

# The Treacherous Net (An Irene Huss Investigation)

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It's May and the snow has hardly melted in Göteborg, Sweden, but things are heating up quickly for Detective Inspector Irene Huss in the Violent Crimes Unit. The body of a teenage girl is found in the woods, naked and horrifically scarred. Then there's the mummified body that is discovered bricked up in a chimney on a demolition site, not to mention the city's ongoing problem with gang violence. With the sudden influx of cases and one detective out on maternity leave, everyone is stretched thin. To make matters worse, Irene feels more than a little intimidated by the new superintendent, Efva Thylqvist, who uses her sex appeal and smooth talking to bend the predominately male staff to her will.

Then a second young girl is found, wearing what appears to be the other half of the sexy lingerie set recovered near the first body. Fearing the two cases are linked and that the killer may strike again, Irene and her colleagues embark on a desperate hunt that takes them deep into a shadowy world of anonymous online predators and insecure teenage girls on a deadly quest for affirmation.

Helene Tursten was a nurse and a dentist before she turned to writing. Other books in the Irene Huss series include Detective Inspector Huss, Night Rounds, The Torso, The Glass Devil, The Golden Calf, and The Beige Man. Her books have been translated into 18 languages. She was born in Göteborg, Sweden, where she now lives with her husband and daughter. The witness who called the police at 9:14 a.m. had been right. There was a dead body at the water's edge. The technicians had quickly gone out to Nötsund to secure the scene. After two hours' intensive work they were done, and the corpse could be removed and placed in a body bag.

Detective Inspectors Irene Huss and Jonny Blom waited patiently. Then Irene carefully examined the puffy grey face before zipping up the bag.

"Alexandra Hallwiin," she said in a resigned tone of voice.

They had suspected as much, but it still felt ineffably sad to be able to confirm that the girl was dead. They hadn't been involved in the case while the girl had simply been listed as a missing person, but as soon as the call had come in about the discovery at Nötsund, along with the information that the body was that of a young girl, they had printed out the available case notes. Jonny Blom drove while Irene read aloud.

Fourteen-year-old Alexandra had been missing for five days. According to her parents she had never shown any signs of wanting to run away, nor had she had any reason to do so now. They described her as a typical horse-crazy teenager—a little shy, perhaps. Hardworking at school, but no indication of bullying. Alexandra's teachers and school friends had backed up her parents' view of their daughter.

Alexandra's face had been all over the front pages over the weekend. She came from a well-off family, and kidnapping had been a possibility right from the start. If she hadn't been abducted, the police still suspected that a crime lay behind her disappearance. A girl who just wants to get away for a while usually tries to take some clothes and money with her, but according to her mother the only thing Alexandra had taken before she went missing on Walpurgis Night, April 30, was a wallet containing her bus pass and three hundred kronor at the most, the clothes she was wearing, a telescopic umbrella and her cell phone. Nothing else.

Alexandra had told her parents she was meeting some of her classmates in Brunnsparcken. In spite of the pouring rain, they were going to see the Chalmers University

of Technology's traditional annual parade, known as the Cortège. Then they were heading back to Torslanda to hang out at the home of one of the girls. She would be home by midnight at the latest. Her parents were going to a party with friends and didn't have time to give her a lift, so Alexandra said she would catch the bus into town. When she waved goodbye and walked out through the door, that was the last time anyone was known to have seen her alive.

The 6:05 p.m. bus had been full, and the driver didn't remember her. The driver on the next bus hadn't noticed her either. There were lots of young people heading into the city center to watch the parade and celebrate.

None of her friends had arranged to meet her in the park. Even the two girls who were regarded as Alexandra's closest friends had no idea what she was planning to do on Walpurgis Night. When they had asked Alexandra about her plans the previous day, she had said she would be training Prince in preparation for the show on Sunday. Since they knew how important the horse and competitions were to Alexandra, neither of them had pursued the matter.

No one could say for certain whether the girl had traveled into town on the bus. When her worried mother had started calling her cell phone after midnight, it had been switched off.

From the moment Alexandra closed the garden gate, it was as if the ground had opened up and swallowed her.

Now they had found her.

It was a Labrador that discovered her. He was young and playful, and at first he was delighted to find a friend who had hidden herself so cleverly. A second later his sensitive nose registered a strange smell. Exciting, acrid, and a little bit frightening. He began to bark agitatedly, sticking his rump in the air as he circled the interesting odor, gradually getting closer. When his master called him—"Elroy! Elroy! Here boy!"—he grabbed a scrap of fabric that was lying on the ground and proudly scampered back with it in his mouth. There was a brief struggle, but eventually Elroy let go of his trophy. The man shuddered when he looked down at the torn, bloodied black lace thong in his hands. The word Sunday was embroidered on the small triangle at the front, surrounded by a border of red rosebuds.

The body had been pushed into a crevice in the rocks; the murderer had piled a few branches and stones on top in an attempt to hide it.

"So it's only the beginning of May, and we've already had our murdered teenage girl of the summer. Along with another one, just to be on the safe side. On the same day," Detective Inspector Jonny Blom said with a sigh.

His colleagues nodded with an air of resignation. Two murders at the same time meant a heavy workload for the team, particularly in view of the fact that the gang war in the city had begun to escalate once more. It had been relatively calm on that front during February and most of March, but over the Easter weekend they had launched two murder investigations within three days. The victims were a thirty-four-year-old father of three, and a twenty-three-year-old rookie. Both had belonged to the warring factions: the criminal network known as Asir, and the notorious biker gang Bandidos.

The investigation also covered a car bomb, although only minor injuries were reported. The car had belonged to a would-be gangster who carried out his activities using the restaurant he owned as a front. Presumably he hadn't been willing to pay the price for the protection of one of the gangs, although it wasn't clear which one. Those who are willingly

or unwillingly drawn into dealings with the biker gangs never talk to the police. Most people have a certain instinct for self-preservation. At the moment Asir and Bandidos were equal, with one loss each. The question wasn't if reprisals would follow, but when. And which of them would strike first.

Irene Huss was only half-listening. She couldn't get the image of Alexandra's dead body out of her mind. When she had looked at the girl's face she had noticed something that was later confirmed by the preliminary autopsy report: some kind of plastic twine had been pulled tightly around her neck. A thin washing line, perhaps. There was no doubt that they were dealing with a homicide.

Other Books

Darah Seni: Petualangan Sherlock Holmes (Art in the Blood), London. December, 1888. Sherlock Holmes, 34 tahun, terpuruk dan kembali kecanduan kokain setelah penyelidikan kasus The Ripper. Watson tak bisa menenangkan ataupun menyadarkan temannya—sampai sebuah surat bersandi datang dari Paris. Mlle La Victoire, bintang kabaret Prancis yang cantik menuliskan bahwa putra termudanya menghilang, dan ia telah diserang di jalanan Montmartre. Sherlock Holmes bergegas ke Paris bersama Watson. Mereka menemukan bahwa anak yang hilang itu hanya awal dari masalah yang lebih besar lagi. Patung yang paling berharga setelah patung Winged Victory telah dicuri dari Marseilles, dan beberapa anak di Lancashire telah dibunuh. Semua petunjuk dari ketiga kasus itu mengarah pada satu pria pengoleksi barang seni, yang tampaknya tak tersentuh oleh hukum. Akankah Sherlock berhasil menemukan anak yang hilang itu tepat waktu dan menghentikan rangkaian pembunuhan tersebut? Tetapi, untuk melakukan hal itu ia harus selalu selangkah lebih maju dibandingkan rivalnya, dan menghadapi ancaman ikut campur sang kakak, Mycroft.

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