

Image III: The Forester's Room (Summer)

Whitewashed walls, table, bench. Seats made of natural wood. A colourful table cover, a white vase holding branches of spruce. Perhaps the forester's armchair and long pipes. Lots of sunlight in the room. Outside, the forest.

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THE MAN: You are not even wearing socks, and what kind of dress is this?

ALI: Isn't it pretty?—I sewed it myself.

THE MAN: Pretty or not, one is not supposed to be dressed like that.

ALI: You! You! You keep saying that "This is not how a woman dresses, that is not what a lady does," and you don't know that I am no lady at all. I'm just not, it's a waste of time, I'll never learn it anyway. This is one of many discoveries I made here (*laughing*). Why don't you admit it, you thought me a lady—(*laughs*).

THE MAN: And you made several such discoveries?

ALI: Yes, you will be surprised. You know, I think I am very different from how you think I am.

THE MAN: I am afraid that's true. You are more ordinary than I thought.

ALI: Ordinary? Yes, maybe I am ordinary; do you want to know what's also possible? Maybe I am not yet at all?

THE MAN (*reluctantly*): Ah, what's the use! I'm not considering talking to you about you.

ALI (*serious*): Well, you will have to.

THE MAN (*sharp*): What do you mean?

ALI: I'm saying you will have to.

THE MAN: I must be dreaming.

ALI (*laughs*): You? You dreaming? No, you are completely awake, but me, I did sleep, and now, suddenly—I smell—I see—I hear. (*She walks up and down.*) I'm alive! (*She feels her body with her hands.*) I feel myself.

THE MAN: Ali!

ALI: I now say "I want!" all the time, it is so beautiful to say "I want!," and I am indeed doing what I want.

THE MAN: And what do I do?

ALI: You. You do what you want.

THE MAN: Do you regret your behavior that night?

ALI: I do regret it! Which means that I would not behave like that anymore. Why I did behave that way at the time? There is certainly an explanation for this. Even if I don't know it.

THE MAN: Did you talk to someone?

ALI: On the contrary, it's because I did not talk at all.

THE MAN: Ali—but you did not think, did you?

ALI: Think? Thought? A lizard doesn't think and lives despite it. And who tells a squirrel: "This is not considered good manners?" It does what a squirrel does. I also want to be how I am. Why should I be protected from life at all? I am not even scared of it?

THE MAN: Ali, do you know anything about life?

ALI: I don't! That's exactly the problem! You all are living in the midst of life, and I should only get to know it through you. Why is that? I have my own eyes, my own ears.

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You've just read an excerpt of the third act of *How we become what we are*, a four-act play written by Lina Loos (1882-1950) and translated from Austrian German to English by Corinn Gerber. *How we become what we are* tells the semi-autobiographical tale of Ali, a young woman dissatisfied by the rigid confines of her life, who forges a new path for herself. In this scene, Ali is confronted by her husband after a period of introspection spent in a small forester's cabin in the woods.

Leisure is a collaborative art practice between Meredith Carruthers and Susannah Wesley, based in Montréal. Recent projects include *Menagerie* (Erin Stump Projects, 2019), *How one becomes what one is* (Musée d'art de Joliette, 2018), *Conversation with magic forms* (Vu Photo, 2017), *Panning for Gold/Walking You Through* (Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, 2017), *Conversations With Magic Stones* as part of *The Let Down Reflex* (EFA, New York, 2016) and *Dualité/Dualité* (Artexte, Montreal, 2015).

CALA
BOOSE

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