



Snowblind

Ragnar Jónasson

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Siglufjörður: an idyllically quiet fishing village in Northern Iceland, where no one locks their doors--accessible only via a small mountain tunnel.

Ari Thór Arason: a rookie policeman on his first posting, far from his girlfriend in Reykjavik--with a past that he's unable to leave behind.

When a young woman is found lying half-naked in the snow, bleeding and unconscious, and a highly esteemed, elderly writer falls to his death in the local theater, Ari is dragged straight into the heart of a community where he can trust no one, and secrets and lies are a way of life.

Past plays tag with the present and the claustrophobic tension mounts, while Ari is thrust ever deeper into his own darkness--blinded by snow, and with a killer on the loose.

Taut and terrifying, *Snowblind* is a startling debut from an extraordinary new talent.

Snowblind Details

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Author : Ragnar Jónasson

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Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Thriller, Scandinavian Lite..., Nordic Noir

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From Reader Review Snowblind for online ebook

Paula Kalin says

Here is a scandi-nordic crime series worth reading! Snowblind by Ragnar Jónasson is the first novel in his Dark Iceland series. The setting is fantastic. The novel takes place in Northern Iceland in an old fishing village that only has one mountain pass to get into. During the winter avalanches happen on a regular basis and nobody can get in or out of the town, causing panic for some of it's inhabitants, mostly those newly arrived. What's really interesting is that everyone lives in complete darkness 24 hours of the day due to the mountains hiding the sun until summer approaches and then the scene is heavenly.

Ari Thor, newly graduated from police academy, takes a job on a whim in this isolated village after the retirement of one of their officers. Jónasson really digs in giving us a terrific background for Ari Thor both past and present. Snowblind starts out slow, but builds up pace as the book progresses and then it explodes! For a supposed town where nothing happens Ari Thor uncovers a recent murder as well as one that happened years ago. Lots of interesting twists!

If you are on the lookout for a new crime series Dark Iceland won't disappoint. It's a fast read that I finished in 2 days.

Thanks to Miriam for recommending the series after reading #5.

4 out of 5 stars

Chelsea Humphrey says

Oh boy, I officially have a major book boyfriend crush on Ari Thor (along with a large gaggle of other women no doubt). What started out as a slow burning noir suddenly turned into a twisty, fast-paced mystery around the half way point. This is technically listed as book #2 in the Dark Iceland series, but for those of us who are reading in english rather than icelandic, this is our beginning. The first third of the book does a nice job setting up our story; we get a good amount of the current state of affairs in our lead character's life while also getting a bit of his history. We're given just enough to keep us hooked on Ari Thor but left wanting more that will hopefully be revealed in further books.

Again, I think we all became a little obsessed with Ari Thor from the beginning. He's so down to earth and cute in that clueless young man way. I did feel the pacing was a bit steady until we are introduced to the crimes described in the summary, but quickly picked up after that. What I had assumed would be a cozy murder mystery soon turned into so much more! I wasn't expecting the major twists, and I think that is what catapulted this into such a great read. I love how the book is structured; we have chapters alternating from present time to a crime that has or will happen at some point, and as the reader we are left in the dark until that beautiful moment with Ragnar brings all the pieces together and connects every detail to a perfect T. I cannot express enough how fantastic it felt to be blown away by so many twists in a single book; as a reader of many mysteries and suspenseful thrillers, it's getting harder to find stories that feel unique and fresh. I can see this being considered a classic police procedural that is talked about for many years to come.

Overall, this was a well-written crime novel that is equal parts thorough mystery and breathtaking suspense.

The fact that this book is such a compelling, character driven read only adds to the appeal, and the setting itself is like another main character adding massive amounts of intrigue and darkness. This book has only fueled my desire to visit Iceland more, and I'm sure the remainder of the series will increase this passion as well. If you are a fan of nordic noir that is an excellent example of the crime fiction genre, look no further. This series needs to go on your must read list for 2017.

While I received my arc from Minotaur Books (thank you so much!), I have to also thank Karen Sullivan over at Orenda for putting this one on my radar (and also offering to send me a few others in the series to keep me appetite satiated); without her I'd be missing out on so many fantastic books that I wouldn't be able to get my hands on otherwise!

Beverly says

I enjoyed this mystery very much, I read it in 2 days and I usually don't read that fast unless its really engaging. The atmosphere of northern Iceland, the cold, the darkness, the continuous snow, is recreated completely and you feel the main character's claustrophobia and isolation so strongly., that I wish I could give it 4 stars, but the writing is a bit like Hemingway's short choppy sentences, but unlike in Hemingway there is not any depth revealed.

We never really get inside the young policeman's head, except in the most simplistic manner, he misses his fiance and is confused about a crush he develops on a girl from the town. He is also supposedly deeply touched and molded by the loss of his parents when he was a teenager, but this too is not filled in by the author. How has this made him who he is? Maybe it will be revealed in the next book in the series.

Mackey St says

I will preface this by saying that I adore Nordic/Scandinavian mysteries. I like that they are slow, methodical, exacting and every single detail is important. I love that when I'm finished reading them I have learned something that I didn't know before either about the location, the people, an ethnicity, something. They aren't just another "I killed a woman with a gun, I'm a sick bastard," book.

That said, this is the American debut of the international bestselling author Ragnar Jonasson's mystery. I've waited forever to read it and it did not disappoint. It started out slowly as we learned who everyone was and the ending could have been wrapped up more quickly but from what I understand his books only get better from here. It was great to read a real police procedural once again.

Liz Barnsley says

Snowblind is one of the most beautifully written crime novels I have ever come across – the depth of character, the truly gorgeous descriptive prose that puts you right on the spot – despite the claustrophobic quality of the world that Ari finds himself in I fell utterly in love with Iceland simply through the words on the page.

Story is everything though really, no matter the book you are reading – and Ragnar Jonasson has written one

hell of a story – dark, unrelenting in places, magically constructed to ramp up the tension, all the while keeping it completely character driven and authentic.

I adored Ari as a character. He is so beautifully normal yet full of depth, depicted in a way that just keeps you with him all the way. I loved how he was dropped into this small tightly knit community, leaving his girlfriend behind (that relationship was very compelling) and slowly realised how isolated it and he could be. The author gives a perfect sense of a place where everyone knows everyone else and yet somehow secrets are still buried just beneath the surface, it was endlessly fascinating. I think I would have been fascinated even without the crime element.

The mystery is the icing on the cake really – and I don't want to give anything away but it is truly compelling, very unexpected at times and cleverly done.

Overall this was a marvel of a read. I adored it with the true passion of a reader – it has everything you could possibly want if you want to be engaged, slightly haunted, completely entertained and I really cannot recommend it highly enough. 5 big shiny stars and some puppies for this one. Heavenly writing, stonking good story and characters that will stay with you long after putting it aside.

Christine says

Snowblind has been widely acclaimed this year. As soon as I started reading, I could see why so many readers had fallen in love with it. Snowblind is the first in a series of books by Icelandic author Ragnar Jonnason. It has been translated into English by Quentin Bates.

Snowblind takes us into a small isolated community in the north of Iceland, a place where everyone knows everyone and it takes forever for newcomers to integrate. Into this peaceful and dull environment, we follow Ari Thor a young police officer in his first post. This is a quiet town, where the police have very little to do. A woman is found half naked and bleeding out in the snow. An elderly esteemed author is discovered dead at the local amateur dramatics society. The peace is shattered. Can Ari Thor track down a killer?

One of the things that hits you about this book is the beautiful chilly and increasingly close atmosphere. There is an overwhelming sense of claustrophobia. Ari Thor feels it and it eats away at him. As the Winter season becomes harsher and the tiny town is cut off from civilisation by snow, this only grows. We know that evil lurks, within this small community; linked to the amateur dramatics society. The tension escalates, as we fall under its spell.

There is a lovely cast of diverse characters, as well as the shining lead in young Ari Thor. From Palmi, the playwright to Tomas, the chief of police to the Anna, the young future teacher, we soon start to get a handle on this community and who is who. There are plenty of suspects in this Icelandic whodunnit. It is a place of hidden secrets, jealousies and reasons for a spot of murder.

I am utterly relieved to learn that this is the start of a series. We need to know what happens next to Ari Thor, our intrepid young police officer. There is really something special about Snowblind, with its mix of classic crime and Scandinavian quirkiness. It is easy to get into, highly atmospheric and incredibly exciting. It is an exceptional translation, without any clunky English. Look out for this one!!! Recommended.

Brenda says

This book is the author's first to be translated into English. It was interesting, although mostly plodding along slowly. Much was made of the darkness, the snowy weather, and claustrophobia created by the surrounding mountains, but I didn't really feel it. I looked up Siglufjörður, Iceland on Apple Maps and it is a very isolated, small village near the Arctic Circle. That helped the atmosphere of the book. The crimes can be found in any old crime novel, but how they are handled in this book are kind of lackadaisical. It's mostly the rookie cop doing the investigating and putting all the pieces together, both current and from the past. A second book, Nightblind, is due this summer and I will eventually read it.

Lynn says

I really enjoyed the protagonist's introduction as a new police officer in a tiny town in the arctic circle. I caught the feeling of claustrophobia in the heavy snowfall and isolation....and ended up finishing the book outside in the sunshine this afternoon. I liked the characters and the setting and I'd love to read the follow-up set in this town during Spring. Hopefully it will be released in the U.S. soon.

Selene says

Genre: Mystery

Pace: Relaxed to slow

The first 70% of this story was so relaxed and slow that I kept falling asleep less than an hour into reading this story *each time*. I also lost count after *ten* of *how many POVs* there were. I didn't mind the relaxed pace of the story but some areas felt too draggy and that's probably why this story acted *more like a sleep aid* as opposed to a more thrilling crime novel.

The upside? There wasn't a million flashback scenes and the story was told from the beginning--none of that fancy stuff where the story starts from the middle or end and works itself back towards the beginning.

? Overall, an okay read but it's the final 30% of this story that had me on high alert and was the most enjoyable.

Janet says

I was seeing Snowblind everywhere. All over social media it was being talked about and I was kindly given an actual copy by the publisher which totally made my day so a huge thanks for that.

The book reads like an old fashioned whodunnit with great characterisations, twisty plotting that doesn't give much away and great place settings. It tells the story of Ari Thor, a newly qualified police officer, who accepts a position of work in a remote part of Iceland, Siglufjörður. A small fishing town with inhabitants

that have been there for generations so everyone pretty much knows everyone. Ari comes along and is immediately known as the outsider, joining what is a very small police presence within the town.

A woman's body is found in the snow. A halo of red blood seeping through the cold whiteness she looks as if she's been carefully positioned there. An elderly and highly successful author is also found dead at a local amateur dramatic society theatre. Are these murders linked? What follows is a fairly slow paced telling of discovery as the story is spun out. Almost all characters present are given a backstory which gives the story real depth and the town itself takes centre stage as we get a real feel of the cold, remoteness and sheer beauty of Siglufjördur. I was really intrigued by the place and found myself looking up the town on the internet to be able to actually visualise the mountains and lakes. Stunning.

The book is slow in parts but overall it works really well and the last portion of the book had my heart beating so fast I thought it was going to beat itself out of my chest! The ending I didn't see coming at all and thought that was very well done.

In short, I really enjoyed Snowblind, mostly for the character development and placement but I also developed a soft spot for Ari Thor so was pleased to hear there will be more from this young officer.

Recommended.

Diane S ? says

It is so incredibly cold here, near zero or below for several days. The perfect time to settle in with this story. Although here we are without snow. When newly commissioned police officer, Ari Thor grabs the job in Siglufjörður, the only offer on the table, his live in girlfriend refuses to leave Reykjavik. He sets out alone hoping to maintain a long distance relationship until she changes her mind.

He arrives in the small town, a town enclosed by mountains, people who all know each other, finds himself very much and outsider. At first it looks like this will be nothing more than a community service posting, but this will change when an elderly, somewhat famous past author is found dead at the foot of the stairs at the drama society.

This is a very slow paced, atmospheric story, but we get to really know the characters, the flavor of the town. Feel the claustrophobia of the cold, the snow, see into others lives, their secrets and fears. Not a thrill ride but a slow unraveling that keeps pace with the unraveling weather. Once I got used to the slower pace, I settled in nicely with this well written novel, enjoyed the multifaceted characters and was constantly surprised by the revelations. A good solid read.

ARC from Netgalley.

Sue says

After reading Blackout, the second of the Dark Iceland series published in the U.S., courtesy of NetGalley, I felt compelled to read Snowblind, the book that introduces us to Ari Thor Aranson as he first comes to begin his police career in the northern Iceland village of Siglufjördur. In this small town, where fish used to

be the way of life, the winter snow is a living, breathing presence that impacts function, emotion and even crime and solution.

The centerpiece of the story and the town is a play about to be performed by the local Dramatic Society. There are personalities galore at the rehearsals leading up to opening night but shortly before that night there is a fatal accident. A well known community member dies in an accidental fall. But Ari Thor questions--was it an accident?

Then there is another suspicious death. This one ratchets up the tension in the town and the story. There are many twists and turns as Ari Thor and Tomas, his boss, work to unravel what has and is happening in the village. Ari Thor has to battle his impulsive nature which can lead to "rookie" errors or miscalculations and his sense of claustrophobia and being overwhelmed by the closely surrounding mountains and constant snow.

Using the geography and an interesting mix of characters, who all seem to have something unexpected beneath the surface, Jonasson has created a captivating story. Recommended.

Laura Rash says

Honestly I had hoped this book would live up to all the hype & it certainly did and then some! Written so fluidly you can turn the pages quickly & get immersed into Iceland within a few pages. A twist on a good old fashioned hometown mystery that was highly entertaining. I'm kind of glad I'm late to the game on this series bc now I can binge read them all at once!

Thanks to Minotaur books for this copy in exchange for review!

Emma says

An incredible mix of Scandi-noir and classic detective fiction.

The young policeman, Ari Thor, is a wonderful creation: intelligent, earnest, impulsive, unsure, self-reflective, troubled. So human in his thinking and behaviour. Jonasson's decision to make Ari Thor a newbie, both as a detective and member of the town, gives the character a fresh perspective, quite unlike most of the main protagonists in contemporary crime fiction. He is in charge of nothing and is frequently overruled in his opinions by the more experienced Thomas, not always to good effect. His role as 'outsider' is both an asset and a curse; his lack of knowledge about the inhabitants of Siglufjordur allows him to see them more clearly, without the lens of past experience, yet that same status accords him less authority, further exacerbated by being newly qualified and youthful. He makes mistakes. His idealism is frustrated. He must come to understand that they are not always happy-ever-afters.

Ari Thor is just one example of the exemplary characterisation employed by Jonasson. Each and every one of the people the author reveals to the reader is fully realised, their backstories utilised to provide a basis for the choices they are making in the present day. They become more than caricatures of 'the cheating partner' or 'the man with a troubled past' to people with messy lives, real motivations and flaws, each living their own private, internal lives within the small town atmosphere of Siglufjordur. They show the truth in the idea that you never really know the people around you, that we all hold secrets. Of course, the depth given to each

individual also makes it harder to guess whodunnit...

The weather plays one of the most significant character roles in the novel. The storm of snow and cold underlies every scene of the book, either hovering in the background or repeatedly forming part of the character (and reader) experience. Alongside the remote setting of the town, it deepens the sense of isolation from the rest of society. The town, and the people in it, are apart, by accident or by design. It is no wonder that the avalanche that blocks the only road back to 'elsewhere' only increases the sense of claustrophobia in Ari Thor, unsettling even the long-termers when things in the town seem to be taking a sinister turn. The close knit community undergoes a transformation when it is trapped together, and when someone within their ranks could well be a killer...

All in all, I loved it and am very much looking forward to the next in the series *Nightblind*. Thankfully, I have very little time to wait. Anything else on my TBR will be shoved aside for this, it's a perfect winter read. The howling wind outside, the wintery storm within the pages, and a nice cup of tea to finish it all off. Heaven.

Jeffrey Keeten says

"She lay in the middle of the garden, like a snow angel.

From a distance she appeared peaceful.

Her arms splayed from her sides. She wore a faded pair of jeans and was naked from the waist up, her long hair around her like a coronet in the snow; snow that shouldn't be that shade of red.

A pool of blood had formed around her.

Her skin seemed to be paling alarmingly fast, taking on the colour of marble, as if in response to the striking crimson that surrounded her.

Her lips were blue. Her shallow breath came fast.

She seemed to be looking up into the dark heavens.

Then her eyes snapped shut."

One of the more intriguing exchanges in a movie full of great lines is the interaction between Griffin Mills, played by Tim Robbins, and June Gudmundsdottir, played by Greta Scacchi, in one of my favorite movies, *The Player*.

""It's very green, actually.'

'Really?'

'I thought that was Greenland.'

‘No, Greenland's very icy. Iceland's very green. They switched names to fool the Vikings who tried to steal their women.’”

I'm always perking up my ears about anything regarding Iceland. There is something so compelling about an island with so much snow and so much volcanic heat beneath. The first Icelandic author I found was Arnaldur Indriðason and have enjoyed his books immensely. Where Indriðason is more gritty and hardboiled, Ragnar Jonasson is definitely more in the classic British mystery vein that Dame Agatha Christie dominated for most of her career. Jonasson has translated 14 Christie books into Icelandic, and he was certainly doing more than just translating. He was learning the craft.

Ari Thor quit his studies in theology and philosophy to take up the study of law enforcement. An odd move that was baffling to most of his friends. He has a girlfriend named Kristin who is studying to become a doctor. She has just moved into his flat in Reykjavik when he gets an offer of a job in Siglufjörður, which is clear on the opposite side of the island in the northern part of the country. A town that frequently becomes snowed in for the winter.

He takes the job without talking to his pretty, committed, soon to be a doctor making lots of money girlfriend. It seems hasty, as if he really does want to escape to some remote area to get away from....

Siglufjörður, Iceland

Siglufjörður is like most small towns all over the world. He will never be accepted as one of them. The best he can hope for is that they learn to like him and tolerate him.

It snows so much that it becomes oppressive. He can't stop thinking about the snow, even when he is sleeping. He needs reassurance from Kristin even more, but she has become more distant and evasive as the pressure of her classes takes more and more of her time. Ari is not happy, but really there is no one to blame but himself.

And then the national treasure of Iceland, Hrólfur Kristjánsson, the writer of the masterpiece *North of the Hills*, falls down a flight of stairs and dies. He was old. He had been drinking. He was agitated by an argument with one of his friends.

A tragic accident for sure. Well, maybe.

Then a young woman is brutally attacked and left in the snow to die. Suddenly, this small community has become very interesting. Ari sifts through the convoluted truths and, in the process, learns more about all the people surrounding the events than he really wants to know. The victims prove the most intriguing of all. What really happened to that woman and why? And who really is Hrólfur? As the layers are peeled back, the new information creates more questions than answers.

Now Ari is no Hercule Poirot. The little gray cells are not fully developed. Nor is he a Miss Marple, but he makes up for his lack of experience with determination and a tenacious desire to learn the truth, no matter how many broken threads of inquiry he encounters along the way. To make things more complicated for him, he is starting to have feelings for a girl there in Siglufjörður named Ugla.

My brain instantly translates that to Ugly, but she is far from that. Not only is she pretty, but she is also hyper

intelligent, and most importantly of all, she is there.

As a final nod to Christie, Ari brings all the suspects together at the end of the novel for the grand reveal.

I enjoyed the small town in the North of Iceland. It seems like the perfect place to get a lot of reading done. The weather keeps people buttoned up, and the frequent avalanches seal off the town from the rest of the world. Nature imposed isolation is sometimes the only way for people to find any peace anymore. I'm rating the book 3.5 stars, but I'll give Jonasson a bump to 4 instead of rounding down to 3. Call it half a star on account. I'm looking forward to reading his next foray because I really want to see this earnest young man grow into the detective I know he can be.

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