

THE HALLS

Novel 2011

Extracts

Translated by Morten Høi Jensen

The woman is an exile for the man's entire consciousness.

For his body, too, and his cock.

The man comes home from work and has yellow fingers; the cold set in as he walked from the parking space to the front door.

It must be sometime in January or February. Judging from the weather. One assumes.

The cold is opaque and envelops the man in the door, he looks as if risen from foam.

But then he's standing behind her in the kitchen and she doesn't see him, she sees the wall. She feels him put his hands on her shoulders. Someone's hands grab her shoulder blades. One comprehends that that's what's happening. Patches and shoulder blades: the woman casts a green gaze behind her, into his face.

So they have that moment. And it is green and the kitchen's walls grate against one another in all the corners; all the walls are crooked and none of the fixtures are even. It yawns. Contours of shadow emerge from behind the furniture and walls.

The woman drops her gaze on to the tabletop. It's varnished. The tree is yellow, she sees. The varnish is peeling, she sees. She lets a finger slide across the varnish, scratching off a couple of flakes.

Seen up close they resemble the tiny particles of glass that move through the light; dust in cones of sunlight. The varnish is dusty up close.

But then it's something else.

Then it reminds the woman of the halo of frost surrounding his hair. As he stands in the door with the plastic bag and the suitcase. The varnish is snow that drifts.

The man remains standing with his hands adjacent to his body.

The man's body gives the impression of being upholstered with transparent cotton wool. It's wrapped about his fingers. About his stomach and throat and about his cock and his ankles, every toe is wrapped up, each one separately, and his eyes too, covered with the kind of soft foam that allows him to slip on the ice and not hurt himself, so he can walk into corners and throw himself headlong on the floor. What a party the man's body is, the woman thinks coolly, what a party.

The woman makes the man's hands look like shovels.

The man reproaches her for making his hands seem so large and clumsy.

The man inspects her. He calls her *his*. Mine, he says. My little darling.

My little.

And he pulls down her shirt. That's what's next.

Her naked shoulders become a pale light in the kitchen.

The man fiddles with the bra. His finger nails are dull.

The man bends down over her. She lowers her neck and her shoulders tremble; they rumble in the kitchen.

Easy, he says.

The woman's pale body is the man's exile.

The man can roam freely, but he wants to be able to see her at all times.

My light, he whispers.

The man can speak and he can listen, but not simultaneously. He enjoys music, is moved by it, but he can't play any notes, so they become more than just notes. He can accompany, the way a body accompanies a thought or a feeling; there is excess, but that doesn't necessarily produce a sound. He almost dares to mourn it. If one day there's courage enough, he might. Fearless you.

*

He wants to know where she is. Where her daddy longleg-fingers are, he wants to see her lying down waiting. The man pushes her down on the kitchen table.

A bowl tips over.

Seven yellow onions roll out and form a pattern on the table. A cabbage head rolls across the tabletop, tumbles like the sun in a sack across the sea. Out of sight.

The man fumbles with his cock, slaps it against the woman's inner thigh to liven it up. There's a brief silence. Then the crisp sigh from the bowl as it hits the tiles.

The man finds her dry cunt with a finger. Opens her. His fingers are cold.

It's best that way.

Little darling.

She concentrates better when he's cold.

The man's nails scratches our woman inside. His exile is now bleeding. He gets a little blood on his fingers. That wasn't meant to happen, he withdraws his fingers suddenly as if he burnt himself.

And then the woman's labia get in the way.

They have swelled; so much blood has descended into the woman's crotch that it almost blackens her vision; there's a pressure by her temples, and one after one the little blood vessels surrounding her eyes burst. A purple gleam is visible in her skin; the man is disgusted with her.

The woman thinks that it's an animal turning inside her. She feels it. Crushing her organs in strange, new ways. Unfamiliar areas deep in her abdomen. Liver, kidneys, something else all the way up in her throat.

She understands that she's the one that's wet; hears the sound, the wet kiss of her own crotch. It envelops the man with a naïve hunger.