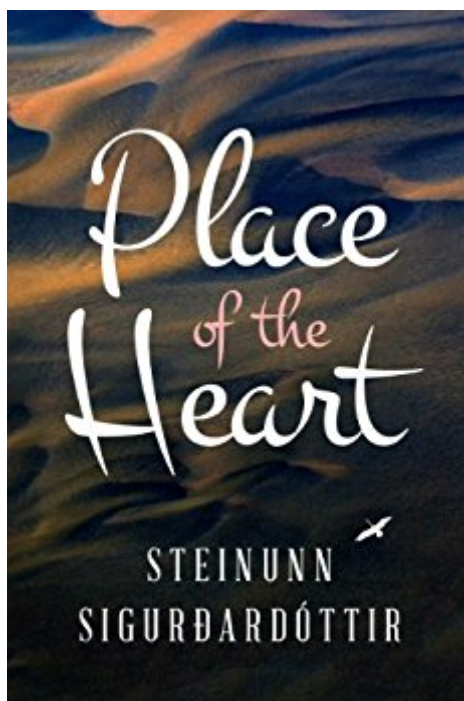


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Place Of The Heart



Synopsis

Winner of the Icelandic Literature PrizeSingle 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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Customer Reviews

Place of the Heart, by Steinunn Sigurðardóttir, won the Icelandic Literary Award in 1995

when this book was first published. Since then it has been translated into Danish, Finish, Norwegian, Swedish, French, and German; in the process, it was nominated for the Nordic Council's Literary Prize and for the French Prix Aristeion. This is the book's first English translation. The translator appears to have done an outstanding job because Sigurðardóttir's stunning, emotionally searing, and confident literary prose is easily discernible. The book tells the story of two dysfunctional relationships between mothers and daughters. Thirty-one-year-old Harpa, and her delinquent 15-year-old daughter, Edda, embark on a road trip from their home in Iceland's capital, Reykjavik, eastward toward Harpa's beloved idyllic hometown of Fjarðarsfjörður located on a picturesque fjord of the same name almost as far east as one can drive on Iceland's famous rim road. It's a rescue mission. Harpa needs to save her daughter from falling victim to a dangerous, criminal, Reykjavik teen drug culture with which the girl has become infatuated. Their relationship has sunk so low that the daughter is physically, verbally, and emotionally abusive toward her mother, and the mother is at the point where suicide seems an alluring alternative. The two make the trip with Harpa's childhood girlfriend, Heiður. They escape in Heiður's pickup with the rebellious girl ignoring them both by disappearing into dark defiant music on her headset and sinking deep into the back seat oblivious to the breathtaking scenery. They only have a week to make this trip. Will it work? Will the spectacular natural beauty of Iceland save this teenager from falling in with the dark side of life?

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