don't know where she is right now.

– Meet me at Kikki's house, she said as he picked up the phone.

– Why are you calling me? You suspected me of the wildest things, and now you're asking me…

– Please, Johs, just come, she interrupted. – And you, don't take the car. Kikki mustn't see you coming. Hurry up.

– Er… all right, OK.

The windows in Kikki's house were dark. Hadn't she gone home after all? Kajsa turned and looked out for Johs, but the streetlights were still out and the darkness and rain were so thick that she wouldn't spot him until he was right next to her anyway. She ran up the stairs; round the corner at the back was the front door. She pressed the handle down gently. The door was unlocked. I have to wait for Johs, she thought, leaning into the doorway. It was pitch black, not a sound to be heard. The pounding in her chest felt deafening. She closed the door quietly and went back down the outside stairs. Moments later she heard footsteps on the gravel, and out of the darkness came Johs. She beckoned him over to the wall, holding a finger to her lips. – Johs, I'm so sorry I suspected you of being someone other than who you say you are, she whispered.

He waved it away. – We'll talk about that later. What are we doing here?

– I think Margareth might be here. The front door is open. We have to go in.

– What? Why do you think that?

– I'll explain later, there's no time now. Come on!

In front of the front door, Johs put his hand on her shoulder; he wanted to go first. They stood a little way inside the door and listened. After a moment, Johs switched on his torch, and Kajsa spotted the red boots. At the end of the hallway, the stairs led up to the loft. The doors to the kitchen and the living room were open. There were two wine glasses on the kitchen worktop. Johs pointed towards the ceiling, and Kajsa nodded. The loft stairs were covered by a thick wall-to-wall carpet. As they made their way up, they noticed a faint glow, and at the top of the stairs they saw that it was coming from a room behind a door that was ajar. They nodded to each other, stood outside and listened. It was completely silent. Slowly, Johs pushed the door inwards. Kajsa had prepared herself for the possibility that Margareth might be held captive, injured, or even dead. But she was not prepared for the sight that met them.

62

A small lamp with a pink silk shade on one of the bedside tables cast a dim glow over the room. Margareth and Kikki were lying on top of the duvets on the double bed, Margareth on her back, Kikki on her side with one arm across Margareth's stomach, and it looked as though Margareth was stroking Kikki's cheek with the back of her hand.

For a few seconds, Kajsa and Johs stood paralysed at the foot of the bed. Then they rushed forward, one on either side of the bed. – Kikki has a pulse, said Johs.

– So does Margareth.

Kajsa realised her voice was far too loud as she rang Nina. This time she answered straight away.

– Margareth is with Kikki, she shouted, they've both ingested something. They're alive, but their pulses are weak. Get hold of the doctor on the helicopter. Hurry over here!

– OK!

– What can we do? said Johs. He walked over to a chest of drawers and picked up a small box. It was empty. Apodorm, he said. I think they're sleeping pills. We need to make them vomit.

Johs lifted Margareth into a sitting position, placed her on the edge of the bed, and sat behind her. She hung heavily in his arms; he placed his hand on her forehead and her head against his chest. Kajsa opened her mouth and stuck her finger down her throat. Nothing happened. There was no reaction from Kikki either; both were lifeless.

– We need to keep an eye on their pulses. If they stop, we'll have to start CPR, said Johs, placing a finger on Kikki's carotid artery. A few minutes later, they heard the sound of a car, and shortly after, the sound of running feet down the corridor.

– Up here! shouted Kajsa.

Nina appeared in the doorway with a man. Now everything happened very quickly. The doctor examined Kikki and Margareth whilst speaking into a sort of walkie-talkie he had on his shoulder, briefing the crew of the rescue helicopter. – Can we land nearby? he asked.

– Behind the house, said Kajsa, there's a flat, open meadow.

Nina ran out, shouting that she would flash her torch to show the helicopter pilot where he could land. A few minutes passed, then they heard the sound of the helicopter over the house, and not long after, three people came running up the stairs with a stretcher.

As the helicopter took off, Kajsa, Johs and Nina stood on the steps and watched it head towards Ålesund. Kajsa glanced at her watch. It was quarter to seven. – I have to go and get Jonas.

– But we need to talk, said Nina. You have to tell me what happened, how you found Margareth.

Kajsa fished the house key out of her pocket. – Come back to my place. You too, Johs, and we'll meet there.

63

7.15 pm

– How did you realise Margareth was at Kikki's? asked Nina.

Kajsa cast a quick glance and an apologetic smile in Johs's direction. – First I have to apologise to Johs.

She met his gaze seriously. – I'm sorry, Johs.

– Hmm, well, I'm starting to understand how you tick, he said with a sarcastic grimace.

– Friends again? said Kajsa.

– Sure, but you'll have to explain it all to me later, he said.

– And now, what made you go to Kikki's? said Nina impatiently.

Kajsa explained her reasoning: about Margareth's mobile phone being missing, that she must have gone to someone's house, and about the red boots. – She quoted the Bible. The passage is about loving, hating, killing and dying. And just so you know, the text also says that there is a time to cast stones, and not least: Both shall die. During your briefing at the prayer house, she seemed unfocused and falling apart, and during the interview with you she almost completely broke down. But as she walked out of the classroom, she suddenly seemed calm and determined. It was strange, but I understand it now. She had made up her mind. Both of them were to die.

Just then, Nina's mobile rang.

She answered in monosyllables, then stared at them in silence for a few seconds before saying: Kikki is dead.

– And Margareth?

– Critical.

64

8. November

The next morning the storm had passed, there was a light gale, and the clean-up in the harbour area was in full swing. At the prayer house, the women were still busy making coffee and serving food to everyone taking part in the work. On the news, the Minister for Local Government was interviewed; he gave assurances that the state would provide financial support for the reconstruction in Losvika. The top priority was to repair the road through Stranda, and the council was in the process of securing the necessary equipment: water pumps to drain basements, diggers, and other equipment and materials required. There was no longer any danger of further landslides; the mountain had given way, and from the window Kajsa could see that work in Stranda was already underway too.

The sky had cleared and the wind had died down. But snow was forecast for the evening. The TV showed drone footage of the landslide area. Up on the mountainside, there was a huge scar where the mass had slid down; almost a hundred metres of the road were gone.

It was ten o'clock when Nina called. – Margareth is fine, she said without preamble.

– That was good to hear. What does she say?

– We haven't been able to interview her yet.

– Do you think it was Kikki who killed Petter?

– We'll see if we get any answers when we search her house and speak to Margareth.

65

12. November

Life returned to normal; the children were back at school the day after the landslide, and when Jonas was due to go to football training five days later, it struck Kajsa that she had never accompanied him to training since they'd moved here. Karsten would have done that. Jonas was delighted when she said she'd come along, and she felt no less guilty when she walked into the sports hall and saw that the fathers and mothers of several of the other boys were there.

– Mattis is here, said Jonas, waving to him.

He was standing next to Elias's father, who was the team's coach, wearing a tracksuit with MOLDE on the back. Kajsa noticed that he'd had a haircut and now had a modern style, short at the sides and longer on top. He must have been to the hairdresser's in Vågen.

Elias's father blew his whistle and the boys gathered around him and Mattis.

After the warm-up, it was time for penalty practice. Mattis placed the ball on the penalty spot. Kajsa heard him say that everyone should aim for a towel hanging in one corner of the goal. Then he demonstrated how the body should move when the foot struck the ball. It was all about power and precision. He took a few steps back, gathered momentum and struck the ball right in the middle of the towel. All the boys clapped, and Mattis bowed and looked delighted.

Is this the shy and awkward Mattis? Kajsa wondered, surprised.

When the training session was over, she walked over to him. – Hi, Mattis, it's great that you've started coaching.

He was sweaty and red-faced. – Yeah, it's fun, he smiled.

– Hey, can we have a chat later today?

– About what?

– About what your dad told you in 1992, that Petter and Rune singled out Stig.

– No, I don't have time, and there's nothing more to say, he replied and began picking balls out of a large net.

Jonas was all smiles after training. – Did you see I scored three penalties right in the top corner? Three!

Kajsa ruffled his hair on the way out of school. – Yes, I saw that. You're brilliant.

– I wish Dad could see me, he said.

– Me too, Jonas. He'd be very proud of you.

66

13. November

The snow fell silently; it was as if the sky were whispering. Slowly it covered the mountains and fields, the bare branches of the trees, the tarmac roads and the sheep tracks. The roofs and jetties turned white, and the village grew lighter. It was just over five weeks until Christmas, the first Christmas without Karsten. A chair around the table would be empty on Christmas Eve; it would be noticeable that his laughter and childlike joy were no longer among them. The thought settled with a physical heaviness in her chest as Kajsa stood on the glass veranda and watched the year's first proper snowfall.

In Stranda, the lights on lorries and diggers were flashing. It would be some time before the road to Losvika was passable, but the council's boat service was ferrying people to and from. The remains of a quay at the harbour had been restored, and Kajsa spotted the police boat coming at high speed, slowing down as it passed through the gap between the piers and moored.

Nina had been to the hospital in Ålesund and spoken to Margareth. She hadn't got much out of her; she was deeply shaken, but she had said that Kikki had been distraught and had insisted almost daily that they had to meet. The evening before the landslide, she'd sent a text message saying that life wasn't worth living without her. Margareth had become worried about what she might do and had gone to see her. Kikki had been cheerful and offered her a glass of wine, but when Margareth repeated that it was over between them, she'd become very upset. Then she couldn't remember anything else; she only had some vague memories of lying in a bed, of Kikki saying she loved her, that they would be together forever.

The post-mortem revealed that Kikki had died of an overdose of very strong sleeping pills. She'd been prescribed them; she suffered from insomnia.

Margareth's mobile phone was in the living room; that was where they'd found the message Kikki had sent her the evening before the collapse. She'd written that she saw no point in living without Margareth.

– But how could she have gone so far as to decide to take the lives of both Margareth and herself?

– Perhaps Kikki couldn't bear being rejected.

– Why do you think that?

– She had a particular history.

The police in Trondheim had informed Kikki's parents of their daughter's death. Kikki was their only child, but they hadn't been in contact with her for many years. According to them, she had been a very challenging teenager. It ranged from slamming doors to her hitting her mother a couple of times in a violent rage. At school, she got into trouble, fell out with the teachers and was in constant conflict with other pupils.

– According to her father, she had few friends growing up, said Nina.

– Kikki told me she'd had a difficult upbringing in a congregation where homosexuality wasn't tolerated, said Kajsa.

– The family belong to the Jehovah's Witnesses. And at one point, attempts were made to 'cure' her. Her father said he tried to help her; he took her to a leader who was supposed to… Nina held two fingers up in the air, – 'make her normal', as her father put it. When she was seventeen, she had a sort of breakdown and was admitted to a psychiatric ward. A year later, she left the congregation, and her parents cut off contact with her. That's just how it works with Jehovah's Witnesses.

But there was something else her father had said that had stuck in Nina's mind.

Kikki could react violently towards people she felt had wronged her. She found it difficult to cope with criticism or anyone going against her.

– Did you ask Margareth if she suspected Kikki of having killed Petter?

– Yes. The thought had crept into her mind, but she had no concrete basis for her suspicion. It was just a hunch. Kikki changed after Petter died; she seemed… what was the word Margareth used? Ah yes, elated. When Fia exposed them, and Petter came home and threw Kikki out, Margareth had seen her rage for the first time. The same rage she'd been met with later when she broke it off, and she'd started to wonder what she was capable of.

– Petter’s reaction the night before he died humiliated Kikki; she couldn’t bear it. Did she take her revenge by sabotaging the brakes on his car?

– We have no evidence to support such a theory. Perhaps we’ll never know the answer.

67

17. November

The front door let out a low sigh, as if the building were weary of people coming and going. Inside, Kajsa was met by a dry, stagnant heat and the smell of filter coffee that had been left on the hotplate for too long, and something sour beneath that, a faint whiff of disinfectant with a hint of lemon.

The floor was shiny, almost excessively clean, with neutral-coloured linoleum. It was reminiscent of grey, wet sand. On the pale green walls hung photographs of fjords, mountains and the sea – a Norway that was out of reach for those who lived here. The sounds were faint: a distant beep from an alarm, a television playing somewhere. In the long corridor, a man walked with a walking frame. His slippers scraped faintly against the floor.

Kajsa stood still for a moment. Memories of the years when her mother had become increasingly demented and had eventually died in a place like this came flooding back. The smell would cling to her clothes, she knew. It would follow everyone who visited home.

She had dreaded coming here. It was a place of lives lived out. Those who lived here were simply waiting. Gudmund Brekke didn't have long left to wait. Was it even possible to talk to him? she wondered as she walked slowly further in. In the middle of the corridor, it opened out on both sides into a large communal room. On one side was the kitchen with a dining table; on the other were sofas and armchairs. A man was sitting by the window. His head was tilted to one side, as if he were listening to something only he could hear. A carer was leaning over him. He looked up, furrowed his brow, and scrutinised her face. Then he smiled and took her hand.

Four chairs were arranged in a row in front of a TV. The volume was low; she didn't think any of those sitting there could hear what was being said. She walked further in and looked at the nameplates on the doors. A woman was sitting in a chair by the wall, humming softly and moving her arms in front of her.

Memories of her mother's final years came flooding back through the smells and sights, weighing heavily on her chest.

When Kajsa spotted a nurse, she asked for Gudmund Brekke. It turned out his room was at the opposite end from where she had entered. – How bad is he? she asked.

– He's going downhill fast now. He's lost a lot of weight, and it's difficult to get him to eat, unfortunately, she replied, her face creasing with sadness. Are you family?'

– No, I'm a neighbour from Losvika.

– Oh, yes, now I recognise you, Kajsa Coren, isn't it? How lovely that Gudmund has a visitor. He's waiting for the priest, she smiled. You know, many people have things weighing on their minds that they need to talk about at the end of their lives.

– How clear is his mind?

– His short-term memory is poor, but the past isn't quite so distant.

– I'll pop in and say hello anyway.

– It's nice for him. He never gets any visitors.

The door creaked softly as she entered the room. The sun was shining directly on the windows, but the red-striped curtains were drawn. A lamp above the bed lit up Gudmund Brekke's face; the shadows made it look like a skull. He lay with his eyes closed, receiving oxygen through nasal cannulas connected to a tube that went round his head. She walked right up to him. – Gudmund?

He blinked. After a moment, he raised his hand towards her. Hesitantly, she took it. His fingers felt like thin, cold twigs. His breathing was shallow and laboured. – The priest? he asked.

She was about to say no, but before she could deny it, he said: I have something to … confess. I must … tell you about … Lukas.

— The boy who died in the woods?

The answer was a whisper. – Yes.

– What was it about Lukas?

– It was Petter … and Rune …'s fault.

Kajsa leaned over him. He tried to say something more, but only a rasping breath came out. Then she heard: – It … went … wrong.

– What went wrong?

– It wasn't… Stig. Forgive… me.

– It wasn't Stig who did it?

Gudmund Brekke closed his eyes; a little saliva dripped from the corner of his mouth. – No.

– Who was it, then? she asked.

Brekke opened his eyes, opened his mouth, but nothing came out.

– Was it Petter or Rune? Both of them?

– No …

He struggled to get the words out. Then it came: – Your fault.

– What do you mean?

– Not Mattis's… fault.

He let go of her, placed his hand on the bedside table. – There… He tapped the tabletop with a finger.

– Is there something you want to show me in the bedside table? He closed his eyes and nodded.

Kajsa pulled out the drawer. There was just an old, worn wallet inside. In two of the compartments there was a bank card, some notes and receipts. In the third there was a photograph.

A shiver ran through her.

Mattis as a child was staring into the camera. A small, frail boy with an evasive, frightened look on his bare upper body was stretching out his arms. They were covered in sores, and his fringe was cut right back to the hairline.

– What happened to Mattis? she asked.

But Gudmund Brekke lay with his eyes closed. She tried to ask him several times, but he didn't respond.

Kajsa took a picture of the photograph and went out.

69

What had Gudmund Brekke said? That Mattis was innocent, that Petter and Rune were guilty, but that they hadn't killed Lukas. It didn't add up.

Kajsa had come home and was standing in the attic in front of the old class photo. Just then, a snap came in from Jonas. He and Elias were doing hill sprints with Mattis in Kvitsandvika. It was the second time he'd taken the boys out for a run since the landslide and the hurricane; he was running with them himself, and Jonas loved it. She smiled, and as she stood there looking at the three faces, something crept up from the depths of her mind. She opened the camera roll on her mobile. Little Mattis, looking scared, gazed at her with tears in his eyes. She glanced up at the class photo. Petter and Rune, big for their age; Mattis, small and spindly.

She quickly flicked through the police documents. There, there it was, in Stig's statement. Petter and Rune had been mean to Mattis. 'I'm scared of them,' Stig had said.

– Everyone's afraid of Petter and Rune. No one stands up to them. But Lukas didn't know that, because he's not from Losvika.

He also said that Lukas had stepped in. – They had a proper row, started fighting. Suddenly Petter punched Lukas in the face, really hard, and shoved him over while Rune stood there laughing.

– I got really scared that they'd be mean to me too, so I ran all the way home without stopping.

Kajsa tried to picture the scene. Stig had fled. Both Mattis and Lukas had been beaten up. What happened after Stig ran away?

She'd asked Gudmund Brekke if it was Rune and Petter who'd carried out the attack on Lukas. He'd said "it was their fault", and she'd thought he meant they were guilty. But was that what he'd meant? Their *fault*. It could mean something else. She stared at the photo of Mattis. Had it been taken on the day Lukas died? What had caused the wounds? Why was his hair so short at the forehead? Something stirred.

It wasn't Mattis's fault.

Mattis had said he couldn't remember what happened, that he'd run off and hidden. And Stig wasn't there. She'd thought the logical explanation was that Petter or Rune—perhaps both of them—had stuffed the moss into Lukas's mouth and choked him. But there was another explanation; she could see that now.

Her gaze lingered on Mattis. The little runt. He'd been pressured by Petter and Rune into taking part in the mischief, Oda Sævik had said. His fringe looked as if it had been singed, and the wounds on his body – could they be burn marks?

Kajsa rang Nina and told her about the visit to Gudmund Brekke and the photo in his wallet. – I thought I'd won Mattis's trust. I felt sorry for him, I believed him, that he didn't see what happened to Lukas because he was hiding, she said. But what if he's lying? And Petter, Rune and Mattis gave identical accounts during the police interviews. Three seven-year-olds aren't capable of coordinating their stories; we've discussed this before – it may have been the fathers who arranged it. I've thought about it several times, that they did it so that Rune and/or Petter could get off the hook. But what if it was to save Mattis?

– How, then? I don't understand.

– That it was actually Mattis who stuffed the moss into Lukas's mouth.

– But why would Rune and Petter's fathers agree to protect Mattis?

– Because it was their sons who pressured Mattis into doing it. Petter and Rune bullied Mattis when he was little, and in the woods they were nasty, even violent, towards both him and Lukas; we know that from Stig's statement. According to Oda Sævik, Mattis had a nosebleed as he ran home from the woods a little way behind the other two. What if they burned him, threatened him to keep going and kept stuffing moss into his mouth, so that he did as they said out of fear? They were seven years old; none of them thought about the consequences.

Gudmund Brekke documented what Petter and Rune had done to Mattis when he took photos of his battered body. He had something to use to pressure the other two fathers into agreeing to pin the blame on Stig. One for all, all for one, what do I know.

– We'll have to go and get Mattis and hear what he has to say.

– He’s doing hill training in Kvitsandvika with Jonas and his mate.

– OK. We’re out on the boat on a mission, and since the road’s closed, we might as well pop round and pick him up. We’ll be there in just under half an hour.

In her mind, she heard her own voice telling Nina that Mattis had done as Petter and Rune wanted out of fear. He had no history of violence, not as a child, not as an adult. Yet he had pinned her to the floor and locked her in. And he’d reacted strongly when she’d pressed him at the hospital. He’d become abrupt, impulsive and quick-tempered; he lost it when he got scared.

It’s fear that triggers him, she thought. How will he react when he sees the police boat? And how well is he really?

I must go and fetch Jonas. He and Elias can’t be there when Nina arrives, she thought, and ran out to the car.

It had been drizzling all day. The cloud cover was low and grey, but now it had lifted, and as Kajsa arrived at the car park in Kvitsandvika, the clouds parted and the sun, which was heading towards the sea, broke through. There was no wind, the snow had melted away and it had become milder, but only four or five degrees. She put on a hat and mittens before getting out of the car. When she opened the gate, she spotted three figures jogging down the path towards the beach.

I’ll have to pretend nothing’s wrong, say I want to join them for a run, and then I’ll take the boys home when we get back to the car park, she thought, picking up her pace. Jonas and Elias were standing on the sand, stretching, when she reached them. Mattis was talking on the phone.

– Mum? said Jonas, surprised. What are you doing here?

– Hi, do you have many laps left?

– Just two.

– Can I join you?

Mattis put his mobile in his pocket and looked at her. There was something in his gaze that immediately unsettled her.

– I was going to come and pick you up, but then I fancied having a go with you, said Kajsa. Afterwards, I can drive you home. OK?

– I've just spoken to the care home. They've asked me to come in; Dad doesn't have long left, said Mattis.

– Oh, that's sad…

– But you know that, don't you? he interrupted. You visited him today. Did you speak to him? Did he say anything?

She spread her arms and shook her head. – Nothing, she said.

– Why did you visit him? And why are you coming to pick up Jonas and Elias? he continued. – You don't need to, I've got my car in the car park.

Jonas and Elias stood watching them. 'Go on ahead, you two, I need to talk to Mattis,' she said.

– But… Jonas began.

– No buts, run up to the car.

She heard it herself; her voice was far too harsh and tense, and she hurried to add: – Mattis and I need to have a grown-up chat, OK?

She handed Jonas the car keys so they could get in the car.

Jonas and Elias looked at each other. – Right then, said Jonas. Come on, first man to the gate. She frantically thought about what she should say to Mattis as she watched them set off running.

She had to try to stall for time, wait for Nina.

– What did Dad say?

Just then she spotted the police boat. It rounded the headland below Losviktua and headed straight for them at high speed.

Mattis was standing with his back to the sea; he turned at the sound, following her gaze. Then he stared at her. His face, which had been more open, closed up. For a moment she also saw a hint of fear. But slowly something else emerged. A resolve, perhaps. It reminded her of what she had seen in Kikki when she was walking home from school and had decided to take the lives of both herself and Margareth. Slowly he came towards her.

She took a breath and tensed her muscles. Mattis …

– Are you scared now? he interrupted.

– Don't do anything stupid.

– You don't need to be afraid, you've been kind to me. What do the police want?

Kajsa saw the police boat approaching behind him. – Talk to Nina, explain what happened to Lukas. I know that Petter and Rune forced you.

– Did Dad tell you that?

– Yes.

She took out her mobile and showed him the photo. He didn't comment on it.

– He said it was Rune and Petter's fault that Lukas died. Not yours. Was the photo taken on the day Lukas died?

Mattis looked at her with a puzzled expression. His gaze seemed distant.

– Are those burn marks?

He glanced over his shoulder. The police boat couldn't be more than a hundred metres away now. – Sorry, he said, and before she had time to react, he started running across the sandy beach. Kajsa stood there at a loss for a few seconds, but when Mattis reached the grassy slope, she ran after him. He wasn't running towards the car park, but followed a path leading up towards Losviktua. Where was he heading? A little way up the slope he stopped running, but kept walking briskly. He remained fifty metres ahead of her the whole time, and she couldn't catch up with him. Eventually he had to stop and catch his breath, but so did she. Her thigh muscles were burning, but she forced herself to walk when he walked, stopping only when he stood still. They went slower and slower, and as they neared the top, she noticed she was catching up a little. At the lookout hut, he stopped and leaned against the wall. Now she was only twenty or thirty metres away. – Mattis, wait! she shouted.

He met her gaze for a brief second, but then he ran on, and by the time she reached the hut, his lead had increased on the flat terrain. She gave it everything she had on the path along the cliff edge. Right by the sacrificial stone, he stopped, facing the sea with his hands on his knees. He turned towards her as she approached. – Stay away, he snapped.

– Don't do that, Mattis.

– Don't bother.

– Yes, I do care about you, I'm going to help you.

– No one can help me.

– Mattis, tell me what happened when Lukas died.

– Why?

– Come and sit on the rock. Please, talk to me.

He stood motionless, gazing out into the distance. Kajsa had her mobile in her hand; she quickly switched it to voice recording. The seconds ticked by. He's going to jump now, she thought.

He didn't jump; he turned and looked at her. Then he nodded, as if confirming his thoughts. – Come, she said, sitting down on the sacrificial stone. After a few seconds, he came over and sat down beside her. Kajsa breathed a sigh of relief.

– That documentary, is it going to happen? he asked.

– Yes, I think so, but there are a few gaps you can fill in.

He was silent for a long time. Kajsa didn't press him, gave him time, waited.

– I remember Dad taking the photo.

He quickly wiped under his nose on his sleeve, took a breath. His voice was thick. – Petter had a lighter, he was standing behind me, holding his hand over my mouth and nose, I couldn't breathe. First he singed my hair, then he burned my arms.

– And Rune?

– He was sitting on top of Lukas and holding him down; he was laughing and egging Petter on. It was he who came up with the idea that they should force me to... to do that... the thing with the moss. A sob escaped him. – If I did it, I'd be allowed to go, he said.

– They forced you by violence. You were only seven, you didn't understand…

He interrupted her; he'd made up his mind now, speaking quickly. – Dad saw what they'd done to me when I got home; I told him about Lukas while he tended to my wounds. Then he took the photo. Afterwards he went out, was gone for quite a while, and when he came home he told me what to say to the police.

– Your father used what they'd done to you to pressure the other two fathers into agreeing to a deal.

– Yes, he sobbed. It was what I did that killed Lukas, but they were accomplices. Every time I stopped, Petter burned me. In the end, Lukas went completely still.

– Did Rune and Petter know the photo existed?

– Oh, yes, why do you think they helped me financially all those years? Dad used the photo for more than just making sure they never told anyone what really happened in the woods with Lukas. Dad had the upper hand over both the fathers and the sons. The photo was a guarantee; they couldn't do anything to me anymore.

– What happened this spring when Markus turned up? she asked.

He didn't answer. – I should have got away from here; maybe things would have turned out well for me. But I love this very spot, he said, it is this view.

– Me too. From here you can see out into the world; the possibilities out there are as endless as the sea. Everything will work out; you can't be punished for Lukas's murder.

He glanced at her askance. – You don't know everything. It won't work out; it's not possible.

– Yes, I think that…

He cut her off. It struck her again how determined he seemed, and the resistance that had been in him earlier when she'd tried to ask him about Lukas was nowhere to be seen. One day Markus was standing in the courtyard when I came out of the workshop and said he was Lukas's brother. I ran inside and locked the door.

– Did you see him again?

– Rune rang me later that evening and asked me to come over to his place. When I got there, Petter was there too. He told me that Markus had met Stig in Oslo, that Stig had shown him the police reports. Markus was convinced that one of the rest of us was to blame. He threatened to go to the press with the story and make life hell for us. Rune had, however, offered him money to keep quiet, so now the matter was settled, he said. But Markus had insisted that he wanted to see where his brother had died, and Rune had agreed that we should show him, in a sort of attempt at reconciliation. At least, that's what they claimed.

– Did you do that?

– Yes, I… well, Petter said I had no choice, and I thought that maybe Markus would forgive us, understand that we were just kids who didn't realise what we were

doing. That would have meant a lot to me. So we drove up to the woods in Rune's ATV. He has a trailer he uses for deer hunting. It was during the CC Cowboys concert; everyone was there, you could hear it all over the village. Markus looked at me and said: So it was you who killed my brother? Then I realised that Petter and Rune had tricked me. In that very moment, Petter knocked him to the ground. Rune fetched a hunting rifle from the trailer and handed it to me. – Shoot him, he said, 'then it'll all be over.

– Did you do it?

– I refused. But Rune and Petter had a plan ready. If I didn't shoot, they would shoot us both and make it look as if I'd killed Markus before taking my own life. Rune would say I must have stolen his rifle. He had a plan, I realised. Markus screamed and begged us to stop. – For a moment I considered shooting Petter and Rune instead, and then shooting myself, but it was as if I was seven years old again. And seven-year-old Mattis always did what Rune and Petter forced him to do.

– You pulled the trigger. He choked out a yes.

– And afterwards?

– I ran away, and they… they dumped…

Mattis gasped for breath, his hands trembling.

– They dumped him on the cliffs, said Kajsa.

He met her gaze, took a deep breath. – Now you can tell the truth, you can tell the whole story, about how I was bullied, abused and threatened, and that Stig was innocent. Do you promise?

Kajsa nodded. – Was it you who sabotaged the brakes on Petter's car?

– I just wanted to scare him, he said, standing up. I didn't mean for him to die. I just wanted him to feel deep fear too.

– Why?

– He came to the door and showed me the photo of Kikki and Margareth kissing.

– The one hanging on the board in the workshop?

– Yes, he accused me of taking the photo, said it was my revenge. I denied it, of course, but he gave me a telling-off, called me an idiot and worse, said he'd make life hell for me if anyone else saw the photo. He behaved just like the bully he was when we were children.

Suddenly Mattis stood up and took a step towards the edge. Far below him, Kajsa could hear the waves crashing. Kajsa reached out her hand towards him, her pulse pounding in her throat. – Don't do it, Mattis. Please, listen to me.

– I'm finally leaving the singularity. It'll be fine.

What was he talking about?

Out of the corner of her eye, Kajsa spotted Nina and the two policemen running towards them from Losviktua.

Mattis glared at them. Then he took a run-up, ran the last few steps and threw himself off, arms outstretched to the sides.

– No! Kajsa screamed.

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Nina alerted the rescue boat whilst she and Kajsa walked to the car park, where Jonas and Elias were waiting in the car. The two police officers went back to the boat at Kvitsandstranda and drove to the cliffs to try to locate Mattis.

They said nothing to the boys about what had happened. Kajsa invited Elias home, and she rang his mother and asked her to come. Then Nina told them what had happened to Mattis. There was no gentle way to break the news, and both boys were deeply affected. Elias's mother wanted him to come home with her, but he preferred to stay with Jonas. Kajsa fetched some buns from the freezer, and they sat on the sofa playing a football game on the Nintendo. After a while, she heard them shouting as usual.

– Children are children, said Nina.

Kajsa played back the conversation with Mattis on the memorial stone and showed Nina the photo of Mattis as a child.

– The story with the bullies from his childhood is repeating itself, said Nina thoughtfully.

– Yes. Mattis' poor mental health was due to what happened when he was seven. Not because he'd been there when Lukas died, but because he was the one who'd killed him, and he knew Stig was innocent. I thought it was Stig's return that caused his condition to worsen. But that wasn't how it all fit together. It was the murder of Markus, the fact that he was once again forced by the bullies from his childhood to take a life. That caused the anxiety he'd struggled with all his life to get worse, his depression to deepen, and he became psychotic.

– Do you think Petter and Rune had planned how they were going to get Mattis to shoot Markus?

– You heard what Mattis said. Yes, I think they set a trap for both him and Markus.

– When he stood on the cliffs and threatened to jump the first time, he said he would die when he decided to, said Nina thoughtfully. – And that the sea would take him. That's how it turned out. She sighed. – When Markus turned up and claimed that Stig was innocent and threatened to go to the press, it must have caused total panic for Petter and Rune. They feared that the story of how Stig had been manipulated into confessing, that he was innocent, would come out. Markus was a threat they had to get rid of. The two of them had a lot to lose.

– The story of the brother of a seven-year-old murder victim would have attracted a great deal of attention. New questions would have been asked, the police would have been pressured to take action, and suspicion would have fallen on Petter and Rune.

– The photo of the abused seven-year-old Mattis backs up his account, said Nina.

– And the photo was Mattis and his father's assurance. They could no longer harm Mattis.

– But we have no evidence against Rune; his role in both the Lukas case and Markus's murder is based solely on the claims of a dead man.

– You must find the hunting rifle and the trailer that were used, said Kajsa, – then you can check the bullet from Markus's body against Rune's weapon, and there may still be traces of his blood on the ATV trailer.

– You sound as if you work for the police, said Nina with a wry smile.

Nina lifted her mobile to her ear, and Kajsa heard her calling for extra officers to pick up Rune Grande and search his property.

71

24. November

Jonas had started sleeping in the double bed with Kajsa again. He was taking what had happened to Mattis very hard. Fortunately, he was enjoying school; he was attending both football and athletics training as usual, and he wanted to attend Mattis's funeral. The whole football team was going, and the church was almost full. Mattis was found on the same day he took his own life. His body was lying in the sea at the foot of the Losvik cliffs.

The priest gave a moving speech about the boy who lost his mother at an early age, the football talent whose dream of turning professional was shattered, the son who looked after his father, and how he had recently rediscovered the joy of football as a coach for the boys in Losvika. – Mattis struggled his whole life, and in the end, death became an easier choice than life, she concluded.

– Would Mattis still be alive if I hadn't visited his father or refrained from telling him what he said to me? thought Kajsa as the coffin was carried out.

72

27. November

– Where's Balder? asked Jonas at breakfast three days after the funeral.

– I don't know.

– I hope he's found some kind people.

Once he'd left, Kajsa acted on a sudden impulse and sent a text message to Nina. Balder had been taken in by the Animal Welfare Society in Ålesund, she said. The lady who answered when she rang there told her that Balder was still with them; they hadn't managed to rehome him yet. Kajsa jumped in the car, drove to Ålesund and made it back just in time before Jonas came home from school. She stood on the steps with Balder sitting beside her. His tail wagged like a whirlwind when he spotted Jonas, who let out a joyful cry, ran up and hugged the dog close. – Is he going to live with us? he asked as Balder licked his face.

– If you want him to.

– Of course I do.

– But then you'll have to take responsibility for him, take him for walks and play with him.

– Of course I will. Maybe we can start with agility, he said enthusiastically, taking the dog lead from his mother. – I have to tell Elias about Balder, he said and ran off.

This wasn't a bad idea, she thought, watching Jonas and Balder as they hopped and skipped side by side across the road.

Now Kajsa could lay out the whole story of what happened in the woods both in 1992 and when Markus came to Losvika in May, and explain how the Lukas case was linked to the murder of Petter Nedrelid. She and Gro discussed the ethics back and forth. For

Kajsa, it was important that Mattis had so clearly expressed a wish for her to tell everything, but she was anxious to know what the police would say about the connection between the three murders. There were major headlines reporting that a man had been charged with complicity in the murder of Markus. This meant that the police had reasonable grounds to suspect Rune Grande, a suspicion based on Kajsa's statement and the material she had handed over to Nina: the photograph and the audio recording. But they needed hard evidence to charge him. Nina hadn't mentioned the Lukas case with a single word at the press conference when the charge was announced. Nor had she mentioned any new evidence, such as the murder weapon or DNA traces on the ATV trailer. Kajsa hoped the police would make a breakthrough soon. It would have an impact on the content of the documentary.

All the boys who were in the woods when Lukas died were anonymised as they had been minors. In Stig Voldsund's case, this had in any event been a condition of his agreeing to be interviewed. Mattis's face in the 1992 photograph was blurred, and all the children were given fictitious names. The names in the audio recording she had made of the conversation with Mattis were edited out and replaced with a beep. The only people whose real names were used were Lukas and Markus Lindbo. However, if Rune Grande were to be charged in the Markus case, they would have to reassess his anonymity.

Kajsa drew up a new editing plan and wrote a new scene, which Gro would be responsible for filming in a studio in Oslo. What had happened in the woods was to be illustrated through close-ups of young boys, blurred and slightly out of focus. The documentary had been given the title 'One for All'.

The TV2 news was playing in the background whilst Kajsa worked. – The police in Vestøy have called a press conference later this afternoon, said the newsreader. It is expected that they will provide an update on the investigation into the murder of Markus Lindbo, who was found shot in the Losvik cliffs in Vestøy on Sunnmøre in May this year. A man has been remanded in custody in connection with the case.

Shortly afterwards, Nina called. She was brief, saying only that Rune Grande would be charged. – I expect to see you at the press conference; you'll find out more then.

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Nina Garshol stood in front of a forest of microphones, with all the camera lenses trained on her. As she began by welcoming everyone and saying they had news regarding the investigation into the murder of Markus Lindbo, her gaze swept across the crowd. She spotted Kajsa right at the back.

They had brought charges against a 40-year-old man. A projectile from a hunting rifle had been found in Markus Lindbo's body, and ballistic tests showed that the bullet had been fired from a weapon found at the defendant's home. In addition, traces of blood had been found on the man's ATV trailer that matched the murder victim's blood. – There were two other people present when Markus Lindbo was killed, and we assume that it was one of these two who fired the shot, she said. Both of these people are dead. The same person who killed Markus Lindbo has also admitted to an acquaintance that he sabotaged the brakes on Petter Nedrelid's car, which was the direct cause of his death in a car accident last June. As the perpetrator is dead, both cases against him have been dropped.

She concluded by opening the floor for questions.

How can you be sure that it wasn't the man you have charged with complicity who fired the shot, when it was his gun and his trailer that were used to transport the murder victim to the cliffs? asked a journalist from Sunnmørsposten.

– The person who has died has confessed to both murders. There is an audio recording of the confession. This person's fingerprints have been found on the weapon. The person we have now charged with aiding and abetting is therefore the owner of the weapon and the ATV used to dump the body. That is why we have charged the man we now have in custody with aiding and abetting murder and not with murder.

– Markus Lindbo was the brother of Lukas Lindbo, who died in an accident in Losvika in 1992. Is there a connection? she was asked.

Nina met Kajsa's gaze. Without her, she would hardly have been standing here with two solved murder cases. She would keep the promise she had made to her; she would say nothing about the evidence she had obtained, neither about the photo of seven-year-old Mattis nor go into the conversation they had had before he took his own life. She owed her that much.

– The defendant has not wished to make a statement to us, so the investigation into the motive and circumstances will continue, she continued. – But what I can add is that the public prosecutor has launched an inquiry into the police investigation of the Lukas case in 1992, and this is also of interest in the ongoing investigation into the murder of Markus Lindbo.

74

18. December

On the last Thursday before Christmas, the documentary 'One for All' was broadcast on NRK. Kajsa watched it with Else, Johs and Stig. Jonas wanted to watch it too. Kajsa had been unsure, but had decided it was fine; perhaps he would even get answers to the questions he was carrying around.

There was complete silence for a few seconds as the credits rolled across the screen.

– Incredibly good, said Johs. It was as gripping as a crime drama. Are you happy, Stig? Stig smiled. Very. I'm *so* grateful.

– Mattis was bullied when he was little, said Jonas. And he never got over it. I felt sorry for him. Kajsa pulled him close. But I felt most sorry for Lukas, who was so looking forward to coming to Losvika, he said.

– What sort of sentence do you think Rune Grande will get? asked Johs Kajsa.

– Many years. He's also charged with assaulting Rita.

– Rune Grande wasn't anonymised in connection with the murder of Markus Lindbo. It's not hard to understand his involvement in the murder of Lukas. Are you sure about that?

– I mean it. We've had a lawyer look at the legal side of things.

Stig sat there, slowly rubbing his hands together. He'd seen the documentary before it was broadcast, but wanted to watch it again with Kajsa and the others.

– What do you think the police will conclude in their investigation into the Lukas case? he asked.

– I hope they make it clear that you're innocent.

– I won't believe it until I see it, said Stig. – But actually, it doesn't really matter that much. Now everyone in Losvika, indeed in the whole of Norway, knows what actually happened. I feel I've already been vindicated.

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NRK.no 12 December 2026

Director of Public Prosecutions strongly criticises police investigation into the Lukas case

Public Prosecutor Guttorm Pedersen has levelled sharp criticism at the police investigation into the death of seven-year-old Lukas Lindbo in Losvika in 1992. Through the documentary 'One for All', it emerged for the first time that in 1992 the police concluded that one of the boys had caused Lukas Lindbo's death, despite publicly stating it was an accident during play. However, many in Losvika were aware of the police's conclusion, and the Public Prosecutor has established that the boy whom the police wrongly identified as the perpetrator 33 years ago was not present when the murder took place and is to be regarded as innocent. The documentary revealed that the police's conclusion in 1992 had serious consequences for the boy, who was eventually taken into care by child welfare services. The Public Prosecutor expresses his deepest regret to him and his family. His lawyer states that the man will be seeking compensation and redress for a lost childhood. The public prosecutor's criticism is directed in particular at the manner in which the interviews with the four boys who were playing with Lukas Lindbo were conducted. He asserts that the confession made by the boy they identified as the perpetrator was a false confession elicited by the interrogator. The public prosecutor is also critical of the fact that there is no evidence from 1992 that could have been examined using new technology and new investigative methods.

The man who confessed to the murders of both Lukas and Markus Lindbo and Petter Nedrelid to documentary maker Kajsa Coren last year took his own life, and the cases against him have therefore been dropped. The Director of Public Prosecutions does not wish to comment on the other claims in the documentary regarding the

circumstances surrounding the death of Lukas Lindbo, as those involved were below the age of criminal responsibility when he died and cannot be punished for any offences of which they may be guilty.

The police state that the investigation into the murder of Markus Lindbo is complete, and the case will come before the court in January. In the documentary ‘One For All’, Kajsa Coren claimed that the murders of the two brothers were carried out by the same perpetrator under threats and coercion from two of the other children. The police do not wish to comment on any possible link between the two cases, but say that this will be addressed during the trial of the man charged with complicity in the murder of Markus Lindbo.

The defendant has sued NRK, the production company PUNKTUM and the journalist Kajsa Coren for defamation in the documentary “One for All”.

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Christmas Eve

The church was packed to the rafters. The whole village was there, as was customary on Christmas Eve; everyone was dressed up for the occasion, many in traditional costumes. For some, the festive service was about faith; for others, it was about traditions and part of a ritual that created the right Christmas spirit: standing and freezing outside the church until the doors opened and you were let in to the warmth, listening to the Christmas Gospel and the sermon, which was always about peace and reconciliation, and coming home to a house that smelled of pinnekjøtt. It was a shared experience that fostered a sense of belonging, and perhaps there were more than just Kajsa who felt they needed this more than ever in Losvika this year. The vicar emphasised that all people were of equal worth, no matter where in the world they lived or what kind of life they led. Human dignity was inviolable. The priest concluded her sermon by speaking of contrasts. Christmas was a time for joy, but also for remembering those who were missing from the table on Christmas Eve. – Grief also carries something beautiful within it, she said. For those who grieve have loved, and greatest of all is love.

When the congregation stood and sang *'Deilig er jorden'* as the closing hymn, Kajsa was unable to sing along. Her tears choked the words.

Kajsa had invited guests to Christmas dinner; she served pinnekjøtt with caramel pudding for dessert. Else, Johs and Stig were there, and Anders and Thea had come to visit. Before they ate, they went round the Christmas tree. It was Else who took the initiative; she had even printed out the songs. She did her bit to ensure it would be a pleasant evening, not least for Jonas. There was *'Glade Jul'* and *'Det lyser i stille grender*', but also fun songs like *'Jeg gikk meg over sjø og land*' and *'Musevisa*'. Thea had

put together a Christmas playlist on Spotify, which played in the background whilst they ate. The conversation flowed easily and naturally around the table, but Kajsa noticed that Jonas seemed pensive, and now and then he glanced at the photo of his father with a sad look.

Johs helped Kajsa clear the table. He carried plates, glasses and cutlery out to the kitchen and Kajsa loaded them into the dishwasher.

– Listen, she said, there's something I've been thinking about. Do you remember the first time we met, when we talked about grief?

– Yes, you said it doesn't get any less, but that it changes over time.

– And you said it's the extreme of life. I thought that you've experienced grief too.

– I've seen it when it doesn't get any less or any different, when it stays fresh your whole life.

– Seen it?

– It wasn't my grief, it was my mother's. She has grieved all her life over the loss of Ellinor; the grief has been all-consuming, it has stood in my way.

– Fortunately, I have a father who has understood that, and we've always had a close relationship.

Kajsa placed her hand on his arm and gave him a hug; for a moment he held her close.

Jonas came in through the living room door. – Aren't you nearly finished tidying up? he said impatiently. I want to open the presents.

Kajsa and Johs smiled at each other. – We're coming, she said.

Jonas received a large Lego building set from Stig, Else and Johs. It was Notre Dame in Paris, and Jonas and Anders sat down at the dining table to build, whilst the others settled down on the sofa with coffee and biscuits.

Jonas was allowed to stay up as long as he wanted, but by midnight he was about to fall asleep over the Lego bricks. – I'm tired too, said Anders, ruffling his hair. Shall we go to bed?

– Can I sleep in your bed?

– Of course.

After the guests had left, Kajsa and Thea tidied up. – Did you have a nice evening, Mum? asked Thea.

Kajsa hugged her. – Yes, thank you for making it so lovely.

They stood there for a moment, holding each other, and Kajsa thought the same thing she'd thought with all three children in her arms when Karsten lay dead in his hospital bed: The children are my shield.

Thea went to bed too, and the house fell silent. Kajsa carried on tidying up for a while before going upstairs to check on the children. They were all asleep; Jonas was in Anders' bed with his arm around his little brother.

Kajsa turned off the lights, but changed her mind and sat down in front of the fireplace, where the embers were dying out. She looked at the photo of Karsten. I love you, you know that, don't you? she said to herself.

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VG.no, 17 March 2026

LATEST: Prominent investor sentenced

The high-profile business leader, Rune Grande, has been sentenced to 12 years in prison for complicity in the murder of Markus Lindbo in May this year and for domestic violence. *The case will be updated.*