

# QUAKE

A FILM BY TINNA HRAFNSDÓTTIR

URSUS PARVUS IN COOPERATION WITH FREYJU FILMWORK. PRESENTS A FILM BY TINNA HRAFNSDÓTTIR "QUAKE". ANITA BRIEM, EDDA ÞÓRGVINSDÓTTIR, JÓHANN SIGURBARSON, BENJAMÍN DADASON, SVEINN BERSSON, TINNA HRAFNSDÓTTIR, SÍSJEIÐUR SÍSJEIÐUR, KRISTÍN ÞÓRA HARALDSDÓTTIR, BERGLAUR EGGI BENEDEKTSSON. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: TÓMAS ÖRN TÓMASSON. PRODUCTION DESIGNER: HILDA HELGADÓTTIR. COSTUME DESIGNER: HELGA ÞÓRS V. HANNAK. HAIR & MAKEUP: KRISTÍN JÓLLA KRISTJÁNSDÓTTIR. EDITING: DAVID ALEXANDER CORNO. VALGÓSS ÓSKARSDÓTTIR. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: LUIS ASCANIO. PRODUCED BY GUNNAR ÁRNASON. MUSIC BY PALL RAGNAR PÁLSSON. EDVARD EGIILSSON. PRODUCED BY HLW JÓHANNESDÓTTIR, TINNA HRAFNSDÓTTIR. BASED ON THE BOOK GRAND MÅL BY ALDUR JÓNSDÓTTIR. WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY TINNA HRAFNSDÓTTIR.





*URSUS PARVUS presents*

## **QUAKE**

an Icelandic psychological thriller drama  
written and directed by  
Tinna Hrafnadóttir.

Based on the best-selling novel  
Grand Mal by Audur Jonsdóttir, one of the most  
accomplished writers of Iceland today.

*Repressed memories that Saga unconsciously blocked as a child suddenly start to  
come back, revealing the truth about her past.*



### *Short synopsis*

Saga, a single mother in her late thirties, gets hit by a fierce epileptic attack walking in a public park with her six-year-old son resulting in a total memory loss. Afraid of being considered unable to take care of her son, Saga attempts to hide her state from others and occupies herself digging for the answers she needs from within. As she struggles to gather bits and pieces from her forgotten life, repressed memories that Saga unconsciously blocked as a child suddenly start to come back, revealing a painful truth about herself and her past.

### *Director's statement*

It was a huge privilege for me to gain the filming rights of Audur Jonsdóttir's award winning novel *Grand Mal*. The story dives into the challenging journey from denial to acceptance and having been through that journey myself I instantly felt strong connection to it and what Saga goes through. I also wanted to highlight the inward-investigative side of the story in order to raise the suspense and also because stories about our complexity as humans, who we are and why, have always been my passion.



#### *About the writer/director*



Tinna Hrafnisdóttir is an Icelandic director, actress, writer and producer both in theater and films. She studied literature and writing in The University of Iceland, she's an alumnus of Iceland University of the Arts, Reykjavik University (MBA), TIFF Filmmakers Lab and runs her own film production company, Freyja Filmwork . Tinna has written and directed two award winning short films Helga 2016 and Munda 2017. Quake is her first feature. Tinna is currently developing her first mini series, Home is where the heart is.

#### *About the producer*



Ursus Parvus was founded in 2015. The producer and owner, Hlin Johannesdóttir, has vast experience in the film industry being actively working as a producer since 2000 (around 30 credits, The Swan, Third pole, Pale Star, Shadowtown, etc) with more upcoming projects as features, documentaries and TV series. Hlín is also currently the head of the Icelandic Academy of Film & TV and has a position at the Icelandic Film School as Head of Production.



*Written and directed by*

*Tinna Hrafnisdóttir*

*Director of photography*

*Tómas Örn Tómasson*

*Production design*

*Hulda Helgadóttir*

*Costume designer*

*Helga Rós V. Hannam*

*Hair and make-up*

*Kristín Júlía Kristjánsdóttir*

*Editors*

*Davíð Alexander Corno, Valdís Óskarsdóttir*

*Sound design*

*Gunnar Árnason*

*Music composers*

*Páll Ragnar Pálsson, Eðvarð Egilsson*

*Producers*

*Hlín Jóhannesdóttir, Tinna Hrafnisdóttir*

*SUPPORTED BY*

*Icelandic Film Centre*

*Ministry of Industries and Innovation*

All star cast

Aníta Briem – Saga (The Minister)



Edda Björgvinsdóttir-Dídi (Under the tree)



Jóhann Sigurðarson – Gunnar (Woman at war)



Benjamín Daðason – Ívar



Tinna Hrafnisdóttir – Jóhanna (Valhalla murders)



Sveinn Geirsson – Bergur (Sisterhood)



Sigurður Sigurjónsson – Elliði (Rams)



Kristín Haraldsdóttir–Tedda (And breathe normally)





### ***Synopsis***

On a snowy day in Reykjavik city, Saga, a woman in her forties, gets suddenly hit by a fierce epilepsy seizure walking in a public park with her five-year-old son and loses her memory. The seizure completely transforms her life. Upon trying to gather together bits and pieces from her forgotten life Saga finds out that it's full of illusions and abnormalities. Long forgotten, painful and repressed memories from her childhood also start to come back again, forcing her to face a disturbing truth about her past and present, and her role in life as a daughter, sister, partner and mother.

But the story of Saga is not just another story of a memory loss. It's much more a story about the situation when you one day realize that the truth about you and your loved ones have been hidden deliberately, even by you, so that you and your family can simply carry on with life. But what is hidden, isn't always forgotten, and when Saga suddenly remembers that her family has a dark secret from the past her present world collapses.

After the seizure, Saga's mind is filled with doubts and uncertainties. What happened before the seizure? Who can she trust? And how can she make any sense of

her emotions and who she was when her memory is so fragmented? Due to being afraid of this out-of-controlness and of being considered unable to take care of her son she seeks to hide her memory loss from others.

When Saga gets back home from the hospital she finds out that she is newly divorced and seemingly she was the one who wanted to end the relationship with her son's father. However, she seems to be still in love with him, so what happened between them becomes a kind of a mystery that needs to be solved where Saga becomes the investigator herself. The story is told from her point of view, so the viewer never gets more information than Saga. That creates suspense and makes the viewer an active participant in putting the story together. The controversial fact that Saga remains in continuous search for answers to questions about herself, yet still trying to hide her severe state of memory loss, creates a very exciting twist and in a certain way a "crime story approach" to the story. The structure of the crime story frame is a convenient way to tell a story of this kind, a story where the layers are step by step revealed before the core comes out and takes us to the gripping moral of the story.

As we become more familiar with Saga, more factors are revealed that are not consistent with her longings and feelings. Her former life begins to become clearer and it turns out that it was not just Saga who wanted to end the relationship, it was also she who was the difficult one, bossy, unfair, dealing with trust issues, and almost everything the father did for or with their son was not good enough in her opinion. Why she behaved like this Saga finds very hard to understand, so to find out from where this devastation comes, becomes the next puzzle for her to put together.

That leads the story to an inevitable revelation of the past which the seizure, the "quake", releases or opens up as the story goes on, just like when earthquakes arouse eruptions and flames that lie beneath the surface. Which is a brilliant metaphor for what is happening in Saga's life. Flashbacks and memories from her childhood full of fear and traumatic experiences start to flow, hurtful memories that she previously couldn't face and buried so deep inside her soul as a child start to appear again and she is forced to face what she has been through, who she really is and why she became that person.

Her father and mother, who seem to be decent people in the present, have a painful past that has been muted in the family for years. Although everything seems to be as it should be on the surface, memories of her parents start to appear in her mind where they are both totally different and pure contrast to what we see in the present. Images of violence, drinking, shouting and fear find their way back into her head but the most difficult one is an unclear image of a small, few weeks old infant, which Saga later finds out was her little sister who died many years ago due to being neglected by her parents when Saga was only five years old. In Saga's memory, she is also responsible

for her death where an image of her as a child trying to save her little sister starts to haunt her. Her little sister had a nasty swelling in her tiny, little throat and couldn't catch her breath without help but Saga was too little to save her and her parents didn't listen to her screaming for help. The father was too drunk and the mother too busy dealing with him.

This horrible event of guilt and blame, which was never treated or dealt with, did become a dominant, but yet unknown and silent, intruder in her own personal life with a consequently poisonous effect on her relationship with her loved ones, family and even her own child. Here the answer to why she was so uncontrollable, dysfunctional and lost in relationship with others and especially her son's father is finally found and revelation is inevitable. Therefore, the fear of losing her son is not only tied to her epilepsy or state of memory loss, but also to the fact that she was constantly afraid, afraid of something she had buried so deep inside that her brain "decided" to forget it. The condition or belief that she couldn't trust anyone with her son, not even his own father, finds its roots in this horrible event where she couldn't protect her little sister from dying. Saga has thus been trapped by fear, fear of not being able to trust anyone, mixing these feelings of guilt and fear together in a devastating way. In her subconscious mind she believed she was guilty, guilty like her parents, and that belief has been controlling her life and behaviour ever since without her knowing so. This is the largest and most influential example of Saga's life, of how she is forced to face this wounded past and to deal with it, to be able to heal herself. And in the end by facing this fear, from where it springs and what causes it, Saga finally finds understanding towards her own and her parent's behaviour, and also reconnects to her elder sister Johanna, whom she had been so close to when they were little kids.

Despite dramatic circumstances, the core of this material is very powerful and human. Therefore, the viewers should be able to connect and relate to countless things that we all know from the complex patterns of families. For example, when Saga finds out that her beloved father was back in the old days harmful to his loved ones, raises the question of *if* we are willing or even able to forgive family members who have hurt us, even though it happened long time ago. And let alone, whether it's even possible. Her father has his own wounded past, he was abandoned by his mother when he was a young child, so this situation is an example of a typical, harmful chain reaction of malicious behaviour patterns from one generation to another.

Another twist to the story is that her mother every year disappears for few days and then comes back acting like nothing happened, which Saga has never understood why. But during her search for the truth Saga finds out that it happens always at the same time the infant died. When the reason for her mother's behaviour moves closer to Saga's awareness, she is faced with the question of forgiveness even harder for although what her father did belongs to the past, the consequences of his doings belong

to the present. Where the boundaries lie in human capacity to forgive is not easy to decide, especially not for a person like Saga, who believes she is also guilty. She also hurt the one she loved, her child's father whom she still loves, simply because she's a living denominator of her own traumatic experiences and memories. Just like we all are, in one way or another.

But the "rebirth" that occurs with this fierce epilepsy seizure creates an opportunity for Saga to start over. To face the damage and rebuild is the challenge she meets, but to deal with that reality might just be the key to unlock her hidden potentials, the life changing key to understanding and acceptance. The seizure is therefore like a beautiful symbol of an earthquake, where hidden flames start to rise which makes us finally see what lies beneath.

In the end Saga finally decides to open up to her child's father, to tell him everything about her past and why she behaved like this, but at that critical moment she finds out that he is already in a new relationship. So that long overdue decision fails without closure due to new circumstances, but even so it doesn't break her. Because Saga is different and stronger. She has a clearer vision, a deeper understanding and gains for the first time a true foundation to build her life on in the future. Which gives us hope.

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