



## **Synkkä niin kuin sydämeni**

*Antti Tuomainen*

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”Mitä tekisit saadaksesi tietää?”

Aleksi Kivi menettää äitinsä lokakuisenä iltapäivänä vuonna 1993. Yhtenä hetkenä äiti istuu työpöytänsä ääressä tekemässä kirjanpitäjän töitään, toisena häntä ei enää ole. Kaksikymmentä vuotta myöhemmin, 33-vuotiaana, Aleksi uskoo tietävänsä kuka on katoamisen takana. Kaikki viittaa rikkaaseen mieheen nimeltä Henrik Saarinen. Poliisi ei ole samaa mieltä. Aleksille jää vain yksi vaihtoehto: hankkiutua Henrik Saarisen lähelle ja selvittää asia itse.

Synkkä niin kuin sydämeni kertoo äidin ja pojan tarinan. Se on kertomus elämän mittaisesta yksinäisyydestä, lupauksien pitämisestä, pakkomielteiden seurauksista, koston oikeutuksesta ja rakkauden voimasta. Menneisyyss on usein siinä mitä erhdymme luulemaan täksi päiväksi.

## Synkkä niin kuin sydämeni Details

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## From Reader Review Synkkä niin kuin sydämeni for online ebook

### Paul says

#### Dark As My Heart – A Wonderfully Dark & Tragic Story

Dark As My Heart is the latest book from award winning Finnish writer Antti Tuomainen in what has been billed as a mixture of Hitchcockian mystery tale and modern Greek tragedy. A very large claim for a writer that is building his career, but one that delivers on what the publishers have proclaimed. This is a dark atmospheric story that is deeply compelling, that draws you in, with surprising twists, sudden violence and an ending you do not see coming.

Twenty years after his mother disappeared, presumed dead, Aleksi Kivi gains employment with Henrik Saarinen, the man he suspects of killing his mother. He has hounded the police of the previous twenty years telling them what he suspected, but felt he was often ignored. So he decided he would get as close as possible to Saarinen so that he could gain the evidence he required.

He was the new caretaker of Kalmela Manor, isolated on the seashore, 94 Kilometres west of Helsinki, just two members of staff, Aleksi and the cook Enni. They both had apartments in a converted barn and worked around the house and estate uninterrupted unless Henrik or his daughter Amanda were at the house.

As Aleksi observes the Saarinen family he gets close to Amanda, which to him is a blessing and a curse as it puts him in a difficult position. At times they both need each other, but there are other times when she is nothing more than a poor little ‘rich girl’. They are also bad for each other as Aleksi discovers but finds her information useful and there are times she amuses him.

Henrik seems to have taken a shine to his new caretaker and enjoys talking to him and probing him, which Aleksi is guarded against. He even gets to act as a chauffeur to Henrik when some tools are required. There are also times when Saarinen seems to talk in riddles to Aleksi but it all soon becomes clear enough to Aleksi, but not before violence has occurred.

With some wonderful twist that are reminiscent of a Greek tragedy we discover the truth about Aleksi’s mother and we also gain some truths we are not expecting. The writing is atmospheric and dark, building up a pace similar to a Hitchcock movie where the reader is totally immersed in the story and then shocked at what happens.

This is an excellent crime story that continues the Nordic Noir takeover of the English reader who will completely enjoy this crime story. An excellent book for all crime fans.

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### Karen says

The exploration of consequences is beautifully executed in Antti Tuomainen’s mesmerising DARK AS MY HEART. That he is an award winning author comes as no surprise, but of the five novels to his name in his native Finland, the third “The Healer” and this, his fourth novel, are so far the only ones translated into English. Needless to say THE HEALER is now on the TBR pile.

Aleksi Kivi was thirteen years old when his mother vanished. Now, twenty years on, he's still haunted by her murder, and his feelings of recognition and utter belief that the millionaire owner of the company his mother worked for is responsible for that death could seem like obsession. That possibility is tempered elegantly by his quiet determination, and his willingness to observe, check and insinuate himself into Saarinen's life in order to discover the truth.

Working as a live-in caretaker on a remote seaside property belonging to Saarinen that insinuation is planned and precisely executed, getting to know members of Saarinen's family and staff, in particular, dangerously close to his erratic and disturbed daughter Amanda.

Told in a deceptively simple, understated manner which matches the personality and determination of the central character perfectly, there's a clarity to the storytelling here that truly is mesmerising. The dialogue is sparse and pitched perfectly, establishing emotion, intent, feelings and motivation without having to resort to long, overblown exposition. That perfect touch is applied to the sense of place as well, creating a remote yet luxurious, underpopulated, beautiful yet sinister environment in which Kivi must try to find the truth, and hence allow himself to move on, and to live.

As close to a single sitting read as can be achieved around here, it's not until after finishing that I realised that what we have in *DARK AS MY HEART* is about as perfect a combination of character, place and plot as I've read in a long time. Classically understated, in that particularly Scandinavian manner that many readers have come to love, the exploration of the why, and the impact of the act are as important to the author as the identification of who.

<http://www.austcrimefiction.org/review/dark-as-my-heart/>

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### **Bianca says**

"Dark as My Heart" is a mystery/thriller that reads like a film; all the way through, I had the feeling I was watching one of those Scandinavian police/crime movies/series.

From the very beginning, I was taken with the beautifully descriptive language. Antti Tuomainen is a fantastic writer. Obviously, the translator did a great job, too.

The novel is narrated by our main character, Aleksi Kivi, now thirty-three years old. His mum's disappearance, presumed killed, has defined his past twenty years of life. He's become obsessed with finding what had happened to her. He's suspecting the millionaire, Henrik Saarinen, as the one who's taken his mum from him.

So when the opportunity presents, he takes a job as a caretaker on a big, secluded estate owned by Saarinen.

Aleksi becomes involved with Saarinen's daughter, Amanda, who's strikingly beautiful but seems out of sorts.

This novel is in many ways a classic mystery/thriller novel. I personally loved the descriptive language, it made for an atmospheric novel, which had a distinctly Scandinavian feel to it. While I haven't read Stieg Larsson's novels, I did see three of the movies. The Swedish ones. In many ways, this novel seemed similar, as far as the secrets and twists, but without the torture, rape etc.

At about 240 pages, this is a relatively short novel, but it felt just right.

Dark As My Heart is a classic mystery/thriller novel with a distinctive Scandinavian feel to it, perfectly suited for a movie adaptation.

Highly recommended.

4.5 stars

*I've received this novel via Netgalley. Many thanks to the publishers for the opportunity to read and review.*

**Cover:** 4 stars

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### **Andy Weston says**

This is certainly a different crime novel with a strong hint of noir. It is told in the first person and the narrator was 13 years old when his mother disappeared 20 years earlier. After the failure of the police at the time to solve the disappearance, Aleksi, the narrator, has of course never forgotten what happened, has his suspicions and is following them up.

Tuomainen's (the Finnish 'King of Noir') writing is captivating and he keeps the pace of the novel quick. His characters are strong and the reader is engrossed. There is little on the dark side though, so to give it a 'noir' billing is not quite correct. It is a perfectly readable crime novel with a difference.

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### **Radynka says**

On se jede pomstít chlapovi, u kterého jeho matka pracovala, a pak s ním m?la románek, ale nezm?ní si ani jméno. :-O A ten konec...No radši jsem zticha :D

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### **Book Madness (Elif) says**

Bu kitap da fena bay?kt?. Ucuz diye al?p pi?man oldu?um bir ba?ka kitap i?te.

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### **Claudiu D. says**

Romanul acesta mi-a adus aminte de ce imi plac atat de mult nordicii.

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### **Susan says**

Antti Tuomainen has been nicknamed, “The King of Helsinki Noir” in his native Finland, where he is the award winning author of five novels. His third novel, “The Healer” was his first book translated and published in the UK, and this, his fourth, “Dark as my Heart” is both the second published in English and the first I have read. However, I must certainly rectify this as I really did love this book and can well see why it was voted the best crime novel of the decade by readers of a Finnish crime fiction magazine.

Aleksi Kivi is thirteen when his mother goes missing. When we meet him twenty years later, he is obsessed with his mother’s murder and believes the killer to be millionaire Henrik Saarinen. Aleksi’s mother worked for a company owned by Saarinen and, when he appears on a chat show, Aleksi is struck by a feeling of recognition. Before long he has a job as caretaker to Saarinen’s property, Kalmela Manor; on the seashore west of Helsinki. He begins to try to investigate - quizzing the former detective on the case and getting to know members of Saarinen’s household; including his daughter Amanda, the loyal cook and surly chauffeur, Markus Harmala.

This is a dark and disturbing novel. The author really makes us aware of the impact of the murder of Aleksi’s mother on his life and how he is unable to move on without knowing the truth about what happened. What is more, ten years after his mother was killed, another single mother was murdered. Is there a link and, with another ten years have passed, is another murder about to take place? This is a compelling read and I really couldn’t put this down. My thanks to the publishers, and NetGalley, for a review copy of this book.

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### **Kerry Pickens says**

Apparently this author has won a lot of awards for writing, but obviously something is missing in the translation. The main character is very likeable, but the plot just doesn’t go anywhere. This is a story of a young man whose mother disappeared one night, and he believes a wealthy man is responsible for the murder. So he goes to work for this guy, seduces his daughter, and then finds out it was the man after all that killed his mother. It seems like a predictable storyline, and all his relationships seem to go nowhere fast.

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### **Adi says**

Dark as my heart.

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## Raven says

I must confess that aside from Matti Joensuu and Kati Hiekkapelto my knowledge of Finnish crime fiction is a little underdeveloped, so was intrigued to discover a new-to me-writer in this sub-genre of the Scandinavian stable. So how did *Dark As My Heart* fare? Will I be seeking out Tuomainen's *The Healer* as well?

If the fact that I read this book in one night can be testament to how much I enjoyed this one is any gauge, I think we can all safely say that this book was a real hit with me. *Dark As My Heart*, drew me in from the start with the mournful clarity and simplicity of its prose, and the underlying power of the emotion that Tuomainen expresses in deceptively understated prose. Discovering afterwards that Tuomainen is an established poet reinforced my initial impressions of the lyrical and sensual quality of both the dialogue and imagery that Tuomainen employs throughout. From the inherent appreciation of the natural world, to the intensity of expression that the author affords the gradual unveiling of Aleksi's turbulent and emotional upbringing in the wake of the loss of his mother, the prose style that Tuomainen adopts is mesmerising. I rarely revisit passages of a crime book after reading, but did on this occasion mainly to marvel at the fluid and lyrical style of Tuomainen's writing style, from the brevity (though no less affecting) use of dialogue, to particular descriptions of the setting of Saarinen's rural estate. It was just so satisfying to see such a seamless blend of beautiful language, and well-structured plot working in harmony, which is something that European crime writers seem to excel at. What was also clever was how at times the book also assumed the feel of a stage play with many double-handed scenes that again added to the claustrophobic and emotionally intense feel of the book. Hence, what the reader encounters is a well-balanced blend of poetry, prose and drama which was exceptionally engaging from start to finish.

Aleksi is viewed throughout the book with an overriding compunction to uncover the truth behind his mother's disappearance, fuelled by a long period of gestation formulating a plan to confront the man he believes responsible. In the case of his character, still waters run deep, with the face he displays to the world masking a deep inner life driven by revenge, and it's fascinating how Tuomainen so beautifully reveals the dark details of Aleksi's formative years. Equally accomplished is how Tuomainen sustains such a pitch of intrigue and secrecy using a comparatively small cast of characters, and Aleksi's interaction with them. He is a completely empathetic character, and I'm sure like many readers to come I was completely rooting for him throughout the book, in the face of the deception and manipulation at the hands of the Saarinens. In much the same way as Stieg Larsson's *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo* or Steffen Jacobsen's *Trophy*, Tuomainen uses the character of millionaire businessman Henrik Saarinen, as a foil for his detached authorial view of the impunity with which the rich and powerful ride roughshod over the normal laws of decent behaviour, and Saarinen is the epitome of this, seemingly untouchable by established means. His daughter assumes the role of the femme fatale of the piece, using her feminine wiles and sensuality to influence and blindside Aleksi, with a particularly unsavoury reveal about her character along the way. The world that Aleksi has infiltrated is morally bankrupt and Tuomainen provides an intriguing study of the base motivations and jealousies that drive human behaviour.

I found *Dark As My Heart* one of the most compelling, emotionally satisfying and beautifully realised crime thrillers that I have encountered this year. The clarity and deceptively simple style of Tuomainen's prose is utterly compelling, underlined by his assured use of more than one literary form, and yet with this clever manipulation and lyricism of the language and form of the book, Tuomainen never loses sight of keeping the reader engaged by the central mystery that drives the plot. Wonderful.

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### Gretel says

*Dark as My Heart* is a book about seeking vengeance and/or closure. Aleksi Kivi gets a job as a handyman for the mysterious Henrik Saarinen, who he believes behind the mysterious disappearance of his mother. Aleksi has waited all these years and after becoming orphaned and being placed into the care system, he wants justice and vengeance.

This is a short book. It has big print and almost finger-sized gaps between lines and is more of a novella than a novel. Tuomainen writes in clean, crisp prose with short chapters from Aleksi's point of view. Because of the minimalist prose I have to admit that some of the characters felt a little undeveloped to me, especially the women. What was Aleksi's mother really like? What was her life like? How did it shape the relationship with her son? We are told that Aleksi's mother worked for Saarinen, she had a love interest in her life and she liked literature because she named her son after author Aleksis Kivi (yes, his name bugged me while reading the book). Amanda Saarinen, daughter and heir to Henrik's fortune, is also not very well fleshed out, apart from being a flirtatious woman.

I was gripped due to the book's length and because of Tuomainen's well-placed dark turns in the story. It's easy to read from the text that all the years of not knowing what happened to his mother has really ground Aleksi down, turning him into a broken human being and you start to root for him, hoping his hunch will take him somewhere. There was one twist that I found a bit too outrageous to comprehend, and it felt as if it was added gratuitously (view spoiler).

The cover sings Tuomainen's praises, calling him Finland's Top Crime Writer. After reading *The Healer* and his newest English offering *Dark as My Heart*, I'm not entirely convinced. An easy, dark read that could've been developed a little more in places. I hope Tuomainen's next book is a bit longer and more fleshed out. I think Kati Hiekkapelto is Finland's best crime writer, just sayin'.

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### Kaisa says

Huono. Tylsä. Löysä.

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### Kerrie says

In some ways this plot reminded me of THE TRAP which I read recently, and also one of the themes of Pauline Rowson's Portsmouth series which also deals with a mother who disappears when her son is in his teens.

In the long run, I thought the author was struggling to bring the story of DARK AS MY HEART to a resolution. The central theme is the search for understanding what happened to Aleksi's mother twenty years earlier. Aleksi and the original police investigator are both convinced that the murderer struck again ten years later and so he will strike again on the 20th anniversary of his mother's disappearance.

Aleksi thinks he recognises the voice of millionaire Henrik Saarinen as that of a friend of his mother and

becomes convinced that he is the murderer. He takes a job as a caretaker on Saarinen's estate so he can keep a close eye on him.

The introduction of other characters: a daughter, a housekeeper, a chauffeur, as well as the detective now semi-retired and dying of cancer, pad the plot out, provide red herrings, and muddy the waters.

The setting has a definite Finnish flavour reinforced by use of a number of Finnish place names. The plot is very noir and for me there were one or two strands that really served no purpose.

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### **James Perkins says**

This is a Finnish crime novel with a difference. Aleksi, the narrator, is not a reporter or a detective. He's just a guy in his thirties wondering why his mother went missing 20 years ago, and determined to find the solution. Of course, policemen must appear, since there were and are crimes involved in the narrative. There must be red herrings, since his mother's disappearance is a mystery, and it would be boring to go right to the solution directly. In other words, it has the potential to be really good. However, this book is missing a few things essential to a brilliant crime thriller. Tuomainen mentions Helsinki locations a lot, but as somebody very familiar with Helsinki, I still didn't get a good sense of place - just a few suburb and street names and an occasional mention of the weather. Aleksi is a dull narrator, so it was hard to relate to him and care about his quest, and suspense was so lacking that I was not really interested in knowing what had happened to his mother. Lastly, the solution was too easy to guess. I am usually terrible at anticipating the end of any crime novel, but I figured this one out about half-way through, and that certainly dulled the dramatic tension. Then there was the writing style. Admittedly, I read an English translation of the original Finnish, but it was still peppered with half-finished sentences that are the literate equivalent of fingernails on a blackboard. And the title should be *As Dark as My Heart*; poorly-rendered titles do not encourage readers. Three positives: the book used a clever idea; despite its flaws, I still read to the end; and it was set in a place I know well. But overall, it doesn't rate more than C+. It's like a first novel that shows promise but you would expect much more from his next effort. Perhaps I will try another Tuomainen novel and see if he gets any better.

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