



## Little Siberia

**Antti Tuomainen**

**David Hackston, Translator**

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A meteorite plunges from the sky, its impact stirring up a small Finnish community's vices. This celestial act begins *Little Siberia*, the latest engrossing title from snark noir master Antti Tuomainen.

Who owns the heavens? If you ask disgraced race car driver Tarvainen, he's entitled to at least a piece. After all, he only missed a meteorite-braining by centimeters; when his car came to a stop with the steaming treasure in his passenger's seat, it felt like providence. But scientists are laying claim to the rock, too. They've valued it at a million euros—enough to change anyone's life. Until they can retrieve it, the meteorite waits in Humevaara, guarded by local volunteers.

Among these volunteers is Joel, a practical priest who's got more on his mind than the possibility of the sky falling down. His wife, Krista, has announced that she's pregnant—inexplicably, as Joel is unable to propagate. For Joel, the shadowy figures who're planning to steal the meteorite are an unwelcome distraction from his search for deeper truths.

While guarding the meteorite, Joel is beamed by intruders, witnesses a body explode, and is left in a car with a corpse. But because he is a master at keeping secrets, this intrigue occurs just beyond the public's eye. In the daylight, he evades his tormentors and instead confronts parishioner questions regarding the end times, the tough choice between dishonesty and death, and the morality of kidnapping an elk.

Through it all, Tuomainen maintains his singular tone, which mixes black humor with genuine, sometimes biting, sympathy for desperate people, provided that none take their needfulness too far. Joel's thoughtful theological musings are an attractive addition to the mix. *Little Siberia* is a gripping thriller whose complications pile to precarious, intoxicating heights.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (March / April 2020)

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