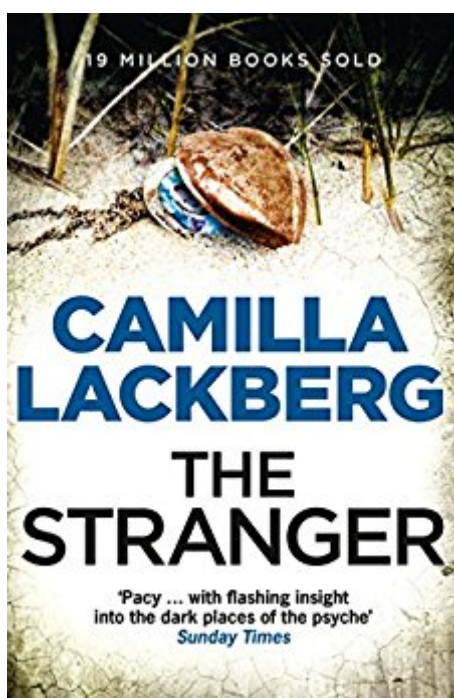


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The Stranger (Patrik Hedstrom And Erica Falck, Book 4) (Patrick Hedstrom And Erica Falck)



Synopsis

To avoid disappointment, please note this book was previously published under the title THE GALLOWS BIRD. Swedish crime sensation and No. 1 international bestseller, Camilla Lackberg's fourth psychological thriller - for fans of Stieg Larsson and Jo Nesbo. A local woman is killed in a tragic car crash. It's a strange accident - the victim's blood contains high alcohol levels, but she rarely drank a drop. The case marks the end of a quiet winter for Detective Patrik Hedstrom. Meanwhile, a reality TV show begins shooting in the town, and as cameras shadow the stars every move, tempers start to flare. When a drunken party ends with an unpopular contestant's murder, all eyes turn to the cast and crew - could there be a murderer among them? The ratings spike as the country tunes in to a real life murder mystery. Under the unforgiving media spotlight, Patrik tackles his toughest investigation yet.

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Customer Reviews

Fjällbacka, Sweden, the home of Detective Patrik Hedstrom, is about to receive it's first group of Reality TV stars. A local entrepreneur has arranged this group of unconventional people to live and be televised in his home town, expecting a lot of good PR and finances to make this an excellent adventure. At the same time Patrik has received a call about a body found in a car. Just as he is to go out the front door, his new policewoman shows up. She is pretty and blonde and very energetic, her goal is to become Chief in a large city. At the scene Patrik feels something is off but can't quite place it. A local woman, with a strong smell of alcohol is dead behind the wheel of the car. As the investigation moves on, Patrik's 'gut feeling' is born out. His boss, Mellberg, the man who does nothing, finds a new outside life and Patrik proceeds with his investigation the way it should be done. At home, Patrik and Erica are planning their wedding, or, at least, they are planning to be married. Erica's sister, Anna, and her two children live with them. Anna has had a tragic event take place and is deep in depression. The one unusual event that takes place that jars Anna out of her depression is so far fetched that it is not believable. As the Reality TV series amps up, many unpleasant events occur, and another body is discovered. Patrik is the man of the hour, and one of the best detectives in a series. He has a sixth sense when something is not right, and he goes to great lengths to follow up on every lead. He and Erica are the personification of a real couple, loving, supportive, and tired, all the time. A new baby, Maja has brightened their lives, and left them exhausted. A true representation of the life of new parents. Camilla Lackberg has given us another excellent novel. Lots of twists and turns, and ethical dilemmas to discuss. Recommended. prisrob 10-19-13

I did not like this book as much as the previous ones in the series by this author. The story line seemed to try a bit too hard to be trendy with the reality TV scenario. The characters that the author uses in the full series developed upon previous books but the new characters were a little simple and didn't have much depth. One of the new character's relationship story line was disturbing to say the least but as it relates to the rest of the characters it was just kinda boring. Unfortunately, because of this book, I have not rushed to order the next in the series like I had done after reading the prior ones.

It's not easy to see how Camilla Lackberg has become Sweden's bestselling native author and how her detective novels have proven so popular in translation. Her Fjällbacka series is peopled with complex and interesting people who grow from book to book, and each mystery is unique. A central cast of

characters appears in each, but it changes in natural ways. Nothing stands still in these novels. Camilla Läckberg has a well-developed understanding of the twists and turns in human development. If anything, however, her view of human nature is dark. The mood that prevails in the Fjällbacka series rarely reaches the levels of depression and despair found in Henning Mankell's Kurt Wallander books, or in Jo Nesbø's Harry Hole novels. But these are not happy stories. Human folly frequently comes to the surface here. Somehow, it all seems natural for a Swedish writer. In *The Stranger*, the fourth entry in the Fjällbacka series, detective Inspector Patrik Hedström and true-crime writer Ericka Falck are raising their months-old daughter, Maya. Or, rather, Ericka is doing all the work. Patrik's job regularly intrudes. To compound Ericka's problem, her wedding is imminent, and she's been unable to find the time to make any plans. To make matters even worse, her younger sister, Anna, and two young children have moved into the house. Anna is in a deep depression after killing her abusive husband in self-defense, leaving Ericka to raise all three children and, presumably, to make all the arrangements for the wedding. Then Patrik's sporadic help at home dries up almost completely as he is assigned a brutal and baffling case. A middle-aged woman stinking of alcohol has driven her car off the road and crashed into a tree, apparently either an accident or a suicide. Patrik isn't so sure, though. And it soon becomes clear that his doubts are well placed. Meanwhile, a tasteless reality TV show has set up shop in a small town bordering Fjällbacka. Goaded by the show's producer, six young people are indulging in a toxic mix of alcohol, hard drugs, and sex on camera. Then one of the six, a 19-year-old woman, is murdered, too. Suddenly, Patrik and his colleagues on the police force are strained by investigations into two murders. And one of them is making front-page news all across Sweden because it involves the country's top-rated reality show. Every one of the Fjällbacka novels is eventful to a fault. A large cast of characters requires both concentration and a good memory, as Läckberg constantly shifts perspective from one to another. In *The Stranger*, we become enmeshed in the lives of every one of Patrik's colleagues, from the hapless and stupid chief of police to the new female detective who joins the force. Patrik's mother, Ericka's sister, and her ex-lover all emerge in three dimensions as well. And throughout the book, in a brief reflective passage at the beginning of each chapter, we enter the mind of a man who will clearly emerge with a key role in the story. If your taste runs to intellectually challenging fare in detective fiction, you'll love the Fjällbacka series.

This mystery/police procedural is complicated, and is presented in a complicated fashion. An unknown character permeates the story as Patrik Hedström is the chief investigator in a case that started with vague clues that eventually came together to tell the story of a murderer's childhood – an extremely psychologically damaging childhood. The psychological theme of motherhood and its effects on both mothers and children – for good and for bad, is also a huge part of the story. And then there is an annoying aspect, from this reader's perspective. Obnoxious characters from a reality show that is being filmed in this town of Fjällbacka, in Tanum Municipality. Their contribution is mostly like a distraction, and an uninteresting one, at that. There must have been another way to write their part; but, I digress. And finally, some characters are a true testament to narcissism, obnoxiously or sadly so. And some are not bad, per se, just narcissistic. So there is a mix of joyful and tragic, happy and gloomy. Some characters work through their tragedy in a good way, some do not. Some you will worry about a little, others will pass by quickly. The pacing is a bit choppy. The murder is definitely a mystery that manages to cling to your attention.

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