



The Legacy

Yrsa Sigurðardóttir

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The first in a stunning new series from the author of *The Silence of the Sea*, winner of the 2015 Petrona Award for best Scandinavian Crime Novel.

The only person who might have the answers to a baffling murder case is the victim's seven-year-old daughter, found hiding in the room where her mother died. And she's not talking.

The Legacy is the first installment in a fantastic new series featuring the psychologist Freyja and the police officer Huldar.

Newly-promoted, out of his depth, detective Huldar turns to Freyja for her expertise with traumatized young people. Freyja, who distrusts the police in general and Huldar in particular, isn't best pleased. But she's determined to keep little Margret safe.

It may prove tricky. The killer is leaving them strange clues: warnings in text messages, sums scribbled on bits of paper, numbers broadcast on the radio. He's telling a dark and secret story—but can they crack the code? And if they do, will they be next?

The Legacy Details

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Author : Yrsa Sigurðardóttir

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From Reader Review The Legacy for online ebook

Viv JM says

I thoroughly enjoyed this slice of Nordic Noir. It was a gripping thriller with plenty of twists and turns, red herrings and imaginative murder weapons! I found the murder scenes themselves edge-of-seat frightening, but without being unnecessarily gory in their descriptions. The characters, including children and young people, were well written and believable. Yes, there were some amazing coincidences pulling the whole thing together but that is often par for the course to keep any mystery going.

This is the best thriller/mystery I have read in a long time and I am pleased to hear that the second book in the series has been translated into English as I will definitely be keen to read more from this author.

Leah says

A great start...

When a horrific murder is carried out, there's only one witness, 7-year-old Margrét, but she's too shocked to tell her tale. So it's decided to ask the Children's House to help out – a place that specialises in helping traumatised children. Meantime the police are searching through the murder victim's background to try to find any reason for her murder, but Elísa seems to have been normal in every possible way: happy marriage, a group of long-time friends, good at her job, and generally popular. And the next victim – because of course there's a next one – seems equally unlikely. Margrét's testimony seems to be the only hope...

This is the beginning of a new series for Yrsa Sigurdardóttir, based around Freyja, the psychologist in charge of the Children's House, and Huldar, the detective in charge of the case. I'm not sure if both will appear in future books or just Freya, but they definitely share the billing in this one. The book is written in third person, past tense throughout. The crime seems to have its roots in the past but we learn about it through events in the present. Personally, I'm thrilled to see a crime book returning to this more traditional format of storytelling – the single time period flows more naturally than chopping backwards and forwards, the third person allows the author to range more widely across the characters without being restricted by what a first person narrator can know, and the past tense is so much more natural and appropriate that I really can't understand why there's such an insistence on using present tense. (I have never once seen anyone complain about a book being written in the past tense, have you?) I'm hoping maybe trends are finally shifting again...

As often happens with the first of a series, this one starts off pretty slowly, with much filling in of the backgrounds of the main characters – perhaps a little too much. There are places where it drags a bit and I found myself wishing that the plot would move along a little faster. However, I like both Freyja and Huldar as lead characters. Neither of them are perfect, but nor are they angst-ridden weirdos or drunks. They are both professionals who take their jobs seriously. Freyja clearly cares deeply about the children who pass through her care, but she's professional enough not to get too emotionally involved to do her job well. This is Huldar's first time in charge of an investigation, and we see him do his best to keep his team working well together, even though they get progressively more snappy with each other as the pressure mounts and time passes with no real leads appearing.

My one real complaint is that the murders are particularly horrific, and though in fact Sigurdardóttir only

lingers over the detail of the first one, she writes so effectively that I found the images that she was putting in my head were too graphic for me, and unnecessarily so. The story is strong enough to stand without the gruesomeness, so that it felt pretty gratuitous to me.

The plotting, however, is great! Twisty, credible (apart from the murder methods), and full of some lovely misdirection – nope, I didn't get there until it was revealed at the end, but on looking back, the clues are all there, so no 'cheating'. It is a whodunit to a degree, but it's actually more about the why of the crime – once the motive is clear, so is the culprit. We see events unfold from various perspectives – Freyja and Huldar, of course, but also through the victims' eyes, as baffled as we are as to why this is happening to them. And then there's Karl, a young student and radio ham who has come across a strange station emitting strings of numbers that somehow seem to be connected to both him and the victims. The sections relating to Karl provide both the central mystery and some great characterisation of him and his friends, as they find themselves drawn into something they don't understand.

Sigurdardóttir's writing is as excellent as always, and the translation by Victoria Cribb is first class – had I not known it was a translation, I would have assumed it was written in English. The rather slow start and the too graphic murders meant that for most of the read it was heading for a solid four stars from me, but the strength of the last hundred pages or so lifted it – I found myself totally absorbed and the skill of the lead-up to the eventual solution both satisfied and impressed me. So I'm going with 4½, and will certainly be looking out for the next in what I hope will turn out to be a fine series, especially if Sigurdardóttir can rein in her imagination just a little on the gruesome front...

NB This book was provided for review by the publisher, Hodder & Stoughton.

www.fictionfanblog.wordpress.com

Carol says

If you either enjoy Nordic Noir or are looking for a fresh take on crime writing and weary of the same-old, same-old, consider *The Legacy*, the first in the Childrens House series by Yrsa Sigurdardottir.

First, a primer on Iceland for everyone not a resident of that country.

Iceland has an estimated population of 300,000 and one of the lowest crime rates in the world.

Take a glance at the following UN data of 2009 homicides:

? Brazil 43,909

? Denmark 47

? UK 724

? US 15,241

? Iceland 1

That's right. One. If you think that's stunning, consider that in 2008 there were zero.

Moreover, although there are approximately 90,000 guns in Iceland (for those 300,000 people), crimes in Iceland usually don't involve firearms. Also, there is virtually no economic disparity or class tension. 97% of Icelanders identify themselves as middle-class. One might well pity the writer who opts to write crime novels that take place in Iceland.

Enter Yrsa Sigurdardottir, perhaps best known for her series in which the central character is Thóra Gudmundsdóttir. Civil engineer by day. Crime/detective/suspense writer by night.

"[M]y job as an engineer gives me a particular perspective on the human experience and the way I depict it. Engineers confront the world through technology, numbers, energy, strength, budgets, and progress; they engage in meetings, face the pressure of schedules and deadlines, and so on. Other writers with different training will have insight into layers of the community that I am less interested in. My Iceland is thus different from that of Arnaldur Indriðason's; his viewpoint is that of a man, mine a woman's if nothing else. I do not often address the lower levels of society and by that I mean the so-called underworld of criminals. My murderers are regular people—something that I find more challenging, motivating, and credible. The local underworld here is not capable of interesting murderers; when these occur they are always committed under the influence and are mainly pathetically sad."

"Instead of drug-dealing and petty crimes, I prefer that the interaction between my characters leading up to ill deeds takes into account the closeness of people here. Where six degrees of separation applies to most of the world's inhabitants, in Iceland it is probably only one degree of separation. Or zero. This provides a great tool for crime and thriller writing as my plots tend to revolve around the minor and major clashes between people. What better than to have everyone know, or know of, everyone else? How hard would you fight to keep your ugliest secrets secret under such circumstances?"

Why focus on the author in my review? Because, on its face, there's nothing obviously special about the plot of The Legacy. What makes The Legacy a great novel and successful crime/suspense read is the way Sigurdardottir tells her story and her skill in telling it, which reflects the excerpted interview above.

In 1987, something horrific happens and, as a result, and three children are adopted by three different families. Flash forward to 2015 and a doctor's spouse and mother of 3 is murdered in her own Reykavik home. Unbeknownst to the killer, the young daughter, Margret, is under the bed during the murder and becomes a crucial witness for the police. The doctor/husband is out of town on business, and Margret is whisked to the Childrens House, for appropriate counseling and care. The director of the Childrens House is Frejya.

Detective Huldar, a nicotine-chewing, single, smart but inexperienced, junior detective, leads the investigation. Huldar recently met and gave a fake name to Frejya at a bar one evening, then snuck away from her apartment the following a.m. without a note, text or goodbye. This background makes for some additional tension throughout the novel, from the moment of Margret's initial interview about her observations on the night of the murder. Other related murders occur. There's a code none of the detectives can crack and no resources available to them to crack it.

It's soon apparent that the downside of having so few murders occur that a department lacks the resources or expertise to solve the ones that do. But then, Sigurdardottir creates a police department under stress, where the various players act authentically. Margret acts and communicates in an age-appropriate manner. Frejya's back story – a brother in jail and her house-sitting both his apartment and his dog, Molly, in a sketchy area of town – makes sense. The code is delivered by radio to a trio of down-on-their luck twenty-year old guys, one of whom, Karl, is particularly well-written and sympathetic. His friends act like twenty-year old guys, not props to flesh out the quantity of possible suspects. I didn't identify the killer until the same moment Huldar

identified [insert ambiguous pronoun here], which is a sign of success with any crime novel.

Note that, while the gore is minimal, the killing scenes are so effectively written that they place the reader in the head of each victim, with full knowledge that escape is impossible. Chilling is an understatement. It's the opposite of torture-porn, but ... still.. you may well want to skip ahead a few pages if you don't want to have those scenes embedded in your brain for some time. The suspense was palpable from the first moment Karl heard a sound in his basement and it remained unexplained. Odds are you'll stay up too late to read it, as I did.

As an aside, props to the publisher for inserting, upfront, a character and pronunciation list. Given the crowded cast of characters and my desire to learn Icelandic pronunciations, I found this list especially helpful.

Thanks to St. Martin's Press and Net Galley for providing an e-copy for my review.

Note: The second book in the series, *The Reckoning*, is scheduled to be released on March 22, 2018; and here's a link to a 2015 interview with Sigurdardottir.

http://scancan.net/sigurthardottir_1_...

Susan says

Although I am a great fan of Scandinavian crime fiction, for some reason I had not yet read anything by Yrsa Sigurdardottir. So, when I discovered she was starting a new series that I could read from the beginning, I thought it was an ideal to chance to read her at last and I am glad I did. We begin with events in 1987 and decisions involving some traumatised children.

The novel then turns to 2015 and the horrific murder of a woman, whose young daughter is the only witness. The crime is investigated by the newly promoted Detective Huldar and his partner, Rikhardur. Huldar suspects that his promotion could be something of a poisoned chalice if he fails to solve his first major inquiry and things get worse when he becomes uncomfortably reacquainted with Frejya, the director of the Children's House, who is familiar with Huldar from a previous meeting.

As the novel unfolds, we have a twisted killer and some very gruesome deaths; made somehow even more horrific by the use of mundane, household appliances... There are some excellent characters and the sense of menace is very well done. I thought this was a good introduction to a new series and I thought there were a good choice of possible suspects. I really need to go back and re-discover this author's past work as this is a great read for crime fans.

Alexandra (matobookalo) says

[μη ξεχν?με ?τι ξεκιν?ει με νιοθεσ?α και συνεχ?ζει με ?να μ?ρτυρα-παιδ? (hide spoiler)]

Paromjit says

Translated from Icelandic, this is the first in the Children's House series set in Reykavik. This is a murky, dark and twisted tale which begins in 1987 where after an unspeakable event, child experts make the controversial decision to separate three children into different adoption homes. This connects to what happens later down the years in 2015 when a mother is gruesomely murdered, discovered under her bed is her seven year old daughter, Margret, the only witness to the crime.

Freyja is director and psychologist at the Children's House which has the remit of meeting the needs of young, traumatised and abused children. They also facilitate contact between the child and the police with a view to protecting the child. Detectives Hulder and Rikhardur are the investigators on the case and needless to say, Margret is a difficult witness to pin down. Freyja distrusts the police, and Hulder in particular, with whom she has history. There are further deaths with the continuing strange use of ordinary household items as the murder weapons, and clues that include odd notes and coded messages on the radio. It is a complex case where the killer will do anything to evade justice and is a difficult figure to discern.

An atmosphere of menace pervades the book and there a number of potential suspects. In an intricately plotted story the tension and suspense is well maintained. The wide ranging characters are well developed and there is a strong focus on relationships in the novel. Very dark Scandi-Noir. Recommended read. Thanks to Hodder and Stoughton for an ARC.

Abby (Crime by the Book) says

Full review to come! This is one fantastic series launch from Yrsa Sigurdardottir - I will absolutely be coming back for more of her Children's House books. Layered, vivid, chilling, slow-burning yet tense - this is superb crime writing.

Kostas Papadatos says

Το καλ?τερο αστυνομικ? μυθιστ?ρημα που δι?βασα φ?τος. Ειδικ? οι τελευτα?ες διακ?σιες σελ?δες ?ταν ?σως οι καλ?τερες διακ?σιες τελευτα?ες σελ?δες που ?χω διαβ?σει ποτ??. Σ?γουρα η Sigurðardóttir θεωρε?ται πλ?ον μεγ?λο ?νομα του χ?ρου και δικα?ως αφο? ε?ναι πεντασ?λλαβο. Μου ?ρεσε περισσ?τερο και απ? το προηγο?μενο βιβλ?ο της.

sue says

This is the first book in the start of a new crime series which I devoured page by page.
I'd left this book at home, thought I had it in my bag when I knew I'd be spending some time in the car and sitting for appointments at the hospital (nothing serious)
I was so fed up as I couldn't wait to jump back into this plot.

A ten year old daughter becomes the only witness to a terrible shocking murder.

Treading carefully the Police need to bring in some expertise. The Children's house.

Then more people die.

There somehow links together a pattern by texts, strange weird messages and numbers.

There are so many twists in this book you will get dizzy.
So many turns that you will trip over yourself coming back.

It's such a huge well written book that kept me riveted. Yes riveted to it. I was stuck like glue.
That's why I couldn't wait to get home to finish it and but at the same time. I didn't want it to end.

My thanks to Veronique at Hodder for my copy.

Laura/Mystery in Minutes says

Mystery in Minutes Overall Rating: 4.5/5

To read the complete review, please visit <https://www.mysteryinminutes.com/reviews/the-legacy/>....

Voted Best Crime Novel of the Year by the Icelandic Crime Authors' Association, The Legacy is the first installment in the Children's House series, written by "Iceland's Queen of Crime", Yrsa Sigurdardottir. The Legacy is an intelligent, slow-burning, character-focused police procedural that methodically reveals layer upon layer of ingenious plotting involving cryptic, coded messages, dark family secrets, and some of the most creatively horrific methods of dispatching victims this reviewer has ever read. Ms. Sigurdardottir can certainly bring the frightening imagery with the best of them (Mo Hayder, have you met Yrsa Sigurdardottir?), and the very first chapter holds the reader in a vise grip as it describes, from the victim's POV, the petrifying minutes leading up to the killing. The novel centers around this first murder of a young mother within her home. One of her three children happens to be present, in hiding, during the mother's murder, and may "hold the key" to identifying the murderer, and solving the mystery. Can child psychologist Freyja, and police officer Huldar (for whom this is his first time leading a big case) win this traumatized, young child's trust, and sensitively persuade her to open up about the nightmarish things that she heard and saw that fateful night? And can Freyja and Huldar protect the only witness from a truly terrifying killer who is still at large? For the answers to these questions, wrapped up in a twist you may never see coming, make The Legacy part of your crime fiction reading list!

Liz Barnsley says

Another banging good crime thriller from Yrsa Siguraordottir here. Love that it will be a new series. I was very fond of all the characters but boy it is not for the faint hearted with reference to the death scenes!

shudder

Brilliant.

Full review later at some point.

Dimitris Passas says

Ελαφρ?ς κατ?τερο των προσδοκι?ν μου το πρ?το μ?ρος της ν?ας σειρ?ς βιβλ?ων της αγαπημ?νης μου ισλανδ?ς συγγραφ?ως, η οπο?α φα?νεται να στρ?φεται πρ?ς τα πι? ??καθαρ??? police procedural μυθιστορ?ματα. Το ιδι?ιτερο στοιχε?ο που ξεχ?ριζε την Sigurðardóttir απ? τους υπ?λοιπους, σκανδιναβο?ς και μη, crime συγγραφε?ς που δεν ?ταν ?λλο απ? την καλλι?ργεια της υπ?νοιας ?σον αφορ? την υπερ-φυσικ? παρ?μβαση στη δρ?ση και την πλοκ? των ιστορι?ν της, σε αυτ? το βιβλ?ο απουσι?ζει πλ?ρως. Παρακολουθο?με β?μα-β?μα τις προσπ?θειες της αστυνομ?ας του P?ικιαβικ σε συνεργασ?α με την υπηρεσ?α παιδικ?ς προστασ?ας (Children House) να συλλ?βει ?ναν καθ? ?ξιν δολοφ?νο, ο οπο?ος σκοτ?νει με πραγματικ? φρικτ? τρ?πο τα θ?ματα του. Το μ?νο στοιχε?ο που δ?νει η συγγραφ?ας στον αναγν?στη ε?ναι η εισαγωγ? του βιβλ?ου στην οπο?α παρακολουθο?με τη συζ?ηση των αρμ?διων φορ?ων σχετικ? με την υιοθεσ?α τρι?ν παιδι?ν που ?ζησαν μια ανε?πωτη οικογενειακ? τραγωδ?α. Μ?νο ?ταν φτ?νουμε στο τ?λος του βιβλ?ου καταλαβα?νουμε πως σχετ?ζεται η υιοθεσ?α με τους φ?νους που διαπρ?πονται σχεδ?ν 25 χρ?νια αργ?τερα και φτ?νουμε σε ?να φιν?λε, το οπο?ο σ?γουρα δεν ε?ναι απογοητευτικ? μεν ?λλα, κατ? την προσωπικ? μου ?ποψη, δεν αξιοποιε? πλ?ρως τη συναισθηματικ? δυναμικ? της ιστορ?ας και αποτυγχ?νει να φτ?σει στην συγκινησιακ? κορ?φωση που θα περ?μενα. Παρ?λα αυτ? συστ?νεται ανεπιφ?λακτα στους αναγν?στες που ενδιαφ?ρονται για ποιοτικα ψυχολογικ? thrillers, εν? οι φανατικο? της Sigurðardóttir σ?γουρα θα το εκτιμ?σουν δε?ντως.

Karen Whittard says

Thank you to Netgalley, Publisher and Yrsa Sigurðardóttir for the opportunity to read this book for an honest review.

I voluntarily reviewed an Advance reader copy of this book.

You can find my review on both Goodreads and Amazon. On Goodreads from today under Karen Whittard and on Amazon under k.e.whittard from publication date.

This is an extremely dark book. Not to be read by the faint hearted. Which luckily isn't me. It involves a twisted killer, gruesome deaths and the horrific use of mundane household items. There are some excellent characters in this book. A wonderful creepy feel to the book. Which I feel is a great opening to this series. There is a whodunnit feel to this book which will continue to keep you guessing at what is going on.

I think you will enjoy this book if you like creepy crime thriller books.

Happy reading everyone

Mary Book-itsa says

Εχοντας διαβασει την εκδικηση της ιδιας το οποιο ειναι ενα απο τα αγαπημενα μου βιβλια πηρα με μεγαλη χαρα στα χερια μου το Dna. Βεβαια δεν μοιαζουν καθως το πρωτο ειναι μεταφυσικο

θρ?λλερ. Το βιβλίο ξεκιναει με εναν προλογο που τοποθετειται χρονικα στο 1987. Μετα εχοντας φτασει στο 2015 η αρχη γινεται πολυ δυναμικα με τον πρωτο φ?νο. Λιγο μετα ακολουθει και ενας δευτερος. Εχουν γινει και οι δυο με εναν εξαιρετικα περιεργο τροπο ο οποιος με εκανε σε ολο το βιβλιο να αναρωτιεμαι γιατι. Η αστυνομια μου φανηκε ελαφρως υποτονικη εως αχρωμη αλλα εσωσε την κατασταση η ψυχολογος Φρεγια την οποια και συμπαθησα πολυ. Για σχεδον 300 σελιδες και κατι δεν μπορεσα να κανω καμια απολυτως συνδεση της ιστοριας που περιγραφεται στον προλογο με το τωρα. Οι εκτενεις περιγραφες μου εκαναν τα νευρα κροσσια και μονο λιγο πριν το τελος καταλαβα το σκοπο που εξυπηρετουσαν. Αφου το στριφογυρισε οσο δεν παιρνει τελικα μας αποκαλυψε τον δολοφονο τουσ μπαμ μπαμ, που μολις το διαβασα εκατσα και κοιτουσα την σελιδα κανα 5αλεπτο. Ειλικρινα δεν πηγε το μυαλο μου ουτε καν στο ελαχιστο, παρολο που εχω διαβασει μια ολοκληρη βιβλιοθηκη αστυνομικα εως τωρα. Ο δολοφ?νος δοθηκε μονο οταν το αποφασισε η Yrsa. Η γραφη της ειναι καλη και οι φονοι αρκετα ευφανταστοι. Εχω καταληξει πως οι Ισλανδοι στην αστυνομικη λογοτεχνια μου αρ?σουν. Επισης βρηκα σωστη τη μεταφραση και χαιρομαι που δεν υπηρχαν επαναλβανομενες φρασεις κλισε οπως στα περισσοτερα αστυνομικα. Οι τελευταιες 200 σελιδες εφυγαν νερακι. Και ?σωσαν ολο το υπ?λοιπο στην κυριολεξια. Το ενα αστερακι κοπηκε γιατι επαιξε με τη υπομονη μεχρι να δεθει η πλοκη μεταξυ παρελθ?ντος και παρ?ντος αλλα θα μπορουσα να της δωσω ακομα μισο μονο για τις 2 τελευταιες σελιδες που τις λατρεψα.

Blair says

I don't know if the author is just insanely prolific or whether there's a huge backlog of her work to translate into English, but it seems there's a new Yrsa Sigurðardóttir book every nine months or so, and here, like clockwork, is the latest. *The Legacy* is the first in the Children's House series. It introduces the central characters of Freyja, director of the Children's House refuge for traumatised and abused children, and police detective Huldar.

The Legacy has one of those devilishly clever prologues: set in 1987, it briefly depicts three young siblings being split up and sent to adoptive families. We know nothing about them, except that their background is so disturbing that a) the adults present can barely bring themselves to talk about it, and b) it's deemed best to separate the children before their reliance on each other becomes unhealthy. Flash forward to 2015, and the gruesome murder of a young mother – with her seven-year-old daughter the only witness – appears to have nothing to do with the opening scene. But, of course, they *must* be connected. If the opening hooks you, the compulsion to understand how 1987 and 2015 join up is what will drive you through almost 500 pages at speed.

This being a series, it also needs a thread that will be carried through to subsequent books, and here it comes in the shape of an unnecessarily complex set of entanglements between Huldar and Freyja, no doubt setting up what will eventually become a relationship. Huldar has also had an ill-advised hook-up with a colleague's wife, the consequences of which slowly unravel over the course of the book. Although some of this is more relevant to the plot of *The Legacy* than it first appears, most of it is pretty boring to read about. Whenever the narrative dwelled on either character's domestic situation, I longed for a return to the crime plot.

That said, the grotesque murders are the worst of both worlds: too obviously invented to convince, but more horrible than I want to read about in a novel. And when the murderer's motive is revealed, it turns out to be *ridiculously* convoluted. While I'll grudgingly admit the solution does tie everything together – including that prologue – it's so utterly unguessable that I found it frustrating anyway: not so much an 'ah, I see –

ingenious!' lightbulb moment as a 'what, really?!" throw-the-book-aside-in-annoyance moment.

I wonder if the author feels more wedded to crime conventions when writing 'series' books than she does writing standalones, as without exception I have found the latter to be more original, more effective and superior in just about every way. I've also noticed that she always seems to weave at the very least a suggestion of some ghostly or supernatural element into her one-off books, something that's conspicuous by its absence here. I missed that dark, intriguing edge; the deaths in *The Legacy* aren't frightening, just horrible, and the plot is more than a little clunky. I will continue to read standalone novels from Sigurðardóttir, but I don't think the Children's House series is for me.

I received an advance review copy of The Legacy from the publisher through NetGalley.

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