

## **New childhood**

**Directed by Ruusu Haarla**

**Written by Ruusu Haarla and Seidi Haarla**

**KOM Theatre, TEHDAS Theatre & Uusi Lapsuus -working group**

**Synopsis in English**

Seidi is born in Kirkkonummi in 1984. Fear and needs are passed through her mother's hands and eyes, for Seidi to fulfill. Experience of filthiness in the mother is formed as the root of Seidi's existence. The mother's poems tell of her sadness, the incapability of stopping this from happening, and being a better mother.

In the present, Ruusu and Seidi tell of their intention to connect with their inner child through their plays. Seidi's alter ego on the video criticizes Ruusu's and Seidi's project, that is harmful to their parents. Letters from the parents attempt to evoke responsibility for the mother's self-destructive behavior in the sisters. The alter ego, having become a mother herself, ponders the meaning and dangers of childhood; If one is to pick it apart by themselves, what will remain?

Ruusu and Seidi dive into their childhood: From the yellow house, Seidi remembers a violent procedure, Ruusu only sweet memories but the remaining shreds of innocence are lost with the upcoming relocation. Seidi's pet is lost to the horny cat pack, Ruusu separates herself from reality. Ruusu tells the audience of memories in her body about a distressing elder lady, of watching tv, of strange men holding her down and her attempts to remember the sexual assault before the crime expires. A letter from the ministry of justice confirms; nobody cares.

The parents fight in the new house about artistic success and trauma leaking into the relationship. Seidi describes fear and bitterness towards her father, as well as feeling responsible for her mother. TRE – exercises performed in her adulthood return her to the "state of war" from her childhood. An educational tape shown to the children by their mother opens Seidi's eyes to the same filth in herself as in the bad man on the video. As their mother prepares a divorce, Ruusu falls into a pond and is almost drowned. Ruusu remembers their mother's departure and feeling responsible for their father. Their father has since written mean spirited letters to the sisters, but a sweet and kind letter only to Ruusu. Seidi's inner child's song about a dirty pussy, violence and erotic fantasies, inspires her to take on a new role.

Moving to Helsinki brings with it mom's new man and a set of new rules. Seidi is bribed into silence with ice cream, but mom and stepdad are made angry by Ruusu's rebellion against the new man in the family. Adult Ruusu raps to vent about the years of silencing, accusations and abandonment. Their first Christmas together makes little Ruusu see the emptiness of the love in the family. As mom and stepdad reveal their plans to get married, Seidi acts joyous even as Ruusu falls into a dark pit. Seidi's marriage vow to the new couple is a promise never to rebel but to always sacrifice her own happiness to ensure her mother's peace of mind.

## **Second Act**

In the second act, adult Ruusu suffers from disconnection and feelings of loathing oneself as Seidi indulges in the return of her alter ego. The sisters fight over the responsibilities related to the creation of the play and mourn over their lost youth. Seidi returns to a childhood memory of feeling lesser next to Ruusu's talents. Vengeful Ruusu forces her parents to watch and listen to the suffering and isolation of her childhood, the results of which is her incapability to love. Seidi's inner child demands Ruusu and Seidi to truly connect with her, which leads Seidi to halt beside her own as well as Ruusu's pain. A safe space is created in which Ruusu recalls her fear of nap time, Seidi plays the role of a pedophile and unloads her pain in the form of a poem to their mother. Ruusu confesses the shame of letting go in her monologue. Seidi shares a story of a childhood game in which the sisters decided to become "self-sufficient". Dad's letter to his daughters ponders the prison of the ego and the healing properties of passing time. In the end, a poem to the mother is an absolution and a consolation for all the wrong that has come to pass.