



## The Iron Chariot: The Original Scandinavian Crime Novel

*Stein Riverton , Lucy Moffatt (Translator)*

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‘The founder of the modern Norwegian crime novel’ – Jo Nesbo

On a blazing hot summer’s day, holidaymakers at a guesthouse on a Norwegian island are shocked to discover a fellow guest has been found murdered out on a desolate plain. The nameless narrator, an author, was the last person to see the victim alive; shortly afterwards, he was disturbed by a noise like ‘a rattling of chains’. A local tells him this is ‘the iron chariot’, which is said to presage death.

**Detective Asbjorn Krag** is summoned from the capital of Kristiania, and sets about investigating the murder. When a similar death occurs on the plain, it is again preceded by the eerie sound of the iron chariot, which leaves no tracks. Mystery is added to mystery when the victim turns out to be a man believed to have died several years earlier.

Drawn unwillingly into the investigation, the narrator is puzzled by the enigmatic detective’s apparent inaction, and troubled by unfolding events. These begin to take a toll on his mental wellbeing and he sinks into a state of dread, exacerbated by mysterious happenings at the cabin where he is staying.

So profound is his unease that he feels he must leave the island. Then Krag promises to tell him the solution to the mystery...

**Voted #2 in a poll of the greatest Norwegian crime novels of all time, *The Iron Chariot* is a classic of the genre that is now getting a long overdue publication in English.**

‘This is a classic Norwegian crime story. It was written over 100 years ago. Riverton is regarded as the founder of the modern Norwegian crime novel and he is a great writer.’ – Jo Nesbo

‘I’ve sketched out a fine new detective novel. Or not exactly a detective novel but a thrilling tale, a sensational tale, the most exciting novel I have ever written. The name of the book will be *The Iron Chariot*’  
– Stein Riverton

## The Iron Chariot: The Original Scandinavian Crime Novel Details

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Author : Stein Riverton , Lucy Moffatt (Translator)

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Riverton , Lucy Moffatt (Translator)**

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## From Reader Review The Iron Chariot: The Original Scandinavian Crime Novel for online ebook

### Ken Fredette says

For a book that was published in 1909 it was fantastic. I liked that he used I and never named the person who was telling the story. Every other person had a name the Gjaernaes', Carsten, and Hilde, the Forester (Blinde), the Fisherman (Jan Jansen), and Asbjorn Krag (the policeman). He went through the whole story giving leading questions and involving several other people as red herrings. Giving descriptions of the iron chariot as not leaving any tracks, he leads you into his ending with anticipation. It was a very interesting story to read as it had newspapers and the telegraph and no other forms to communicate with. I would highly recommend this book to read.

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### Mike says

This classic mystery from Norway is over 100-years-old. I wasn't sure what to expect from it but I was curious so I thought 'Why not?', I'm glad I gave it a chance.

The story begins when a body is discovered on a remote vacation island in Norway. An enigmatic detective is called in to investigate and things proceed from there. The iron chariot of the title is part of a local legend, people seem to hear the noise of it - chains rattling and the like - whenever something mysterious or sinister occurs.

As told by the anonymous narrator (a guest vacationing on the island) the story takes on a standard Agatha Christie-type feel (though this author predates Christie's heroes)... guests staying in a somewhat remote location are visited by mystery and murder. The language naturally reflects the time in which the original story was written, it is a little stilted and overly proper from a modern perspective.

Once the story gets going there is a gradual shift in the narrative. It goes from a straight ahead mystery similar to Agatha Christie or perhaps Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to a more nuanced, slightly off kilter story with slight hints of Edgar Allen Poe. It took me a little by surprise.

So, bottom line, The Iron Chariot was originally written in 1908 Or '09, it's a little dated, there are some slow parts, but it's worth a look. Anyone who enjoys the old classic-style mysteries will almost certainly find something to like with The Iron Chariot.

\*\*\*Special thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for allowing me the opportunity to read and review this title

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### **Sue G says**

For a translated book written in 1909 this was immensely readable and didn't feel dated. If you put it into context with crime fiction which came later it seems way ahead of its time.

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### **Anne says**

I believe this is the oldest book I've ever read, but despite the fact that it was first published in 1909, it doesn't give you the feeling of actually being that old. The story is capturing, ahead of it's time and with a nice twist at the end. Definitely worth my time.

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### **Tony Whipp says**

More Gothic than Crime/Thriller, I fear I was rather disappointed by this book. The setting, in early twentieth century Norway, never gets to feel real. Ditto the characters - at least, many of them - who are mostly put in for a purpose that became clearer as I read. As for the denouement, that had become apparent to me by half-way through. As I say - disappointing.

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### **Alexandra Crocodile says**

I wrote a review of this book on my blog - but if you're too lazy to click on the link I can tell you that this book's M.O. is similar to Christie's "the murder of Roger Ackroyd", only 10 times worse. Horrible stuff.

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### **J. Kay says**

#### **Interesting twisted plot.**

This story is timeless; Originally published in 1909, a complex plot with hints of Sherlock Holmes and other classic fiction.

I'm recommending it to my Bookclub.

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## **brian lewis says**

### **Original Plot**

Good story different from most murder mysteries near the end became obvious who was the murderer was but enjoyable none the less.

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## **Ragnhild says**

Opprinnelig gitt ut i 1909, er boken en av de første av sitt slag. Kan minne om en slags blanding av Poirot og Sherlock Holmes. God, gammeldags krim med en uforutsett twist på slutten - hva mer kan man be om?

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## **Rowena Hoseason says**

This is a brand-new translation of a Norwegian novel that's more than 100 years old – so don't pick it up expecting cutting-edge Scandi crime or the bleak brutality of Nordic noir.

Instead The Iron Chariot offers a nostalgic interlude in the golden age of the private detective. Puzzle-solver and independent investigator Asbjørn Krag is nothing less than the Norwegian equivalent of Sherlock Holmes, and this story is every bit as eerie and unsettling as The Hound Of The Baskervilles.

The Iron Chariot is a clever blend of gothic suspense – all swirling mists and the melancholia of the midnight sun – and the art of intertwined plots, in which sleight of hand and deductive reasoning simultaneously confound and reward the reader. Some aspects of the writing style feel a little twee to the 21st century eye, but the author establishes the outline of crime fiction to come. There's a tip of the hat to forensic science, the idiosyncratic investigator, a rising sense of dread and uncertainty – and in common with today's trendy psychological thrillers, all is far from what it seems. The iron chariot itself is a menacing presence; perhaps a haunting from the past, perhaps a portent of an oppressive future...

An unusual read, then. If you enjoy classic crime and first-generation gothic ghost stories then it's likely to entertain. If you prefer domestic dramas or 'inside the mind of a serial killer' thrillers then it'll most likely mystify you, but not in the way Stein Riverton intended.

Congrats to the publisher, Abandoned Bookshop, for taking the risk of resurrecting such an unusual novel. Likewise, translator Lucy Moffatt has done a wonderful job of capturing the atmosphere of Norway in 1909; resisting the temptation to modernise the writing yet making it easily accessible.

8/10

There's a more detailed review over at  
<https://murdermayhemandmore.wordpress...>

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## **Øystein Bjaanes says**

Norwegian crime literature from 1909. Could that be any good? I really didn't know, or care, but I got this

book as a gift when I joined a book club a couple of years ago. Since then, I've noticed it from time to time, and I have assumed it would be worth a read.

It was. Granted, it took some time getting into the language, which (in this edition) is close to the original, if not the original, and thus antiquated. When you get used to it, however, you notice that this is a well-written book. It is not the most sophisticated plot (I read it late last evening, and without really trying to solve the crime, and even then I touched on the solution), but the crime isn't what the book really is about.

In an afterword, the author is quoted that what he tried to achieve here was to describe fear, growing fear, and in that task he has succeeded. The book is told in a first person-narrative, and the narrator steadily descends into panic and fear. This psychological angle is well done, and I found it much to my liking.

I'm glad I finally read this book. I may not seek out the other works from Riverton, as the afterword said his works were of greatly differing quality, and this book was his master piece, but I wouldn't put it past me to pick up another, should I come across it.

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### **Karina says**

Although written in 1909 (!), it is still an exciting murder mystery. Admittedly the private detective (a gentleman detective no less) belongs to another era, but it does not interfere with the pleasure of reading. An added bonus is the wonderful setting, a beautiful isolated island off the Norwegian coast. All in all, good fun.

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### **Simon Roy Hughes says**

Three years after the death of Henrik Ibsen, another Norwegian literary giant released his most well-known novel, *Jernvognen*, which in Lucy Moffatt's translation has been given the title *The Iron Chariot*. Unlike Ibsen, who was a metaphorical giant, Stein Riverton—the pen-name of Sven Elvestad—was a giant in a literal sense, standing 197cm and weighing upwards of 100kg. He was myopic in a literal sense; but as an admirer of Mussolini, and the first journalist to publish an interview with Adolf Hitler in a foreign (i.e. non-German) publication, his myopia was also metaphorical. He eventually drank himself to death at the age of 50, in 1934. In the meantime, he published 98 novels, 18 of which, including *The Iron Chariot*, were released in 1909.

The unnamed narrator in *The Iron Chariot* is one of several people at a summer resort on a Norwegian island who discover the body of the forestry inspector Blinde on the road from Gjørnæs farm. Two more bodies subsequently turn up. On the occasion of each death, people in the vicinity report having heard the “infinitely distant sound of loose chains rattling,” which is consistent with a local legend of the eponymous iron chariot: “whenever some terrible thing was about to happen at Gjørnæs Farm, or whenever somebody was about to die, people always heard the iron chariot rattling its way across the plain.” Asbjørn Krag, the detective called upon to solve mystery of the deaths, solves the case with very little effort. The reader, however, despite being schooled in the last 150 years of detective fiction, is hard-pressed to provide a satisfactory solution before Krag makes his arrest. As such, the novel makes for compelling reading.

*The Iron Chariot* was the first detective novel in Norwegian literature, and appearing as early as it did, there are not many predecessors to choose from and compare with. The two that spring to mind are both from

English-language literature: Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin in "Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), and Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes novels and tales (1887–1893, 1903–1927).

Krag's investigative method (including staring at the objects of his interrogation, taking ample time to ruminate over matters, and an extensive network of correspondance) is less reminiscent of Holmes's deduction ("when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth") than it is of Dupin's ratiocination ("the extent of information obtained lies not so much in the validity of the inference as in the quality of the observation"). In fact the depth of Krag's reflection disquiets the poor narrator, whose nerves are increasingly fraught as the novel progresses.

The narrative structure is one that we recognise as quite conventional for detective fiction: a demarcated geographical area and limited galley of characters, an apparently complicated mystery to explain, ample misdirection, a detective who has matters well in hand, and a weighty plot twist. Again, *The Iron Chariot* is effective as a detective novel, both engaging and atmospheric; it provides a very satisfying read.

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## **Marcus Hobson says**

I thought this was a brilliant read.

Set on an island in Norway, it is a murder mystery. Called by many the first of the Nordic Noir novels, it still certainly holds its own in the company of all the modern crime masters. For me it captures the essence of the place and location, spruce forests, boulders and rocky outcrops, marshes and a chilly ocean, all basking in the brief heat of summer.

A body is found and a detective is summoned from Kristiania (modern day Oslo) to investigate the crime. Strange nocturnal noises are heard, clanking iron chains, and seem to be the herald of death and perhaps even murder.

First published in 1908, *The Iron Chariot* came out 12 years before the first Agatha Christie novel with Poirot. In many ways the central detective, called Asbjorn Krag, feels like a cross between Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot. I think it is that confidence that he has worked everything out already and is just waiting for some of the missing pieces to fall into place. Krag even has the pince nez, the tiny spectacles that balance on the nose, just like Poirot.

A great story, available in a new translation in e-Book format.

Thanks to Scott at The Abandoned Bookshop for proving me a copy to review.

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