



## Place of the Heart

*Steinunn Sigurdardottir*

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## **Winner of the Icelandic Literature Prize**

Single mother Harpa has always been a misfit. Her physical appearance is unique among Icelanders: so small she self-deprecatingly refers to herself as a dwarf, so dark-skinned she doubts her genetic link to her father, so strange she nearly believed the children who mistook her for a mythical creature of the forest. Even as an adult, she struggles to make sense of her place in the world.

So when she sees how her teenage daughter, Edda, has suffered since the death of her best friend, Harpa sees no choice but to tear her away from her dangerous social scene in the city. She enlists the help of a friend and loads her reprobate daughter and their belongings into a pickup truck, setting out on a road trip to Iceland's bucolic eastern fjords.

As they drive through the starkly beautiful landscape, winding around volcanic peaks, battling fierce windstorms, and forging ahead to a verdant valley, their personal vulnerabilities feel somehow less dangerous. The natural world, with all its contrasts, offers Harpa solace and the chance to reflect on her past in order to open her heart.

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