



Ragnar Jónasson

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- born in Iceland
- has a law degree and teaches copyright law at Reykjavik University
- board member of the Icelandic Symphony Orchestra
- starting at age 17, translated fourteen Agatha Christie novels into Icelandic.
- co-founder of the Reykjavik international crime writing festival Iceland Noir.
- lives in Reykjavik with his wife and two daughters.

SERIES:

Dark Iceland

1. Snowblind
2. Blackout
3. Rupture
4. Whiteout
5. Nightblind – takes place 5 years before the first book.
6. Winterkill

Hidden Iceland

Chronologically reversed series featuring a 64-year-old female detective called Hulda Hermannsdóttir—her name literally meaning “elf-woman” from Icelandic mythology. The first book focuses on Hulda’s final case, with the series subsequently focusing on her earlier cases.”

1. The Darkness
2. The Island
3. The Mist

Helgi Series

1. Death at the Sanatorium - (Theda has read, very good)
2. The Mysterious Case of the Missing Crime Writer

STAND ALONES:

1. The Girl who Died
2. Outside
3. Reykjavik: A Crime Story – with Iceland’s Prime Minister Katrín Jakobsdóttir (2017-2024)

LOCATION:

fjord: a long, narrow, deep inlet of the sea between high cliffs, as in Norway and Iceland, typically formed by submergence of a glaciated valley.

generic fjord



Siglufjordur – former herring capital of the world



Siglufjörður

25 miles from Arctic Circle



BONUS QUESTION – NO GOOGLING !!!!

What number does Karl dial to report finding Linda's body? (it's not 911)

p.s. rather unfair question, since it's not in the book, but someone must have this esoteric knowledge!!

tidbits -- Icelandic Naming Conventions

- Last names aren't a thing in Iceland only 4% of Icelanders have them, and last names don't change after marriage. – *we don't know last names of quite a few of the characters*
- Names have rules - A person may not have more than one middle name or more than three first/proper names, and no more than three names in combination. Adoption of new (unapproved) family names is also prohibited.
- Icelandic Naming Committee - approves or denies names that haven't been used before.

tidbits

- traditional Icelandic Christmas dinner – smoked pork
- Denmark ruled Iceland from 1380-1874 – *hence characters spending time in Denmark*

THE CHARACTERS and their MANY SECRETS:

NAME	Some Info	Your notes
Ari Thór Arason.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ari means 'eagle' • 24 yo • rookie cop • why is he nicknamed "the priest" and "the reverend"? "petrolhead"? • what is his big secret? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Kristin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ari's girlfriend in Reykjavik • Resident doctor / medical student? 	•
Tómas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Sargeant, in charge at Sig. station • 50's • what is his secret? 	•
Ugla	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • works in fish processing plant • piano lessons on the side • gets part in play • single, in Sig. four years, early 20's • what is her big secret? 	•
<i>Ágúst</i>	• <i>Ugla's dead boyfriend</i>	•
Hrólfur Kristjánsson,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • famous writer "North of the Hills" • Chairman, Dramatic Society • befriends Ugla • 91 yo • what is his big secret? 	•
Úlfur Steinsson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director, Dramatic Society • former diplomatic career • 69 yo 	•
<i>Eiríkur</i>	• <i>Ari replacing him, has been there 40+ years, still considered outsider</i>	•
Hlynur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30's, police officer • what are his big secrets? 	•
Pálmi Pálsson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playwright • former schoolteacher • 70's 	•
Karl Steindór Einarsson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what were His Big Secrets? • what do you think of Ari's opinion of him? 	•
Linda Christensen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nurse • Karl's live-in girlfriend 	•
Rosa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • friend of Palmi's father visiting from Denmark • what was her secret? 	•
<i>Mads</i>	• <i>Rosa's son</i>	•
Leifur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handyman, Dramatic Society • mid-30's • carpenter • main income – filling station job 	•
<i>Arni</i>	• <i>Leifur's brother, killed by drunk driver, never caught</i>	•
Anna Einarsdóttir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karl's lover • works at hospital, and co-op • 24 yo 	•
Nína Arnardóttir	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ticket Sales at Dramatic Society Theater • 60 yo • What are her big secrets? 	•
Thorsteinn	• Hrólfur's lawyer	•
<i>Snjólaug</i>	• <i>Thorstein's wife</i>	•
<i>Gudrun</i>	• <i>nurse at hospital, witness to H's will</i>	•

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Given his extensive history in translating Agatha Christie books into Icelandic, what elements of Christie novels do you see in this book?
2. How, if at all, does the 2008 recession affect the characters in the book?
3. Are the interspersed chapters intriguing or distracting? What about the fact that initially you don't know if this is happening "now" or in the past? Were they unnecessary? or needed to convey true horror of crime and character of the intruder? Should they have come later in the book?
4. What might qualify this as a "locked room" mystery?
5. By the end of the book, has Ari managed to fit in?
6. Ari's decision to take job in Sig. – who do you agree with – Ari or Kristin?
7. Had you heard of Jolabokaflod (*the Christmas Book Flood*) ? The Icelandic tradition of reading a new book on Christmas Eve, and into the early hours of the morning,
8. What is "the silver of the sea"?
9. Why do you think that Ari was so claustrophobic and panic stricken by the isolation and the snow, when it doesn't seem to bother anyone else?
10. What are some of the mistakes Ari Thór makes, and what does he learn from them?
11. So many characters had big secrets, did they add to the story? or is this a case of "don't we all"?
12. "Jonassón's true gift is for describing the daunting beauty of the fierce setting, lashed by blinding snowstorms that smother the village in 'a thick, white darkness' that is strangely comforting," said NYT Book Review. Do you agree that the setting—which has also been called "claustrophobic" by reviewers—is somewhat comforting? If not, what was your reaction to the setting? Would you want to live there in the Winter?

QUOTES: your favorites??

- The red stain was like a scream in the silence. – *first sentence in the book*
- The tall trees surrounding the garden were in their winter finery, taking on shadowy shapes in the darkness that were reminiscent of clowns rather than trolls,
- She lay in the middle of the garden, like a snow angel.
- There was still no breath of wind, but Pálmi knew that in a place such as this the coming storm was inevitable. -- do you think he is referring to a physical storm or a metaphorical storm, or both?
- Karl: He was like a car in low gear when he was away from the card table. It was only when he had cards in his hand that he felt fully alive, flush with high-octane petrol.
- Karl got a kick from being on stage, looking down on the audience – the ordinary people – with the lights upon him.
- Ari: It was not easy to hide the effects that the unremitting snow, the winds and the bone-shattering cold had on him. ,,,, He had tried to listen to classical music to drown out **the deafening silence of the incessant snowfall**
- Man had beaten the mountains by tunnelling through them, and was doing his best to fend off the forces of nature with robust avalanche defences so big that they looked almost as if trolls rather than men had built them. But the darkness and the snow could never be defeated.