

The Crow Girl: A novel

By Erik Axl Sund

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The International Sensation

It begins in a Stockholm city park where the abused body of a young boy is discovered. Detective Superintendent Jeanette Kihlberg heads the investigation, battling an apathetic prosecutor and a bureaucratic police force unwilling to devote resources to solving the murder of an immigrant child. But with the discovery of the mutilated corpses of two more children, it becomes clear that a serial killer is at large.

Superintendent Kihlberg turns to therapist Sofia Zetterlund for her expertise in the psychopathology of those who kill, and the lives of the two women become quickly intertwined—professionally and personally. As they draw closer to each other and to the truth about the killings, what surfaces is the undeniable fact that these murders are only the most obvious evidence of an insidious evil woven deep into Swedish society.

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Editorial Review

Review
“What is it about Sweden that produces such deliciously, darkly off-kilter thrillers, featuring idiosyncratic, complex characters such as Lisbeth Salander and now Detective Superintendent Jeanette Kihlberg? As Kihlberg investigates a killer who targets immigrant children, she must deal with xenophobia, extreme right-wing politics, and other hot-button issues that only deepen our morbid fascination.”
—*O, The Oprah Magazine*

“Swedish crime novels in the post-*Dragon Tattoo* era have offered a full slate of [the] grotesque . . . but there’s been nothing with the cracked intensity or wild ambition of the pseudonymous Erik Axl Sund’s 800-page event *The Crow Girl.* . . . This book’s engine never stops humming.”
—Lloyd Sachs, *Chicago Tribune*

“Erik Axl Sund—aka Jerker Eriksson and Håkan Axlander Sundquist—may look like aging rockers but they share a steely command of the writerly art. . . . [A] complex and very dark narrative . . . The narrative slowly and surely exerts an inexorable grip . . . [an] unerring building of tension. And, as with the best of Scandinavian crime fiction, from Henning Mankell to Stieg Larsson, there is still room for an acute element of social commentary. . . . The personalities of the women at the heart of the book, all driven in distinctive ways, are carefully and successfully wrought. . . . You will find [*The Crow Girl*] to be among the most wide-ranging and forceful Scandinavian crime novels you have encountered.”
—Barry Forshaw, *Financial Times*

“[A] breakout novel . . . peddling high-concept stories [with a] compelling voice.”
—Lucy Feldman, *The Wall Street Journal*

“Horrors abound in the pseudonymous Sund’s scathing first that rips asunder the appearance of Sweden’s contemporary welfare state to reveal just about every conceivable human crime. . . . [A] challenging multifaceted descent into the abyss of evil and madness.”
—*Publisher’s Weekly*

“Very likely to be the most disturbing book you’ll read all year . . . there’s a fantastic twist in store, very well executed, and a successful conclusion for the complex web of evil Sund weaves over the course of the novel. . . . Pitch perfect.”
—Alison Flood, *The Guardian*

“A breakneck journey through a plot of labyrinthine complexity. . . . Sund boldly places dissociative identity disorder at the heart of this extremely disturbing novel.”
—Joan Smith, *The Sunday Times* (London)

“Brutal, upsetting and brilliantly written, it is the best crime novel of the year so far . . . The joint authors . . . rage against misogyny and sexism. They decry child abuse and human trafficking. And, perhaps most importantly, they tell a brilliant story. . . . This novel is dark—jet-black dark . . . the authors’ biggest triumph, however, is to make 750 pages whizz past . . . terse, direct and compelling.”
—*The Metro* (London)

“The Swedish crime thriller tipped to make a killing . . . follows in the footsteps of Stieg Larsson and

Henning Mankell."
—Mark Lawson, *The Guardian*

"Dark, powerful, disturbing and creepy."
—Marcel Berlins, *The Times* (London)

"It's so determinedly and dementedly dark that it makes Stieg Larsson's Millennium trilogy seem like Midsomer Murders. . . . There is so much action in its 768 pages . . . ridiculously entertaining . . . such a compulsive page-turner."
—Matt Thorne, *Sunday Express*

"Bold, addictive, and timely."
—Madeline Phillips, *Chicago Review of Books*

"The next big thing . . . thoughtful . . . *The Crow Girl* is a pulse-pounding thriller. . . . With its heady mix of graphic violence, noirish thrills and social commentary, the book has all the hallmarks of Nordic noir and is a must-read for Scandinavian crime fiction enthusiasts. . . . An ambitious book . . . combining the thriller credentials of Jo Nesbø with the deep psychological turmoil of Karin Alvtegen. . . . A landmark achievement for its authors. It will definitely turn heads worldwide as a darkly delightful must-read."
—Jeremy Megraw, Crime Fiction Lover

"One-ups Stieg Larsson's *Dragon Tattoo* trilogy with its darkly violent indictment of the horrors supposedly 'civilized' humans are capable of perpetrating."
—Kerry Lengel and Randy Cordova, The Arizona *Republic*

"[A] gruesome, compelling and deeply unsettling debut thriller."
—Geoffrey Wansell, *The Daily Mail*

"[An] epic psychological thriller . . . [an] ultradark atmospheric suspense and a jolting examination of a cycle of abuse and revenge that spans generations. Like the novels of Karin Fossum, Stieg Larsson, and Camilla Lackberg, this award-winning U.S. debut builds a powerful indictment of society's willingness to turn a blind eye toward powerful, privileged abusers preying on the weak."
—Christine Tran, *Booklist* (starred review)

"Full of chills and spills . . . a smart, rewarding psychological thriller, with an emphasis of both of those genre terms."
—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Creepy is elevated to an art form in this tale of dysfunctional characters . . . but skillfully escalating suspense keeps you hooked all the way through. . . . Translated into beautifully economic prose by Neil Smith."
—Gill Oliver, *The Press and Journal*

"*The Crow Girl* is a raw, dark psychological thriller that's as long and tenebrous as a Scandinavian midwinter's night. . . . A complex, absorbing, disturbing tale."
—Ted Fox, *Otago Daily Times*

"Skillfully escalating suspense keeps you hooked through its 760-pages. This novel proves that what frightens us most are not acts of violence, but quiet horrors of the human psyche."

—Press Association

“Goodbye, Hannibal Lecter. That old cannibal is as psychologically interesting as a pet canary in comparison to Victoria Bergman.”
—*Arbetarbladet* (Sweden)

“[An] insanely creepy psycho-thriller that places the thin veneer of normality under the microscope.”
—*Elle* (Denmark)

“[*The Crow Girl*] is among the best I have read in Swedish in the genre. Perhaps even *the* best. . . . I wouldn’t be surprised if future writers will refer to this work in the same way in which so many Swedish and foreign writers always refer to Sjöwall & Wahlöö as their major source of inspiration.”
—*Gefle Dagblad* (Sweden)

“A profoundly frightening novel, a dark fairy tale that stands out in the Scandinavian crime fiction tradition. . . . This novel is a psychological noir that analyzes the human soul and digs deeply into human vices, repressed, subconscious perversions, and the inherent violence of the human nature.”
—Sololibri.net (Italy)

“A conclusion in which one elegantly gathers all the strings and unsolved issues . . . The truth is ruthless and so evil that I couldn’t have guessed it even in my wildest imagination . . . Erik Axl Sund have written a [novel] that readers of crime fiction cannot do without.”
—*Krimifan* (Denmark)

“[*The Crow Girl*] makes you breathless and confused as you chase across the pages, eager to find out more. It is a story that takes place in what Jung calls the collective unconscious . . . [An] insidiously shimmering masterpiece.”
—*DAST Magazine* (Sweden)

About the Author
ERIK AXL SUND is the pen name of Swedish author duo Jerker Eriksson and Håkan Axlander Sundquist.

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The house was over a hundred years old, and the solid stone walls were at least a meter thick, which meant that she probably didn’t need to insulate them, but she wanted to be absolutely sure.

To the left of the living room was a small corner room that she had been using as a combination workroom and guest bedroom.

Leading off of it were a small toilet and a fair--sized closet.

The room was perfect, with its single window and nothing but the unused attic above.

No more nonchalance, no more taking anything for granted.

Nothing would be left to chance. Fate was a dangerously unreliable accomplice. Sometimes your friend, but just as often an unpredictable enemy.

The dining table and chairs ended up shoved against one wall, which opened up a large space in the middle of the living room.

Then it was just a matter of waiting.

The first sheets of polystyrene arrived at ten o’clock, as arranged, carried in by four men. Three of them were in their fifties, but the fourth couldn’t have been more than twenty. His head was shaved and he wore a black T--shirt with two crossed Swedish flags on the chest, under the words “My Fatherland.” He had tattoos of spiderwebs on his elbows, and some sort of Stone Age design on his wrists.

When she was alone again she settled onto the sofa to plan her work. She decided to start with the floor, since that was the only thing that was likely to be a problem. The old couple downstairs might have been almost deaf, and she herself had never heard a single sound from them over the years, but it still felt like an important detail.

She went into the bedroom.

The little boy was still sound asleep.

It had been so odd when she met him on the local train. He had simply taken her hand, stood up, and obediently gone with her, without her having to say a single word.

She had acquired the pupil she had been seeking, the child she had never been able to have.

She put her hand to his forehead; his temperature had gone down. Then she felt his pulse.

Everything was as it should be.

She had used the right dose of morphine.

The workroom had a thick, white, wall--to--wall carpet that she had always thought ugly and unhygienic, even if it was nice to walk on. But right now it was ideal for her purpose.

Using a sharp knife, she cut up the polystyrene and stuck the pieces together with a thick layer of flooring adhesive.

The strong smell soon made her feel dizzy, and she had to open the window onto the street. It was triple--glazed, and the outer pane had an extra layer of soundproofing.

Fate as a friend.

Work on the floor took all day. Every so often she would go and check on the boy.

When the whole floor was done she covered all the cracks with silver duct tape.

She spent the following three days dealing with the walls. By Friday there was just the ceiling left, and that took a bit longer because she had to glue the polystyrene first, and then wedge the blocks up against the ceiling with planks.

While the glue was drying she nailed up some old blankets in place of the doors she had removed earlier. She glued four layers of polystyrene onto the door to the living room.

She covered the only window with an old sheet. Just to be sure, she used a double layer of insulation to block the window alcove. When the room was ready, she covered the floor and walls with a waterproof tarpaulin.

There was something meditative about the work, and when at last she looked at what she had accomplished she felt a sense of pride.

The room was further refined during the following week. She bought four small rubber wheels, a hasp, ten meters of electric cable, several meters of wooden skirting, a basic light fitting, and a box of light bulbs. She also had a set of dumbbells, some weights, and an exercise bike -delivered.

She took all the books out of one of the bookcases in the living room, tipped it onto its side, and screwed the wheels under each corner. She attached a length of skirting board to the front to conceal the fact that it could now be moved, then placed the bookcase in front of the door to the hidden room.

She screwed the bookcase to the door and tested it.

The door glided soundlessly open on its little rubber wheels. It all worked perfectly. She attached the hasp and shut the door, concealing the simple locking mechanism with a carefully positioned lamp.

Finally she put all the books back and fetched a thin mattress from one of the two beds in the bedroom.

That evening she carried the sleeping boy into his new home.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Wanda Woods:

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Bert Martinez:

Reading a publication can be one of a lot of pastime that everyone in the world loves. Do you like reading book therefore. There are a lot of reasons why people like it. First reading a reserve will give you a lot of new info. When you read a e-book you will get new information due to the fact book is one of many ways to share the information or even their idea. Second, studying a book will make you actually more imaginative. When you examining a book especially fictional works book the author will bring you to imagine the story how the character types do it anything. Third, you can share your knowledge to other folks. When you read this The Crow Girl: A novel, it is possible to tells your family, friends in addition to soon about yours reserve. Your knowledge can inspire the mediocre, make them reading a e-book.

Mary Diaz:

Reading a book being new life style in this season; every people loves to study a book. When you learn a book you can get a lots of benefit. When you read publications, you can improve your knowledge, since book has a lot of information upon it. The information that you will get depend on what types of book that you have read. If you would like get information about your study, you can read education books, but if you act like you want to entertain yourself you are able to a fiction books, this kind of us novel, comics, as well as soon. The The Crow Girl: A novel offer you a new experience in examining a book.

Sherry Clark:

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