

The Father

Anton Svensson

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Svensson pens a compelling narrative with themes of loyalty, obligation, revenge, and independence, paced as tightly and methodically as military tactical maneuvers.

The first few pages of the Swedish thriller *The Father* establish the traumatic early-life stories of three bank-robbing brothers, the Swedish Militärligan, or the Military League. They commit their crimes in 1990s Sweden, proving to be both brazen and methodical, and more audacious with each crime. The novel is attributed to Anton Svensson, a pseudonym for a writing team comprised of investigative journalist Anders Roslund and screenwriter Stefan Thunberg; Thunberg confesses that their novel was inspired by the true story of his own family.

The brothers' early childhood is dominated by their alcoholic, violent Yugoslavian father, Ivan, and their abused and fearful mother, Britt-Marie. The novel is made up of chapters that oscillate between this childhood and the present day, as well as chapters with alternating viewpoints focusing on Leo Dûvnjac, the eldest brother; John Broncks, the detective obsessed with catching them; and Ivan.

Outwardly, Leo is a responsible twenty-four-year-old who owns his own construction company. His brothers, Felix and Vincent, work for him, as does his childhood friend, Jasper. When Leo decides to rob banks so that neither he nor his brothers will ever have to be dependent on anyone else again, he devises an ingenious plan to empty out one of the Swedish military's storage bunkers. With an arsenal of submachine guns, AK4s, and KSP 58s, Leo, his brothers, and Jasper begin their quest to rob as many banks as necessary until they have all the money they could possibly want.

Team Svensson pens a compelling narrative with themes of loyalty, obligation, revenge, and independence, paced as tightly and methodically as military tactical maneuvers. While the character of John Broncks serves as a tenacious foe, he seems less developed than the brothers at times and has a thought process that seems a bit contrived.

For fans of Henning Mankell and Scandinavian thrillers in general, *The Father* is an excellent addition to the genre. The narrative is fluid, with an even continuity that speaks well of Elizabeth Clark Wessel's translation. After such a suspenseful thriller from Svensson, a sequel will be anticipated greatly.

MONICA CARTER (Summer 2016)

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