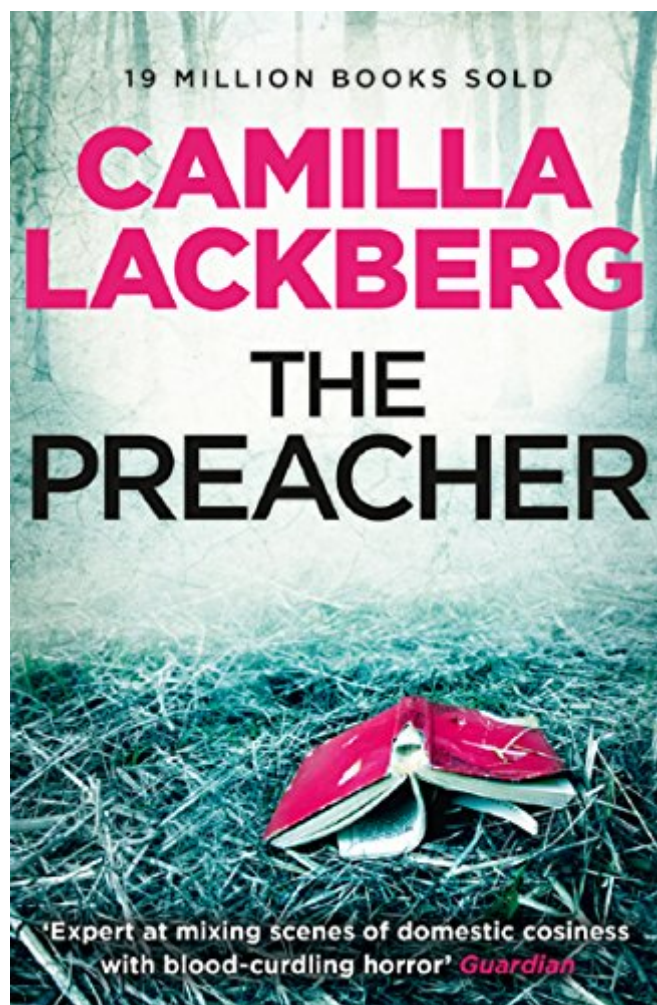


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The Preacher (Patrik Hedstrom And Erica Falck, Book 2)



Synopsis

A brilliant Scandi-crime thriller from international bestseller Camilla Lackberg, perfect for fans of Jo Nesbo, Henning Mankell and Stieg Larsson. Twenty years ago, two young women disappeared whilst holidaying in the peaceful Swedish resort of Fjällbacka. Now their remains have been discovered, along with those of a fresh victim, sending the town into shock. Local detective Patrik Hedström, whose girlfriend Erica is expecting their first child, has personal reasons for wanting to find the killer. And when another girl goes missing, his attention focuses on the Hults, a feuding clan of misfits, religious fanatics and criminals. Which of this family's dark secrets will provide the vital clue?

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Customer Reviews

It's a sweltering summer on the coast of Sweden, and Erica Falck is suffering mightily under the weight and anxiety of eight months of pregnancy. Her partner, Detective Patrik Lindstrom, has taken a vacation in hopes of supporting her as best he can at home. Then Patrik is called in to head up a deeply puzzling murder mystery. The nude body of a woman in her late teens has been discovered lying in the open in a spot frequented by tourists. Beneath her tortured corpse

lie two skeletons, each suspected to be the victim of a similar murder 24 years earlier. A classic setup for Swedish noir: a seemingly impossible case. First, the three women need to be identified. If Patrik and his colleagues in the police manage to determine that the two skeletons belong to the teenage women gone missing two decades ago, then a bigger challenge arises: how to link the latest murder with the earlier ones. Complicating the case is Patrik's position in the police force. He's in his mid-30s. Though the chief has placed him in charge of the investigation, he needs to rely on two much older detectives. One of them is nearing retirement and seems to care only about golf. The other is a bully who deeply resents having to report to Patrik; he's lazy, too, and has a tendency to cut corners at very disadvantageous times. And their boss, Chief Mellberg, is almost never willing to lift a finger in an investigation, though he's always eager to take credit with his superiors and the press once the case is solved. There are only two others in the small rural department whom Patrik can rely on: an ambitious younger detective who has great respect for Patrik, and the receptionist, who is far more intelligent than her job requires and whose role in the station has expanded accordingly. Family dynamics are the key to this thriller. Even before the three bodies have been positively identified, Patrik finds his suspicions centering on the Hult family. The family's patriarch, now deceased, was the Preacher of the book's title. He was a Bible-thumping fundamentalist minister who claimed that his young boys could heal with their hands. One of the boys grew up rejecting his father and the religion he preached. The other, much closer to his father, committed suicide shortly after the two young women went missing. He is widely suspected to have murdered them. Under the circumstances, the Preacher, Ephraim Hult, changed his will to favor Gabriel, the older brother, since the younger one had died. Now Gabriel and his family live in luxury in the villa the Preacher inherited from a grateful parishioner, while his brother's surviving family, his widow and two sons in their 30s, live in abject poverty. Understandably, currents of conflict run in several directions through this complicated family. Patrik's challenge is to navigate through these conflicts and find out the truth about the murders of the three young women. The Preacher is a superior example of Swedish noir. The characters are all too human, the plot complex and unpredictable, and the suspense builds steadily to a surprising conclusion. About the author Camilla Läckberg has reportedly earned more money from her books than any other native author in Swedish history. She is just 42 years old. Her first book, *The Ice Princess*, was published only in 2003 after she left a career as an economist. The Preacher, her 14th novel, is the second in her bestselling series of Swedish detective novels set in the small coastal town of Fjällbacka.

(3.5 stars) As readers of Camilla Lackberg's previous novel, *The Ice Princess*, have discovered, Fjällbacka, Sweden, a small fishing village in western Sweden, holds many secrets, some of them involving murder. Chief Investigator Patrik Englund is enjoying a much-needed vacation when he learns that a six-year-old has discovered a woman's naked and beaten body near a ravine. Underneath that body are the skeletons of two more women who disappeared in 1979. Autopsies prove that all three had been slowly tortured over the course of many days before merciful death interceded. Through flashbacks to 1979, when the first deaths occurred, the story develops into a murderous saga which may involve the Hult family, whose family patriarch, Ephraim Hult, was a highly successful evangelical preacher, and whose two sons Johannes and Gabriel had supernatural healing powers when they were children. Ephraim is now dead, and his sons are enemies as a result of Ephraim's will. The author spends as much time on the lives and motivations of her characters as she does on plot development, and when yet another young girl disappears from town, Patrik and his crew (which also has their own frictions and rivalries) realize they may have a chance to find her before she dies of the same tortures which were inflicted on the previous young women. Dozens of complications, which are revealed through the family backgrounds, psychology, and interactions of the police officers, the victims, and the various members of the Hult family keep the tension high as Lackberg involves the whole community in a wide assortment of clues and red herrings. Although the dialogue is often wooden and clichéd, the author's emphasis on characters and why they behave as they do give a depth to this novel that straight action-mysteries do not usually have. Flashbacks in italics inserted throughout the present day action reveal the thoughts of an imprisoned female victim from 1979, held in a cold dark place, as she tries to cope with another day of torture. Blackmail, revenge, an obsession with power, seething resentments spawned by injustice, and love and passion are all motivating forces which one sees here through the various characters. There are, however, many implausibilities in the plot. A number of characters, some of them repeating, add little to the story line except diversion. Erika's sister's problems, a big part of *The Ice Princess*, for example, continue here as a distraction, and the late addition of the character of Kennedy Karlsson, with his unusual background, seems to be a convenient way out of a messy plot issue. It is easy, however, to see why Camilla Lackberg is the best selling author in Swedish history, outselling even Stieg Larsson in number of books sold: She has written nine #1 sellers in Sweden, good escape novels (of which the *Ice Princess* is #1 and this is #2) that keep the reader entertained, involved in the action, and willingly "suspending disbelief" throughout. Two more of her pop novels are already being translated for the US market (by Steven

T. Murray, translator of the Stieg Larsson books and those by Henning Mankell), and one would hope that her later novels will show her increasing growth as a novelist. Mary Whipple
The Ice Princess: A Novel

It was pretty interesting and fast paced, but the way she wrote the cliffhangers for the different sections was annoying and seemed rather amateur. I.e., the detective gets a phone call with game changing news and rather than just ending the section with something like, "Patrick hung up and turned to Martin." So you know something's about to happen, she'd write something like, "Nothing could have prepared Patrick for what he was about to hear..." It just felt cheesy. Other than that every few chapters, the story was interesting and kept me guessing. The ending was rather implausible, but it's a crime thriller and suspending disbelief is what one must do when reading them. I'll read more by her.

boring. starts slow, gets slower and quite daft. The whole police force seems to be really incompetent and stumbles from one stupid mistake to the next. how those guys solve anything is actually a miracle which never gets really explained in the book. Also, Erica has no proper role in this book..she basically just feels sorry for herself and plays host to some really annoying relatives/friends.so, again: boring, predictable. Avoid this and read something from Jussi Adler. Or anything else....

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