



# THE CLIFF / HAMARINN

A FOUR PART MINI SERIES

BY SVEINBJÖRN I. BALDVINSSON

The Cliff is a dramatic mystery about a Reykjavik Crime Detective who is sent to a small rural community in Iceland to help a young local policewoman investigate a suspicious accident. Together they unravel a mystery that involves bizarre incidents and unexplained deaths, happening against the backdrop of a controversial hydroelectric project.

## One page synopsis

A young man is badly hurt in mysterious accident that takes place at a remote construction site in the middle of the night. HELGI MARVINSSON (35), a Detective in the State Police, is called in to help the inexperienced local detective, INGA ARADOTTIR (30). She is a young and ambitious woman and she is not happy with Helgi's assignment to the case. But as they get to know each other, their feelings evolve and they grow closer.

At first glance, the case looks like a freak accident. An excavator has fallen over the edge of a cliff at a time when nobody was supposed to be working. The operator is found unconscious inside the machine and rushed to hospital.

Environmentalists are fighting against the proposed power plant but the stakes are high in the small local community. The competition for contracting work is fierce and the landowners are expecting

large sums of money in compensation from the government. But some of the locals believe that higher forces are at play, citing ancient legends surrounding the cliff on the construction site.

As the investigation progresses, secrets are unearthed and new information comes to light but somehow the case seems to get more and more complicated. The injured excavator operator unexpectedly dies in intensive care, an explosives expert is crushed under a rock at the construction site and people disappear...

Through the process of investigating the case, Helgi is forced to confront his own personal demons. He has recently lost his son but has been suppressing his feelings and concentrating on his career. The case and his partnership with Inga help him deal with his loss and learn to grieve.



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### SYNOPSIS

#### part one

An excavator falls over the edge of a cliff in the Fell Mountains, with a young man named SNORRI (23) trapped inside. The accident happens in the middle of the night when no one is supposed to be working. The mysterious and near-fatal accident rocks a small rural community in Iceland.

Homicide and Violent Crimes Detective, HELGI Marvinnsson (30's) is brought in as an expert to help the local police. One of the reasons he is chosen for the assignment is the fact that he spent summers in the area as a young boy.

We learn that Helgi lost his son in a car accident about a year ago but he has suppressed his feelings of loss and focused on his professional career. He divorced his wife following the accident and his daughter now lives with her mother and her new husband. Helgi has paid little attention to her for the past few months.

The local Chief of Police is away on holiday and his assistant, INGA Aradóttir (30), is handling the case. She has just graduated from the FBI Academy but what she lacks in experience she makes up for in ambition and ability. She is displeased with Helgi's involvement and makes it clear that he is invading her territory.

As Helgi and Inga start investigating the case, it becomes evident that the financially strapped agricultural community is torn by serious conflicts. There are highly controversial plans to erect dozens of pylons for a new power line, officially for added security. The opponents claim that the government is preparing for the construction of a new hydroelectric power plant in the mountains. The site of the accident was on a dangerous stretch of the pylon project.

The project is contested by those who don't want to see vast areas of unique nature sacrificed in order to create a reservoir for the power plant. The supporters, on the other hand, see the power plant as a means to save the community from collapse and dereliction.

Others believe that not only political and financial issues are involved. They blame all the breakdowns, accidents and bad luck that has surrounded the pylon project on an ancient legend that protects the Cliff. For the electrical lines to be placed where they're supposed to, the cliff has to be disturbed.

Helgi and Inga are working hard on the case but most of their findings seem to only heighten the mystery regarding the accident. They interview LAUGA, an old widow, who claims that at the night of the accident she saw a Ball of Lightning floating through the air and exploding at the farm where Snorri, the excavator operator, lived with his parents. Lauga called his mother who, as a result, was the first person to arrive at the scene of the accident.

When investigating the site of the accident, Helgi and Inga discover that a shed has been broken into and all the dynamite stored there stolen. A cheap lighter is found in a place, which indicates that it was dropped after the fall.

Snorri's mother, EYDIS, says that, on her way to the work site, she saw a tourist on a bicycle but no one fitting her description has turned up at the local camping site.

Phone records show that shortly before EYDIS called 112 from her son's mobile phone, a call was made from that same phone to an unregistered phone number. That phone is now consistently turned off. By timing EYDIS'S actions at the site, Helgi and Inga reach the conclusion that somebody else must have been at the site at the same time and called the unregistered phone number.

Although initial interviews with witnesses, neighbours, family members and the old widow don't provide many vital clues, some interesting information is unveiled.

Former best friends are now enemies...

There will be a handsome insurance pay-off for the old excavator...

The pylon project is affecting the whole community and the financial stakes are high. The contracts are lucrative and so is the compensation paid to the appropriate landowners...

A lot is at stake for the recently established local tourist businesses that will be all but ruined by a new power plant...

People don't agree on whether Snorri had a girlfriend or if the relationship was over...

Snorri is lying in a coma at the University Hospital in Reykjavik with his mother at his bedside.

There is strong political pressure to push the hydroelectric project forward before the upcoming election. As a result, the police investigation into the accident is closed, and work resumes at the site, much to Inga's dissatisfaction. Helgi resumes preparations for his long-awaited fishing trip.

At midnight the day before Snorri is to be woken up, he, suddenly and for no apparent reason, goes into cardiac arrest. Despite all efforts, his life cannot be saved. What makes his death suspicious is the fact that a pendant is found around his neck. A pendant he had not been wearing earlier that evening...

As a result of this sudden turn of events, the case is reopened and Helgi has to postpone his fishing trip.

*end of part one*





## part two

It turns out that Snorri's pendant is a part of a gold medal he won at a track and field tournament several years ago. After the tournament he had returned home with only half of the medal and his family never knew what had happened to the other half.

Snorri used to always wear his half of the medal around his neck but when he was admitted to the hospital it was given to his mother for safekeeping. The pendant found around his neck after his death is the mysterious other half.

Helgi and Inga question the hospital staff with meagre results. One staff member believes he saw a woman enter the I.C. Unit around the time of Snorri's death.

According to Snorri's mother, only her husband and ANNA(25), Snorri's friend and neighbour, knew that he was supposed to be woken up the day after he died. This means that Anna's husband, LÁRUS(27), an out of work contractor, might have known too.

Lárus has a fishy alibi for the night of the accident and Inga is eager to investigate his story. Snorri, Anna and Lárus all grew up together

but Lárus and Anna moved away and got married. They have recently moved back to the area but Lárus is the sworn enemy of Snorri's father, mostly because of the fierce competition for contracting work. Lárus is becoming a prime suspect but there is no hard evidence to tie him to the accident or the death at the hospital.

Helgi and Inga go to see DÓRA(28), Snorri's supposed girlfriend, who runs the local pub. She's not there but her landlord claims to have seen Snorri's car outside her house on the night of the accident. He also tells them that Dóra went to Reykjavik the day before Snorri's death and hasn't been back since.

Snorri's autopsy reveals that he died of a heart attack but is otherwise inconclusive.

Helgi and Inga set up an office at the local hotel. Inga has problems concentrating on the case because her husband is running for office and isn't pulling his weight around the house or taking care of their son.

Anna, who works as a nurse at the local health centre, tells Helgi and Inga that when she first visited Snorri in the I.C.U., he opened his eyes but didn't talk. Apparently, she also visited him briefly on the day he died and is happy she got a chance to say goodbye. She insists that Lárus did not come with her.

Snorri's parents want space to mourn and bury their only child. VEIGAR, the father, is burdened by financial worries. No money is coming in but the bills keep arriving. When Helgi searches Snorri's room at the farm he finds what looks like an old teenage love letter from Anna to Snorri.

Dóra, Snorri's girlfriend, returns home and Helgi and Inga pay her a visit. Dóra informs them that she and Snorri had an amicable break-up a few weeks before the accident. She claims she hadn't met or spoken to Snorri for some time before the accident and never visited him at the hospital.

Inga's determination leads her to use questionable methods in the investigation. She finds out that Dóra has at some point called the same unregistered phone number that was dialled from Snorri's mobile around the time of his accident. When questioned about this she denies knowing the number.

Inga and Helgi also know that Snorri called Dóra's number several times on the night of the accident and the calls were answered. She is evasive when asked about what she was doing in Reykjavík. Like Lárus, Dóra is under suspicion because of her dubious story, but neither of them can be directly linked to any wrongdoing.

Veigar, Snorri's father, accuses the local hotel owner, an ardent environmentalist and born-again Christian, of involvement in the tragedy...

Inga is able to confirm that Snorri and Anna were romantically involved.

Anna has her own questions for her husband, Lárus...

An explosives expert prepares to blast the cliff...

UNA, the daughter of the hotel manager, dumps SÆVAR, Lárus's teenage brother, and hitches a ride to Reykjavík...

Helgi and Inga are starting to like each other...

Snorri's parents are being pulled apart by their emotions...

HILDUR, the hotel manager's wife, goes to the church all alone and prays that she and her husband can dig their way out of the debts that resulted from setting up the hotel and tourist business...

Lauga sees another ball of lightning. This time it disappears at the construction site. Anna and Lárus's psychic little boy, JÓN(8), sees it too. The following morning, he hides his father's boots to prevent him from going to work...

The hotel owners discover that their daughter has run away...

Gudni, the explosives expert takes a break from his final preparations to have a coffee in a trailer beneath the cliff. His dog acts strange, running off with his things...

As little Jón approaches the construction site, running as fast as he can, a huge piece of rock suddenly comes loose at the top of the cliff and falls down. It crushes Gudni's trailer.

*end of part two*



### part three

The violent death of the explosives expert seems to be a freak accident but it makes big headlines in the press and puts more pressure on Helgi and Inga to wrap up their investigation so things can go back to normal.

Lárus and Anna's son, Jón, surprises Helgi by asking him about a boy in a red sports jacket he claims to see with him. Helgi tries to write it off as nonsense just like the kid's statement that he saw a man push the huge rock from the cliff. But when he is on his own, Helgi retches and falters thinking about the little boy's description of his dead son.

Meanwhile, it is discovered that the unregistered mobile belonged to a shipment sold locally and the owner therefore probably lives in the area. But the phone remains turned off.

Inga proposes that somebody could have killed Snorri at the hospital with an overdose of potassium, a necessary supplement for the patient that would induce heart attack if overused. It is

untraceable only hours after death. Helgi dismisses this theory as incredibly far-fetched.

The hotel owners start looking for their daughter Una but, as she has run away before, there's no big alarm.

Helgi and Inga prepare to arrest Lárus on the basis of circumstantial evidence and also bring their witnesses in for formal statements. Helgi feels that something more is needed to warrant Lárus's arrest but when it turns out that his wife Anna bought the missing mobile, he agrees to bring him in.

Mechanics examining the excavator discover a rag with signs of burning inside the oil tank. It looks like somebody tried to set it on fire. The rag is from an old T-shirt, which can be linked to Lárus and Anna.

Back at the hospital in Reykjavik, a previously unavailable staff member now recognises Dóra from a photograph and claims he saw her hurry out of the hospital around the time of Snorri's death.

Helgi is shocked when he looks at a newspaper-photograph of the crushed trailer beneath the cliff and sees what looks like the reflection of a child's face standing beside him. After buying several copies of the paper and finally getting hold of the original photo he must admit that the image is a bit faint. But there's definitely a crack in the wall he has build around his grief.

Snorri is buried. Veigar, his father surrenders to his emotions, leaves the wake and gets drunk. He ends up sitting in his car on the road leading directly to the cliff face. His foot is on the gas pedal...

Helgi gives Eydis, Snorri's mother, a ride home from the wake. Veigar has not returned home. She tells Helgi that Snorri and Anna's love affair was doomed because Veigar is also Anna's father, a fact that the young lovers had been unaware of. Helgi spots an old photograph in the house that shows Anna, Snorri and an older kid. Eydis tells him that the third person is Anna's brother who had a tragic accident and died in hospital after lying there paralyzed from the neck down for almost a year.

Inga gets a warrant for Lárus's arrest. But there is a new complication.

An extension to the hotel, which is under construction, is suddenly ablaze. The owner shouts at people to stay away, that there's dynamite in there. The firemen explain that it won't explode in a fire.

Inga sees the fire from the window of her room and runs out. She catches sight of a man moving in the dark near the church and follows him. When she turns a corner he knocks her down and escapes into the night on horseback.

Lauga, the old widow, tells Helgi the story about the cliff and shows him what she believes is evidence of its accuracy. Helgi is not convinced, but must admit that some of it falls into place with other things he has learned in the past few days, especially Jón's account of the mysterious man pushing the boulder down from the cliff.

The next morning, Inga is prepared to move on with her plan of arresting Lárus and bringing others in for formal questioning.

Anna admits to Helgi that she bought the unregistered mobile and gave it to Lárus but claims that he then lost it...

Inga finds several gaps in Lárus's account of his whereabouts on the night of the excavator accident...

Lárus finally admits that he spent the night with Dóra. He claims he didn't get a phone call that night but says it is possible that Dóra may have answered his phone. He also tells them that Snorri came to her apartment that same night and called several times but she didn't answer so Snorri may have left messages on her machine...

Dóra's neighbour calls Inga and Helgi. He's concerned that something is not right in her apartment. Helgi and Inga go there and discover...

Dóra is in bed, unconscious and perhaps dead. She has been brutally beaten.

They call an ambulance.

*end of part three*





#### part four

Dóra has not only been attacked, she has also taken an overdose of prescription medicine. Inga and Helgi go to the hospital to interrogate her. Confronted with Lárus's testimony about the night of the excavator accident, Dóra starts telling the truth. But she refuses to reveal who her attacker is. It turns out she got pregnant with Snorri's child but, when the relationship ended, she decided to have an abortion. Snorri tried to persuade her not to and that's the reason he was trying to speak to her on the night of the accident. She ignored him because Lárus was with her.

The next morning Dóra discovered that Snorri had left the medal piece, matching his own, outside her door. He had wanted to give it to her before but she had refused to accept it.

Dóra went to the I. C. Unit, the night before her scheduled abortion, to give the medal back to Snorri. When she was about to leave his room all the monitors started beeping and she ran out.

She decided not to go through with the abortion. Dóra tells Inga that she couldn't bear listening to the messages Snorri left on her machine and threw away the tape. Inga decides to try and find it.

Lárus is released from custody.

Gunnar, the hotel owner, admits to stealing the dynamite from the construction site, citing political reasons. Helgi finds out that Gunnar has acquired the bond tied to the disputed land. Snorri's father had signed the bond in order to buy the land from Lauga because he knew of the propounding project and the compensation the landowners would get.

Investigators have concluded that the hotel building was set on fire. Gunnar believes Snorri's father found out who was squeezing him for payments on the bond and decided to take revenge.



As Helgi looks for clues after the fire, Anna brings him what looks like a farewell-letter from Lárus's teenage brother who has not been seen for a couple of days. Helgi calls out Mountain Rescue to go look for him.

As Inga goes through Dóra's trash trying to find the tape from the answering machine, a man enters the apartment. The man thinks Dóra is in the flat and starts apologising for attacking her. When Inga reveals herself, she faces Dóra's attacker, Snorri's dad.

Meanwhile, the pressure from above is increasing. Without informing Inga, the Local Chief of Police has been called back from his holiday to take over and wrap up the case. Inga is devastated.

Sævar, Lárus's teenage brother, is found. He has climbed up the pylon near the Cliff, armed with a shotgun and explosives, and connected detonating equipment to the pylon's foundations.

Helgi and Inga arrive at the Cliff and Helgi goes to talk to Sævar. As Helgi is winning the young man's trust, the local Chief of Police turns up with a fully armed SWAT team. Just before they are ordered into action, Helgi manages to persuade the kid to surrender. He also promises him that he won't be charged with anything since no harm has been done.

Back in Reykjavík, Una, Sævar's girlfriend, has received an SMS with a picture of him on the pylon, sent from Helgi's mobile. She is shocked and decides to head back home.

Under interrogation, Sævar admits to Helgi that he stole the dynamite from the hotel owner after his daughter told him where it was kept. Helgi finds out that Gunnar and his wife Hildur knew about the fire suspiciously early.

Tortured by the secret, Sævar confesses that he went to the construction site on the night of the accident to put the excavator on fire, in protest. When it didn't work, he started the engine and put the machine on its course, rolling down the slope towards the edge of the cliff.

At this moment, Snorri arrived unexpectedly. He ran to the excavator, went inside and tried to stop it from going down. Sævar expresses remorse for what he did. He says it was him who called Lárus's unregistered mobile that night but he hung up when a woman answered.

Pressured by Helgi, the Gunnar, the hotel owner, agrees to make a statement about the dynamite. It turns out he stole it from the construction site and when he was cycling back he saw both Snorri and his mother approaching the site. He claims that he has no idea who started the fire at the hotel but suspects Snorri's father, his sworn enemy.

Helgi manages to talk Inga out of quitting her job and insists they can close the case in the 12 hours left before the local Chief of Police formally takes over.

Una, Sævar's girlfriend, returns home and is relieved to find him unharmed. She confesses that it was her idea, not his, to sabotage the excavator that night. They did not intend to harm anyone.

Inga figures out that Hildur, the hotel owner's wife, started the fire in order to claim insurance money but she was unaware that her husband had hidden dynamite in there. She was worried about their financial situation with the threat of the new hydroelectric power plant. When brought in for questioning, she confesses everything.

The tape from Dóra's answering machine is found. Helgi and Inga, who have become quite fond of each other, now have answers to almost every question regarding the case. However, they still have no explanation for Snorri's sudden death at the hospital. This is a huge disappointment to Inga.

By putting the last pieces together they reach the conclusion that Anna, the nurse, may have given Snorri a Potassium overdose, as an act of mercy. She and Snorri watched her brother wither away and the ordeal must have left its marks.



Helgi attends a strange meeting, which the leaders of the pylon project have been forced to attend. The meeting is presided over by a Medium who is, supposedly, able to contact the hidden forces of Cliff. Helgi is shocked when the Medium describes a boy in a red sports jacket who wants to comfort his dad. He runs out of the meeting, overcome by grief. Inga follows him and when she finds him he tries to hide the fact that he has been crying. She comforts him and, for the first time, he does not pull away but gives in to his feelings. This brings the two of them closer together.

Inga finds out that Potassium is missing from the local clinic where Anna works. But it is not enough evidence to arrest her. They still have no hard proof and may have to leave it at that.

But at the very last minute, Anna tracks Helgi down and starts telling him what she did. He warns her before she admits anything, giving her the chance to stop and go on with her life, but she is unable to live with the secret any longer.

Helgi and Inga close the case and, despite their feeling for each other, go their separate ways. For now.

The project is not abandoned, but the Cliff is spared. A lot of painful truth has surfaced and the scars will take time to heal. And as a reminder and a demand of respect from forces beyond our control, not all the pieces in the puzzle have been put into place. The timing of Snorri's arrival at the work site, the incident when the rock crushed the explosives expert, the visions of old Lauga and Lárus's young son...

Coincidence or fate? Who knows?

*end of part four*

# THE CLIFF / HAMARINN

## CHARACTER LIST

### I. THE POLICE

- HELGI (30's), Detective, Reykjavík Police.
- MARÍN (30's), Forensic Specialist, Reykjavík.
- INGA (30), Detective, Local Police, Ásvöllur Village.
- ÓLAFUR, Forensic Technician, Reykjavík.
- FREYR, Policeman, Local Police, Ásvöllur Village.

### II. BAKKI FARM

- EYDÍS (45), Snorri's mother. Farmer/Homemaker.
- VEIGAR (50+), her husband, Snorri's father; Farmer/Contractor/Chairman of Local Council.
- SNORRI (23), excavator operator; Horse Trainer /Co-Contractor.

### III. TEIGUR FARM

- ANNA (25), Part-time Nurse, Local Clinic, Ásvöllur Village.
- LÁRUS (27), her husband; Farmer/Contractor.
- SÆVAR (17), Lárus's brother. In love with Una.
- JÓN (8), son of Anna and Lárus.
- VAKA (4), Jón's sister.

### IV. HOLT FARM/HOTEL

- GUNNAR (40), Hotel owner/Tour-Operator/Farmer.
- HILDUR (35), Gunnar's wife.
- UNA (18), their daughter, in and out of love with Sævar.

### V. OTHERS

- DÓRA (28), Snorri's former girlfriend. Pub Manager, Ásvöllur Village.
- LAUGA (70), widow, Farmer at Foss Farm.
- GUDNI (45), Explosives-expert/technician.
- ORRI (30), Inga's husband. An aspiring politician.
- GUÐMUNDUR (60's), Helgi's boss, Reykjavík Police.
- ÓSKAR (30), Project Manager, General Contractors.
- HERMANN, Dóra's landlord and neighbour.
- GUÐJÓN, Local Chief of Police



## WRITER/SCREENWRITER/TUTOR

### SVEINBJÖRN I. BALDVINSSON

After graduating with a BA in Literature from The University of Iceland, Baldvinsson studied dramatic writing and has a Masters degree in Professional Writing from The University of Southern California. In 1993 He became the Head of Program dept. Icelandic National TV until 1996. Thereafter he enrolled into the North by Northwest script training course as a screenwriter in 1997 and the NNW „Seven Samurai” course for screenwriting tutors in 2002 and has since then been active as a script consultant and tutor at NNW.

He Teaches creative screenwriting at The University of Iceland and was a Film consultant/commissioner for The Icelandic Film Centre for three years.

Baldvinsson has published five volumes of poetry, three children books, one novel and a collection of short stories, including the award winning ICEMASTER, published in several languages and filmed twice.

#### **His Screenwriting Credits Include**

„DEFENSE” („FORSVAR”) (2004) –Danish legal drama series, produced by Nordisk Film for TV-2 in Denmark. Staff writer on 9 of the total of 29 episodes.

„TAXA” (1998) Danish drama series, DR-I TV. Episode writer.

„TEARS OF STONE”(1995) feature/drama.

Icelandic/German/Swedish co-production. Won several prizes at film festivals around the world(Prague, Gothemburg, Montpellier) and was the Icelandic entry for the Academy Awards.

Baldvinsson has served as Vice President, Federation of European Screenwriters(FSE), since 2006 and Secretary of the Icelandic Association of Playwrights and Screenwriters since 1998.

## THE DIRECTOR

### REYNIR LYNGDAL

Already in his teens Lyngdal was quite the prodigy, winning numerous awards for video art and short films. After studying cinematic arts at the prestigious CECC in Barcelona, Lyngdal returned to his native Iceland. Not Forgetting his artistic roots he directed numerous short films winning awards as far apart as Reykavik Short Film Festival and the Toronto Film Festival.

Lyngdal has two feature films in development. In 2006 he was chosen to direct the New Year program for RUV The National Broadcaster, a program watched by 95% of viewers. Lyngdal prefers a hands-on approach, immersing himself in the creative process from the initial conceptualization to final editing. As a commercial director he has received a number of awards at home and abroad.

In his spare time Reynir is married to actress Elma Lisa Gunnarsdottir.



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