

## Welcome to Sweden

Sweden. A country where people kill each other for nothing. A country where the inhabitants at best are depressed suicide candidates, but more likely are cold-blooded psychopaths. A country where we drink too much, we do not socialize with each other, and we never look anyone in the eye. The men here are vengeful woman haters, ready to grab a carving knife as soon as their wives or girlfriends say anything they don't appreciate. And the women, they are indeed beautiful—tall, blonde, and blue-eyed—but they are victimized by this violence. That is, when they aren't taking matters into their own hands. With close-cropped hair, big tattoos, and the S.C.U.M. Manifesto in hand, they are ready to castrate any human with a Y-chromosome. The rest of the inhabitants of this godforsaken country are but callous egoists, engaged in nothing but their own material welfare. And let's not forget the weather here, which is constantly gray, and the streets that are covered with watery slush. A summer two-days long—two days washed away by the rain if you are unlucky. And then, of course, we have the world's highest taxes.

Being Swedish has few advantages.

At least, that's the image you might have thanks to the wave of "Swedish crime" fiction that has flooded the world in recent years. Perhaps it is true to some extent, perhaps we have our psychopaths and victims, but would you believe me if I say I have never met any?

In actual fact, the country I live in bears very little resemblance to this gloomy picture. I live in a decent country. People here are helpful and supportive. Our society may not be perfect, but it is characterized by a culture where the strong help the weak, a culture with a sense of justice. Our men and women may not always act as equals, but there are few other places in the world where you'll see as many fathers pushing strollers.

Yes, we are a little anxious and we want to be modern. Sushi is the flavor of the month? We'll eat it! Lebanese meze is popular? A Lebanese restaurant will open in your neighborhood next week! We strive to listen to and be like others, it's true, but perhaps that's because we live in a remote part of the world.

This book, *Yesterday's News*, was a huge success in Sweden. I think one reason the public embraced it is that it reflects a Sweden we can identify with, rather than the cold and anxious version we read about in detective stories over and over again. Perhaps the desire was so strong for us to read about everything else: the good, the friendly, and the hopeful.

With this book, I hope to offer you a glimpse at another Sweden, another kind of Swedes. A picture more reflective of the truth. We may be a nation of anxious and slightly smug people, but evil ... no. Not more than any other people, at least.

I wish you pleasant reading, and maybe we'll even meet in Stockholm some day. It's a beautiful city. I'd be happy to show you around!

Kajsa Ingemarsson  
*Stockholm, August 2012*