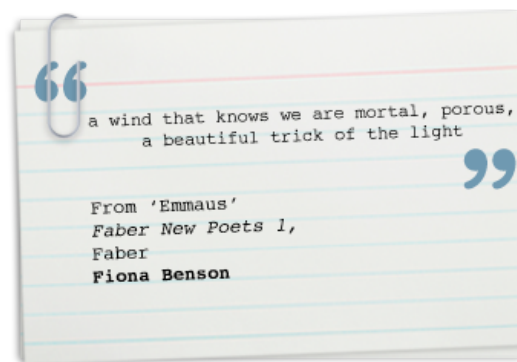




Good Morning! It's Thursday on June 02, 2011.

Literature for everyone in the South West

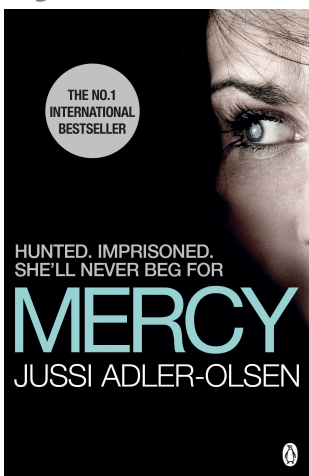


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book of the month

MERCY
 by **JUSSI ADLER-OLSEN**



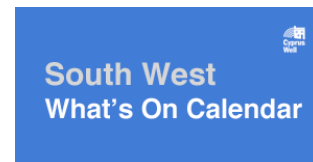
Scandinavia's new bestselling crime writing phenomenon comes to Britain!

Sometimes you get a second chance . . . Carl Mørck used to be a good homicide detective. One of Copenhagen's best, in fact. Then a bullet almost took his life. Two of his colleagues weren't so lucky, and Carl, because he didn't draw his gun, blames himself. Now his erratic behaviour is going to cost him his job. It's just a matter of time.

So promotion is the last thing he expects. Newly created Department Q deals with 'cases of special focus'. His former colleagues think it's a joke – a home for hopeless cases. Carl, leading it, will fit right in. Except that his first case is that of missing politician Merete Lynggaard. She vanished five years ago. Everyone assumes she's dead. Everyone assumes it's a waste of time.

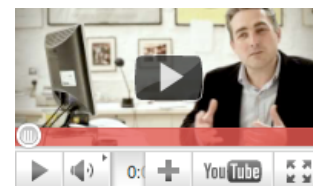
Everyone, that is, except Carl. Because Merete isn't dead – at least not yet.

In Denmark, *Mercy* hit No 1 in the bestsellers list and remained in the Top 3 for over a year. Jussi has sold 3000000 copies of his novels, an astounding figure considering that sales have so far been limited to a few countries across Europe. Rights to *Mercy* and its follow-up *Disgrace* have now been sold to an amazing 25 countries.



Book of the Month Clips

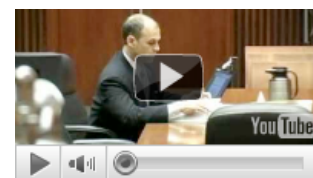
The Redeemed by M.R. Hall



Dissolution by C.J. Sansom
[Pan Macmillan](#)



Innocent by Scott Turow
[Hachette Book Group](#)



Dark Matter by Michelle Paver
[Pan Macmillan](#)

The Death of King Arthur by Peter
Ackroyd
Penguin

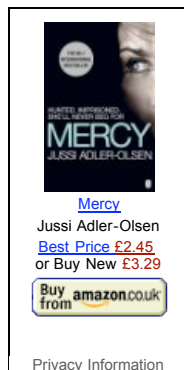


For more interviews with Jussi Adler-Olsen visit
Penguin Books on YouTube



About the author

Jussi Adler-Olsen was born in Copenhagen and studied medicine, sociology, politics and film. He worked as a magazine editor and publisher before starting to write fiction. So far he has written three Department Q thrillers, which all hit the Danish and German bestseller lists on publication and stayed there ever since. The film rights to the series have also been sold to Lars Von Trier's production company. See the author's website for more information.



A review of *Mercy* by Shade Point

Eventually, Shade Point will get sent a Scandinavian crime novel that isn't any good. It has to happen. So far, though, it's beginning to look like there's a secret installation in the hills outside Bergen or someplace, where scientists and literature specialists from all over Scandinavia build and refine the perfect crime novel template before handing it to writer operatives to take over the world. The constant flow of great writing has to dry up. Someday. Surely.

Well, not today. *Mercy* by Jussi Adler-Olsen is a mighty old thriller. No wonder Lars Von Trier's production company has snapped up the film rights to Adler-Olsen's Department Q series, of which *Mercy* is the first. There is something at once big and cinematic about the book, and then something refined and human at the same time. It has the screen potential to be laden with action, fighting, and terror - while staring out at the audience from the point of view of ordinary people, ordinary lives and hopes and dreams dashed. It is

something of this concentration on the interior isolation and yearning of characters, allied to the very best in edge of the seat storytelling, that is perhaps at least some part of that template from the Bergen hills. A lazy comparison to make because of the Danish connection, but if you liked *The Killing*, there's a real chance you'll like this book, and there's a real chance a book like this could be adapted for the screen with the same power.

(Anti) Hero of Mercy Carl Morck is very much the troubled loner with the interior life of ice and blood that so characterises many Scandinavian thriller leads. To Shade Point, at least, he is very like Wallander. He has much of that detective's sense of human loss, regret and to an extent bitterness towards a world that is passing him by. There is something of the Western hero in characters like these, such walking anachronisms in the face of new national identities, new cultural dimensions and changing times. Morck and Wallander are really, in many ways, very similar to Sheriff Ed Tom Bell in *No Country for Old Men*. Something of Cormac McCarthy's elegies to characters wrestling with oblivion is present in these Scandinavian heroes. In Morck there is also, like Leif GW Persson's Johannson, a hint of Le Carre or Greene's burnt out cases - isolated operatives who toil on the edge of, well, just about everything.

Morck is particularly troubled because he emerges at the beginning of the novel as a survivor against the odds - he has been a gasp from death in an incident where one of his colleagues is killed and the other is paralysed for life. The bullet that hits Morck may as well have killed him, he might think, because an already erratic and anti-authoritarian world view is simply maxed out after this trauma. So much so, that in what they perceive as an ingenious move, his colleagues and superiors decide to take advantage of a political zeal for unsolved old cases to bump Morck upstairs - making him the commander of Department Q, a one man band operation to look into cold mysteries. They only give him part of the funding of course, and with comedic irony, actually stick him in the basement.

Morck may be on the verge of burn out, but he's no fool, and readers will discover how he increases his resources, and inherits his assistant Assad, a man who is not who he seems to be at all. Along with a wider field of characters, including his hospitalised colleague Hardy, the future team of Department Q is starting to take shape. There is quite a bit of sly comedy to the process, and the whole thing is really enjoyable. There is a sense of a cast being assembled, a *Magnificent 7* gradually being put together by the world weary Morck.

Fate, which I think is another preoccupation of the white coats in the Bergen bunker, plays a huge part in the course of this novel. Deliberately so, and chillingly so. Amidst the setting up of Department Q, which the iconoclast Morck is in no hurry to exactly turn into work, the processing of old cases from upstairs to downstairs to the Q basement is desperately slow. Even then, Morck is entirely random about his approach to these missing persons and unsolved murder files. It actually takes Assad to prompt some greater interest in them, and even then a fair number of chapters have actually gone by before Morck deigns to read a case file. As we are soon to learn, however, this process takes place against the clock of life and death. When Morck and Assad plump for one of the cases to pursue, they could not have left it a minute later. In this randomness, this choice, there comes a keen awareness of the fragility of the balance of life and death. Morck could have just as easily gone for a different folder.

The first case is that of Merete Lynggaard, a politician who vanished 5 years before the start of the novel. She is presumed to have jumped or fallen from a ferry. Her story, however, is much more complicated, and soon Morck and Assad are in a race against time to find out what happened to her. Without giving too much away, this is where the terror comes in. Merete's fate is appalling and the stuff of sleepless nights and haunted days. Morck and Assad simply must succeed. Towards the end the reader is willing them to prevail. I read one review where the reviewer confessed to actually stopping a bit through to read the last couple of pages. I can completely sympathise with this, the tension gets unbearable (which in my case led to a marathon reading session one sleepless night) but try to hang on. The sheer emotional weight of the ending needs the reader in the dark.

Mercy is a great book. The series is perfectly poised to be massively entertaining. There isn't of course a secret installation anywhere, there are just very good writers from

Scandinavia, always have been, and perhaps they spring from a different expectation of the nature of thriller writing. Adler-Olsen tells a cracking, hugely exciting and compelling story, but he also describes people and moments that speak very keenly to the reader about life, fate and meaning. Perhaps this is the secret, and crime fiction from other places has become all about shock and forensic procedure; these successful Scandinavian writers are storytellers, and they are as concerned to create depth in characterisation as they are page turning thrills and (blood) spills. Morck could just as easily inhabit the pages of a non-crime novel. Like Wallander, I would read about him starting a salmon farm.

Book of the Month Archive

June 2010 Derek Landy: *Skulduggery Pleasant Dark Days*

July 2010 Scott Turow: *Innocent*

August 2010: Julia Green: *Drawing With Light*

September 2010: C J Sansom: *Heartstone*

October 2010: Of Love and Hope

November 2010: Michelle Paver *Dark Matter*

December 2010 Peter Ackroyd *The Death of King Arthur*

January 2011 Andrew Taylor *The Anatomy Of Ghosts*

February 2011 Jill Mansell *To The Moon And Back*

March 2011 Aminatta Forna *The Memory of Love*

April 2011 M.R. Hall *The Redeemed*

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