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Viktor Arnar Ingólfsson , Björg Árnadóttir (Translator) , Andrew Cauthery (Translator)

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When the shotgun-blasted body of a goose hunter is discovered, the police believe they have a list of suspects who may have wanted the victim dead, from his young wife to the caretaker of his property. But then a second body, another hunter, is found with a similar fatal wound. And then a third. As the pattern emerges—all goose hunters, all shot at the break of dawn—Reykjavik policemen Gunnar and Birkir face the terrifying possibility that a serial killer is stalking the idyllic Icelandic countryside.

Gunnar and Birkir set a trap for the one they call “the Gander,” but it quickly becomes a wild goose chase as the murderer plays some tricks of his own. With the clock running out and the discovery of another body all but guaranteed, the cops must determine if there is a thread connecting the victims or if the killings are all part of a twisted game.

Daybreak Details

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From Reader Review Daybreak for online ebook

Susan says

First book I've read by Ingolfsson and first time he's come to my attention. Having visited Iceland I am always interested in books by Icelandic authors. I had, as usual, no idea of who the killer was and thought the mystery was kept a mystery for a good long time. Loved the setting and the feel of Icelandic life - tho, of course, I have no idea of the authenticity of it. Will look for more books by this author.

Stacia says

Daybreak is a competently written, plot-driven crime novel that has been well translated from the Icelandic. While I enjoyed reading it, I can't say it will stay with me or that I would read additional books if it were to become a series. There was a generic feel to the novel, as though it could have been set almost anywhere—it didn't have a strong sense of place or character.

The detectives assigned to the case, Gunnar and Birkir, are both outsiders themselves; Gunnar is of German heritage, Birkir Vietnamese. The author did a good job of conveying the distance they felt from Icelandic society, but unfortunately in doing so he also created too much distance between the reader and the characters. They both had the potential to be interesting, yet because of the lack of development, both struck me as stereotypes: the overweight, sloppy detective and the silent, inscrutable one. I had hoped the author would use the setting to greater advantage, since Iceland is such a remote, bleak landscape, but with its focus on plot, there's not a lot of description.

Some of the elements that I most enjoy about Nordic crime fiction were missing from this book—strong sense of setting, a greater social awareness—but that's not necessarily a criticism. This was a solid, compelling mystery novel, perfect for a beach read or on the airplane, when you want a fast-paced, quick read.

This ARC was furnished by the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Carl says

Always good to branch out--an Icelandic thriller has an ending that no American writer would ever use. Situation: Our main cop is personally in danger and the girl is trapped in a gondola in danger of freezing to death.

American ending: Cop kills bad guy and rescues girl.

Icelandic ending: Cop escapes from bad guy by running (!) away. He goes to where the girl is trapped but he can't figure out how to work the gondola so he gets help from others.

Dirty Harry he is not!

Gary Van Cott says

I thought this was a pretty good book. It is set in Iceland and hence a bit different. It is the second book I have read featuring Birkir and Gunnar. I hope that someone who is familiar with the author's work will set up the books with these characters as a series.

Lukasz Pruski says

Viktor Arnar Ingolfsson's "Daybreak" is a rather straightforward police procedural where Reykjavik detectives are trying to catch a serial killer. It is marred by the use of two major literary clichés, but redeemed a little by the Icelandic setting. The author of "Flatey Enigma" and "House of Evidence" (I have reviewed both titles here) has been skillful in capturing the sense of location in his novels. Also, the choice of the killer's victims is cleverly offbeat: geese hunters are being killed during or just before the hunt.

In the character cliché, the two main detectives have stereotypically contrasting personalities: a fastidious, hard working, and dedicated Birkir, of Vietnamese extraction, and Gunnar, an overeating and heavily drinking slob, but an experienced and smart detective. This could have been overcome by deeper characterizations but unfortunately, with few exceptions, the characters in this novel are underdeveloped and stereotypical. I will not reveal the plot cliché here, so as not to spoil the reading, but it appears about mid-novel and concerns the motive for the killings.

There are some good things in this unremarkable novel such as, for example, a list of euphemisms for death reminiscent of the famous Parrot Sketch ("becoming a root inspector" is my favorite) or the astute characterization of Detective Superintendent Magnus Magnusson's family life, but overall the book has left me quite disappointed. The author himself refers to Sjöwall and Wahlöö's "The Laughing Policeman", a masterpiece of the Scandinavian police procedural genre, as if paying it homage, with the understanding that his work does not rise to the old masters' level of writing craft.

Finally, I now know for sure that I will never be a geese hunter. Using decoys to trick the flying geese to entice them to land and killing them is not my idea of a good time.

Two and a quarter stars.

Chip says

[the misogynist suspect, the wife of the incompetent loose-lipped cop tattling to the press (really???!), and, of course, the mutual decision of two very best friends to go all Hunger Games on each other for a woman they had to be idiots to think was

Fran says

This was my second of Viktor Ingolfsson's Novels that I read this past month. I could not put either of them

down, but I think I enjoyed House of Evidence a bit more because of the historical times and settings woven throughout the story. Daybreak is set entirely in Iceland, and is a crime mystery, pure and simple. But maybe not so simple. He deals with difficult issues, people's lives, hopes, dreams, disappointments, and very personal matters.

In reading Ingolfsson I feel I am understanding more about Iceland, which is one of the reasons I have been reading Icelandic literature and novels. Once again, I wish I knew the language so that I could read his works in the original and not just in translation, although this book was translated by the same team of excellent translators who translated House of Evidence.

This book deals with, of course, murder, but also goose hunting, rural life, urban life, and perhaps my favorite character, Birker, whose quotations I loved. The poetry in the book added to the story and depth of the characters, and seemed to me to be so very Icelandic.

Greg at 2 Book Lovers Reviews says

I love a good mystery/crime book. It is always interesting to read a European based book once in a while to really contrast with the American approach.

Daybreak is set in Iceland, there is a killer on the loose. He is killing goose hunters. It is up to Birker and Gunnar of Reykjavik's Violent Crime Unit to stop the serial killer. Despite the fact that they are both loners and foreigners, you could not find a pair of detectives so different from one another, who still get along as well as Birker and Gunnar. Iceland is really the only home that they have ever known.

Ingolfsson has told an excellent who-done-it. I was guessing right up until the very end. What was different about Daybreak is that it is not only about one detective and his partner, both Birker and Gunnar share equal billing. The crime was gruesome and violent (bonus!), the suspect and twist were unexpected and the cast of characters allowed for some great comic relief.

This was my first Ingolfsson book. While I can see the obvious comparisons to Larsson and Adler-Olsen (all dark crime books set in Northern Europe), Ingolfsson has his own unique presentation which sets him on his own.

If you like dark crime stories, you need to read Daybreak!

Cyndy says

Who is killing goose hunters at daybreak in Iceland? This alone makes the novel worth reading. Some may say the detective partners are just another "odd couple" and they are, but they get along and do things together outside of work. Every possible suspect is pointing hints and fingers at others. This was a page turner for me and because of that it's recommended reading.

Julie says

Someone is hunting goose hunters in this Icelandic mystery. While I enjoyed the story, the author needs to

work on the "show, don't tell" aspect of fleshing out characters. There are two main detectives in this story, but at the end, all I can tell you about them is that one is fat and one is Vietnamese.

Sherry says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, both the storyline and the characters. It was well crafted and I found it difficult to stop reading. I must say one aspect of the mystery was easy to figure out. However, this didn't take away from my desire to read on.

Gunner may have appeared a brownish character but he certainly was a smart cop. So was Birkir. They may have appeared mismatched but they work well together. Their backgrounds helped in their development. The why of the story made sense if a psychopath's reasoning can make sense. All in all, the book makes me hope Mr. Ingolfsson continues to create more m :) stories with these characters.

Brenda Dickenson says

This Icelandic mystery is a must on any list.

A geese hunter is out just waiting for the geese to show up and be lulled in by his decoys. From out of nowhere his decoys get taken out by another hunter and then the first hunter becomes the hunted. The man hunter must now be found. The police have their work cut out for them as more hunters are killed. This book shows society of Iceland as the police and those must seek take us throughout the land and the diverse characters you encounter. If you like a mystery that leaves you guessing up to the end, this is it.

anneliese says

Highly recommend- excellent character development and beautiful setting. Smooth and fluid translation. An additional bonus is that each volume contains a piece of original poetry written by a friend of the author. I am looking forward to reading all his books!

Danyel says

I was listening to NPR around the same time that everyone on the planet, including me, was reading The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo trilogy when the commentator mentioned the Martin Beck series of Scandinavian novels (collectively known as The Story of Crime). I was interested, picked up the first book and immediately -- and obsessively -- devoured the whole lot of them, packing each one up and sending it off to my folks as soon as I finished them: a vote of high confidence in my world. Why am I mentioning this now? Honestly, it was my previous good experience with that series and my American tendency to lump Iceland in with the Scandinavian countries that led to me picking up Daybreak in the first place. Although Daybreak was not the best crime novel I've ever read, I did track down a second book by this author. There is an interesting window into a society to be seen through the pages of a crime novel -- the glimpse was enough to make me look for more.

Michael Smith says

I don't know what it is about Scandinavian mystery writers, and about Icelandic writers in particular, but they're both very similar to and very different from the class Anglo-American police procedural. And Ingolfsson is one of the best of them, so it's a puzzle why this one had to wait eight years to be published in translation. Birkir Hinriksson is a homicide detective of some experience and despite his name, he's V-Vietnamese, a refugee orphan who came to Iceland with a party of boat people. He's a loner, takes his job very seriously, and loves running, sharp clothes, and classical music. His partner is Gunnar Mariuson, also unmarried, but otherwise a very different sort of person -- and yet the two of them work perfectly as a team. In this case, a goose hunter has been murdered with a shotgun at dawn near his hunting blind, and the two men have to travel out from Reykjavik to see what they can make of things. And they're just beginning to figure out the forensic facts of the case and sort out the probable suspects, when another goose hunter is killed some distance away. And then they turn up a possibly connected case from the previous year. Is there a conspiracy here, or a serial killer, or what? The author's style is straightforward, not dramatic, and with a leavening of dry wit. It's a quick read and an enjoyable one.
