

Nordic Thrillers

What is Nordic noir?

Nordic noir is a dark subset of the crime fiction genre. It is usually defined by some or all the following:

- **Brutal crimes**, often in quiet and/or safe communities
- **A bleak setting**, whether on city streets or a remote fjord
- **A tortured protagonist**, typically a detective with a mysterious or painful past.
- **A strong plot**, with multiple complex threads and a few twists

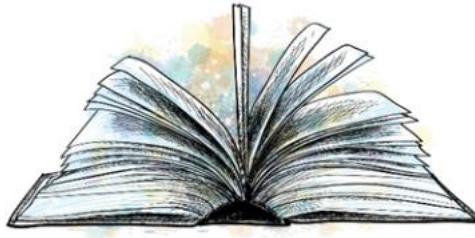
And of course, the setting is always somewhere in Scandinavia or the Nordic region. While they don't necessarily have to be, most Nordic noir authors are also from the region.

Kerstin Bergman, a researcher in comparative literature at Lund University in Sweden recently talked about three reasons for the genre's popularity:

1: "One is the very strong focus on social and political criticism. International people are often very curious about the Scandinavian welfare states and that is something that they can learn a lot about from reading these novels."

2: "We have a very strong focus on setting. To a lot of people in the world, the Nordic landscape and nature is very exotic, with the cold dark winters and the summers with the midnight sun and things like that."

3: "We have so many strong women characters in them and that is something that makes them unique. Like other genres, readers of crime fiction are to a very large extent women and they like to identify with these characters to manage to combine work and home life."



Page Turners

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Monroe Township Library

Nordic Thrillers (October 2025)

The Shadow Murders (2022) by Jussi Adler-Olsen (Netherlands)

(The ninth book in the Department Q series)

FIC ADLER-OLSEN

On her 60th birthday, a woman takes her own life.

When the case lands on Detective Carl Mørck's desk, he can't imagine what this has to do with Department Q, Copenhagen's cold cases division. It's a tragedy to be sure, but the cause of death seems to be clear.

But his superior, Marcus Jacobsen, is convinced that this is not a suicide, but a murder related to an unsolved case that has been plaguing him since 1988. The investigation soon uncovers a pattern: Every two years for the past three decades, there have been unusual, impeccably timed deaths with connections between them that cannot be ignored. Faced with their toughest case yet, made only more difficult with COVID-19 restrictions and the challenges of their own personal lives, the Department Q team must race to find the culprit before the next murder is committed, as it is becoming increasingly clear that the killer is far from finished.

You Will Never Be Found (2023) by Tove Alsterdal (Sweden)

(The second book in the High Coast series)

FIC ALSTERDAL

In the small mining town of Malmberget, north of the Arctic Circle, residents and their houses are being relocated. As the mine that built the town slowly swallows it street by street. Only a few stubborn souls cling to their homes, refusing to leave. When two workers making their final preparations hear a sound coming from a basement, they break a cellar window and find a terrified man curled up in a corner.

In Ådalens, 700 kilometers away, police officer Eira Sjödin is investigating the disappearance of a man reported missing by his ex-wife. The man seems to have vanished without a trace.

Eira knows the pain of loss. To escape her loneliness and her memories, Eira loses herself in a casual affair with GG, who is twenty years her senior—and her boss. When the diligent GG doesn't show up for work two days in a row, Eira and her colleagues quickly realize that something is very wrong. In the dramatic second installment of the High Coast Series, Eira Sjödin finds herself at the mercy of an elusive perpetrator—and of a love she can no longer deny.

I'm Travelling Alone (2015) by [Samuel Bjork](#) (Norway)
(The first book in the Holger Munch & Mia Kruger series)

FIC BJORK

A chilling and fast-paced thriller in which two detectives must hunt down a vengeful killer and uncover the secret that ties each of them to the crime.

A six-year-old girl is found in the countryside, hanging from a tree and dressed in strange doll clothes. Around her neck is a sign that says, "I'm traveling alone."

A special homicide unit re-opens with veteran police investigator Holger Munch at the helm. Holger's first step is to persuade the brilliant investigator, Mia Kruger to join the team. Mia has been living on an isolated island, overcome by memories of her past. When Munch's own six-year-old granddaughter goes missing, Mia realizes that the killer's sinister game is personal, and "I'm Traveling Alone" races to an explosive and shocking conclusion.

The Deathwatch Beetle: A Mystery (2021) by [Kjell Eriksson](#) (Sweden)
(The ninth book in the Ann Lindell series)

MYS ERIKSSON

An atmospheric thriller and a tender depiction of the countryside and the people of Roslagen.

Four years have passed since Cecilia Karlsson disappeared from the island of Gräsö in Roslagen. When Ann Lindell receives a tip that she has been seen alive, she cannot help getting involved, even though she is no longer with the police.

The black sheep of the island, Nils Lindberg, has never forgotten Cecilia Karlsson, with whom he was in love as a teenager. And he carries a secret. He may not be completely sober all the time, but he has no doubt about what he saw out on the bay. Cecilia's parents are desperate, not knowing what happened to their daughter. Yet their silent house contains many things that have been left unsaid.

While Ann struggles to put the pieces of the puzzle together, she is also trying to establish herself in her new life together with her lover Edvard. At the same time, someone is hiding in a cottage in a remote part of the island. Someone who is looking for revenge...

The Indian Bride (2005) by [Karin Fossum](#) (Norway)
(The fifth book in the Inspector Sejer series)

MYS FOSSUM

Inspector Konrad Sejer returns on the trail of a violent killer in small-town Norway. Gunder Jomann, a quiet, middle-aged man from a peaceful Norwegian town, thinks that his life is made complete when he returns from a trip to India a married man. But on the day his Indian bride is due to join him, he is called to the hospital to his sister's bedside. The local taxi driver sent to meet the Indian bride at the airport comes back without her. Then the town is shocked by the news of an Indian woman found bludgeoned to death in a nearby meadow. Inspector Sejer and his colleague Skarre head the murder inquiry, cross-examining the townsfolk and planting seeds of suspicion in a community which has always believed itself to be simple, safe and trusting. For what can only have been an unpremeditated and motiveless act of violence, everyone is guilty until proven innocent.

The Collector: A Novel (2022) by [Anne Mette Hancock](#) (Denmark)

(The second book in the Kaldan and Schafer Mystery series)

FIC HANCOCK

A psychological whirlwind that explores the nature of truth and what it means when we can no longer trust what we know to be real. When 10-year-old Lukas disappears from his Copenhagen school, police investigators discover that the boy had a peculiar obsession with pareidolia—a phenomenon that makes him see faces in random things. A photo on his phone posted just hours before his disappearance shows an old barn door that resembles a face. Journalist Heloise Kaldan thinks she recognizes the barn—but from where?

When Luke's blood-flecked jacket is found in the moat at Copenhagen's Citadel, DNA evidence points to Thomas Strand, an ex-soldier suffering from severe PTSD. But then Strand turns up dead in his apartment, shot in the head execution style. What did the last person to see Lukas really witness that morning in the school yard? Was it really Lukas, or an optical illusion? Can you ever truly trust your eyes?

The Girl by the Bridge (2023) by [Arnaldur Indridason](#) (Iceland)

(The second book in the Detective Konrad series)

MYS INDRIDASON

An elderly couple is worried about their granddaughter. They know she's been smuggling drugs, and now she's gone missing. Looking for help, they turn to Konrad, a former policeman whose reputation precedes him.

Always absent-minded, he constantly ruminates on the fate of his father, who was stabbed to death decades ago. But digging into the past reveals much more than anyone set out to discover, and a little girl who drowned in the Reykjavik city pond unexpectedly captures everyone's attention.

A brilliant, chilling tale of broken dreams and children who have nowhere to turn.

Burial Rites (2013) by [Hannah Kent](#) (born in Australia, Hannah travelled to Iceland on a Rotary Exchange, where she first heard the story of Agnes Magnúsdóttir)
 (This title is a standalone novel inspired by a true story)

FIC KENT

Iceland, 1829 – Agnes Magnúsdóttir is condemned to death for her part in the murder of her lover.

She is sent to wait out her final months on the farm of district officer Jón Jónsson, his wife and their two daughters – who are horrified to have a convicted murderer in their midst. Only Tóti, the young assistant priest appointed Agnes's spiritual guardian, is compelled to try to understand her. As the year progresses and the hardships of rural life force the household to work side by side, Agnes's story begins to emerge and with it the family's terrible realization that all is not as they had assumed.

In beautiful, cut-glass prose, Hannah Kent portrays Iceland's formidable landscape, in which every day is a battle for survival, and asks, how can one woman hope to endure when her life depends upon the stories told by others?

The Ice Princess (2008) by [Camilla Läckberg](#) (Sweden)
 (The first book in the Patrik Hedstrom series)

MYS LACKBERG

The writer Erica Falck has returned to her hometown on the death of her parents but discovers the community in turmoil. A close childhood friend, Alex, has been found dead. Her wrists have been slashed, and her body is frozen solid in a bath that has turned to ice. Erica decides to write a memoir about the charismatic but withdrawn Alex, more as a means of overcoming her own writer's block than solving the mystery of Alex's death. But Erica finds that her interest in Alex is becoming almost obsessive. She begins to work with local detective Patrik Hedstrom, and the duo soon find some unpleasant secrets buried beneath the comfortable surface of the town.

The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo (2008) by [Stieg Larsson](#) (Sweden)
 (The first book in the Millennium series)

FIC LARSSON

Forty years ago, Harriet Vanger disappeared off the secluded island owned and inhabited by the powerful Vanger family. No corpse was found, no witnesses, no evidence. But her uncle, Henrik, is convinced that she was murdered by someone in her own family - the deeply dysfunctional Vanger clan. Disgraced journalist Mikael Blomqvist is hired to investigate. When he links Harriet's disappearance to a string of gruesome murders from forty years ago, Mikael decides he will need an assistant. And he gets one: computer hacker Lisbeth Salander. Lisbeth is a tattooed, truculent, angry girl who rides a motorbike like a Hell's Angel and handles makeshift weapons with the skill of remorseless rage. This unlikely pair forms a fragile bond as they delve into the sinister past of this island-bound, tightly knit family. But the Vanger family are a secretive lot, and Mikael and Lisbeth are about to find out just how far they're prepared to go to protect themselves - and each other.

Before the Frost (2004) by [Henning Mankell](#) (Sweden)
 (The ninth book in the Kurt Wallander series)

MYS MANKELL

The leader of a religious cult in Guyana instigates a mass suicide. He succeeds in killing himself and his whole flock of worshippers, save one, a man who escapes. In the wooded land outside Ystad, the police make a horrific discovery: a severed head, and hands locked together in an attitude of prayer. A Bible lies at the victim's side, handwritten corrections and amendments on every page. A string of incidents, including attacks on domestic animals, have been taking place, and Inspector Kurt Wallander fears that these events could be the prelude to attacks on humans on a much greater scale. Linda Wallander, preparing to join the Ystad police force, arrives at the station. She possesses all the hallmarks of her father - a maverick approach and a flaring temper. As Linda's involvement in the case progresses, she has to confront a group of extremists bent on punishing the world's sinners. "Before the Frost" is a totally compelling and atmospheric crime story.

1793: The Wolf and the Watchman (2019) by [Niklas Natt Och Dag](#) (Sweden)
 (The first book in the Jean Mickel Cardell series)

**FIC NATT OCH
DAG**

Set in the gritty streets and shadowy corners of 18th-century Stockholm, "The Wolf and the Watchman" is a dark, masterful historical thriller where a chilling murder investigation peels back the twisted layers of a city rife with secrets, corruption, and intrigue.

One morning in the autumn of 1793, watchman Mikel Cardell is awakened from his drunken slumber with reports of a body seen floating in the Larder. This once pristine lake on Stockholm's Southern Isle is now a rancid bog. Efforts to identify the bizarrely mutilated corpse are entrusted to incorruptible lawyer Cecil Winge, who enlists Cardell's help to solve the case. But time is short: Winge's health is failing; the monarchy is in shambles, and whispered conspiracies and paranoia abound. The rich and the poor, the pious and the fallen, the living and the dead—all collide and interconnect with the body pulled from the lake.

Breathtakingly bold and intricately constructed, "The Wolf and the Watchman" brings life to the crowded streets, gilded palaces, and dark corners of late-eighteenth-century Stockholm, offering a startling vision of the crimes we commit in the name of justice, and the sacrifices we make just to survive.

The Snowman (2007) by [Jo Nesbo](#) (Norway)
 (The seventh book in the Harry Hole series)

FIC NESBO

Oslo in November. The first snow of the season has fallen. A boy named Jonas wakes in the night to find his mother gone. Out his window, in the cold moonlight, he sees the snowman that inexplicably appeared in the yard earlier in the day. Around its neck is his

mother's pink scarf.

Police investigator Harry Hole suspects a link between a menacing letter he's received and the disappearance of Jonas's mother - and perhaps a dozen other women, all of whom went missing on the day of a first snowfall. As his investigation deepens, something else emerges, he is becoming a pawn in an increasingly terrifying game whose rules are devised - and constantly revised - by the killer.

The Silence of the Sea (2014) by [Yrsa Sigurdardottir](#) (Iceland)

(The sixth book in the Thóra Gudmundsdóttir series)

FIC SIGURDARDOTTIR

As "The Silence of the Sea" opens, a luxury yacht crashes into a Reykjavik pier. But the boat is empty; no one is on board. What has happened to the crew? And what has happened to the family who were present when the yacht left Lisbon? What should lawyer and investigator Thora Gudmundsdóttir make of the rumors that the vessel was cursed? She is spooked even more when she boards the yacht and thinks she sees one of the missing children. And whose body washed up further along the shore?

Big Sister (2018) by [Gunnar Staalesen](#) (Norway)

(Book 20 in the Varg Veum series)

FIC STAALESEN

Varg Veum, a private investigator, receives a surprise visit to his office. A woman introduces herself as his half-sister, and she has a job for him.

Her goddaughter, a 19-year-old trainee nurse from Haugesund, moved from her bedsit in Bergen two weeks ago. Since then, no one has heard anything from her. She didn't leave an address; she doesn't answer her phone, and the police refuse to take her case seriously.

Veum's investigation uncovers a series of carefully covered-up crimes and pent-up hatreds, and the trail leads to a gang of extreme bikers on the hunt for a group of people whose dark deeds are hidden by the anonymity of the Internet. And then things get personal...

Chilling, shocking and exceptionally gripping.