



Blackout: A Thriller

Ragnar Jónasson

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A huge bestseller in England, France, and Australia, the third book in the Dark Iceland series from a spectacular new crime writer.

"Easily the best yet. Beautifully written and elegantly paced with a plot that only gradually becomes visible, as if the reader had been staring into the freezing fog waiting for shapes to emerge."—*The Guardian*, UK (Readers' Books of the Year 2016)

"A chiller of a thriller whose style and pace are influenced by Jonasson's admiration for Agatha Christie. It's good enough to share shelf space with the works of Yrsa Sigurdardottir and Arnaldur Indridason, Iceland's crime novel royalty."—*The Washington Post*

On the shores of a tranquil fjord in Northern Iceland, a man is brutally beaten to death on a bright summer's night. As the 24-hour light of the arctic summer is transformed into darkness by an ash cloud from a recent volcanic eruption, a young reporter leaves Reykjavik to investigate on her own, unaware that an innocent person's life hangs in the balance. Ari Thor Arason and his colleagues on the tiny police force in Siglufjörður struggle with an increasingly perplexing case, while their own serious personal problems push them to the limit. What secrets does the dead man harbour, and what is the young reporter hiding? As silent, unspoken horrors from the past threaten them all, and the darkness deepens, it's a race against time to find the killer before someone else dies...

Dark, terrifying and complex, *Blackout* is an exceptional, atmospheric thriller from one of Iceland's finest crime writers.

Blackout: A Thriller Details

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From Reader Review Blackout: A Thriller for online ebook

Sandy says

It's the summer of 2010 & Iceland is just getting back to normal after the eruption of Eyjafjallajökull that spring. In Siglufjörður, Ari Thór Arason is settling into life as a small town cop. Two years ago, he was living in Reykjavík with girlfriend Kristín when he qualified as a police officer. But jobs were scarce so when an offer came from up north, he jumped.

Crime in the area is usually of the petty variety so Ari is more than a little surprised when he's told a tourist has stumbled over a body. There's no question it was murder & the victim is soon identified as Eliás Freysson, a sub-contractor working on the new tunnel. Freysson divided his time between Siglufjörður & Akureyri (to the southeast), giving Ari & boss Tómas lots of ground to cover as they start to pick apart his life.

In alternate chapters we meet a TV news reporter named Ísru based in Reykjavík. It's a high stress, cutthroat environment & she's slowly dying of boredom from covering the puff pieces assigned by a competitive boss. When news of the murder trickles south, she sees her chance & manages to get sent to Akureyri as a second stringer.

There are several side stories that accompany the murder & each is told through the eyes of the character involved. As chapters alternate & time lines shift, we gradually learn what each has been up to for the year preceding Freysson's death. There are some ugly truths & hidden connections waiting to emerge that gradually weave the story lines together. The title comes from a description of the 1947 eruption of Hekla but proves an apt metaphor for the dark burdens some of these characters carry.

This is not a shoot 'em up thriller. The author takes time building the characters, making you privy to their thoughts & complicit with their actions. The fact we know more than Ari lends the story a sense of urgency as we follow his investigation, wondering how he's going to uncover what we already know in time to save a life. The author does a good job of showing the grunt work most cops endure until one casually tossed out comment spins the case into focus.

All the while we're surrounded by one of the most important characters, the setting. Gusty winds, summer sun tarnished by ash & looming mountains that silently bear witness. The isolation that sneaks up on you within minutes of passing the last house in town. This is a location that shapes people's thoughts & actions.

The pace ramps up for the final quarter as some big pieces fall into place. The last few pages make it clear there are some changes ahead for Ari & ensure fans will be scrambling to get their hands on the next one.

Shout out to the those responsible for cover design in this series. Each has a clean, striking graphic that somehow manages to send a little chill up your spine.

Just a note to all those who have been waiting to devour the english translations of this series. The original books were not written or published in chronological order. If you want to follow Ari Thór's journey as it happens, the order is as follows: Snowblind, Blackout, Rupture, Nightblind. There are 2 other books I have not found translations for yet: Fölsk No'ta (this is the very first book that precedes Snowblind) & Andköf (will be called Whiteout, takes place between Rupture & Nightblind in terms of the MC's timeline).

Thomas says

4 stars

This is book 2 in the Dark Iceland series. It is centered around 2 people, Isrun, a reporter for a tv station in Reykjavik, and Ari Thor, a policeman in Siglufjordur. A man is found brutally murdered in Skagafjordur, whose address is in Siglufjordur and the 3 man police team in Siglufjordur is asked to assist with interviews in the investigation. Isrun, ambitious to get ahead, sees this as her ticket to advancement and wangles an assignment to go and report on the death.

The other 2 officers in Siglufjordur are Hijnur and Tomas, each of whom has personal problems, causing them difficulty in performing their duties. Ari also has his own problems. How they solve this murder and unearth other crimes connected to it makes for an interesting mystery.

The book takes place during the volcanic eruption of Eyjafjallajökull. People living in the southern half of Iceland talk about the volcanic grit in the air.

I read this book because I spent 3 nights in Siglufordur as part of a Iceland land tour last summer. It is a lovely little town that had a thriving fishing industry for hundreds of years until the herrings disappeared about forty years ago. Tourism has now replaced the fishing industry. There is a herring museum in town. Our guide said that life was very difficult during the eruption. Everyone wore face masks.

I recommend this series to anyone who enjoys Icelandic fiction or mysteries in general. The translation was excellent. I read it in 2 days.

One quote: "She could taste the polluted air in her mouth. The ash cloud over the city had grown thicker and heavier as the day passed. The sun was blotted out by the heavy haze, its presence behind the grey miasma hidden but still felt as the temperature continued to climb."

Thanks to Minotaur Books/St Martins Press for sending me this eARC through NetGalley.

Monica says

There was a lot of potential in this story but it was so confusing I never totally connected with it. Perhaps if I had read the previous in the series, this one would have made more sense. The mystery/police drama did have a nice plot twist that I found completely surprising.

Thanks to NetGalley for the free copy in exchange for my honest review.

Erin says

Thanks to Netgalley for an e-ARC in exchange for an honest review. Publication Date: August 28th, 2018

A discovered body, a determined journalist, a love stricken cop, and a human trafficking scandal all set in Iceland. This was a fairly straightforward plot with many characters in the spotlight, but I never really felt immersed in the story or particularly shocked by any of the stories twists. It's akin to watching a season finale and having no idea what the characters have gone through to get to this point. But I LOVE the cover and have no quibbles about the translation.

Kate~Bibliophile Book Club says

Couldn't love Ragnar's books any more if I tried. Let's be honest, I'm an unapologetic fangirl for the Dark Iceland series and Blackout is no different.

Set after Snowblind, but before Nightblind, the events of Blackout are different to anything so far. An old fashioned whodunnit, and a lot of whydunnit makes it a very interesting read.

There is murder, intrigue, and more than a little suspense as the story unfolds piece by piece and page by page. There are many characters to follow throughout Blackout, but this book is character-rich, and with the introduction of Isrún I think the author has a wonderful addition to the series. An adept reporter, with a past coming back to haunt her make for an excellent story running alongside the events in Blackout.

With Blackout being set in the midst of a volcanic ash cloud, this makes the atmosphere much more menacing and dark. I've always sung Ragnar's praises with regards to his use of location and descriptive atmospheric passages in setting the scene for his novels, and this one is no different.

I read this book slower than the previous two, partly because life got in the way, but partly because I wanted to immerse myself in the cold dark wilds of Iceland and transport myself there alongside the characters. I also now want to go and re-read Snowblind and Nightblind again because my mind is still in Siglufjörður.

Reading these books, catching up with Ari Thor and returning to Iceland feels like catching up with an old friend. Though the subject matter is dark, VERY dark in Blackout, it's still comforting to get lost between the pages of a Ragnar Jónasson novel.

I cannot recommend these books highly enough! I loved Blackout, got thoroughly immersed in the story, and I didn't want it to end.

All the stars. Always.

Paul says

Black Out – A Bright Light in the Dark

Ragnar Jónasson is back with the third in his Black Iceland series with Black Out, which is truly a masterpiece of Icelandic Noir, which is distinctive from its Nordic cousin. Once again with a nod to the golden age of the detective fiction, Jónasson has written a really distinctive and evocative and thoroughly modern crime novel. Even if it seems like it is an old fashioned whodunit there are more twists and turns to keep you guessing.

Black Out is set during the volcanic eruptions of 2010 when the ash clouds kept much of Europe out of the air, Reykjavík rather than have its summertime 24-hour sunlight, the clouds are bringing darkness and choking to the City and the south of Iceland. It is from here that a TV reporter is able to escape and chase a story in the north of the country, unaware that a life of an innocent girl is in the balance, and she can finally face her personal hell.

Ari Thór Arason and his colleague and Inspector Tomas have been drafted in to investigate a murder while leaving Hlynur Ísaksson to man the police station and deal with the problems of the small town of Siglufjörður. Ari and Tomas have noticed that Hlynur is not himself and do not know what he is taking his

mind away from what he should be doing.

Ragnar Jónasson has given us quite a complex and enjoyable plot, where there are plenty of twists and turns, so nothing is predictable, which adds to the enjoyment. He has given us a powerfully evocative plot, a modern plot with issues that are feared across western Europe. Once again you feel the claustrophobia and the smallness of Iceland, while being contemporary and yet timeless.

Ragnar Jónasson is the award winning, Crown Prince of Icelandic Noir whose work has been excellently translated by Quentin Bates delivering a piece of work that is second to none. He brings together the best of Nordic Noir with the classic whodunit and has delivered a masterpiece. There are more twists and turns than twister, that will leave you breathless, but deeply engrossed in the story.

Ragnar Jónasson is a bright light in the dark, who is getting better with every novel he creates, is a work of stark beauty.

Tazkatie says

Brilliant... Love love love this series

Jen says

June 2010. Reykjavik is still recovering from the eruption of Eyjafjallajokull the previous month, the atmosphere somewhat tainted. Reporter Ísrún fears that this will be just another routine day for her, knowing that her boss, Ívar, will assign her yet another mundane report, anything to prevent her from challenging him for promotion. And yet when she hears of a dead body found in the north of the island, in the town of Skagafjörður, Ísrún is determined to be the one to look into it. Leaving Reykjavik to investigate a new angle on her own, Ísrún has her own reasons for wanting to look into the murder, little knowing that it is an investigation which will lead to a surprising discovery and a heart breaking admission.

Ari Thór is still working as a cop in the northern Icelandic town of Siglufjörður. Two years out of police college, his relationship with both Kristin and Uglá are over, and his focus is purely on his career. When Tómas, is called in to assist on the investigation into the murdered man found in Skagafjörður, and with his other junior officer Hlynur currently losing his edge on the job, he turns to Ari Thór for help.

In truth, all three officers are distracted. Tómas by his wife's absence, having moved to Reykjavik to study; Ari Thór by his desire to win Kristin back and his obsession with her possible relationship with someone in Akureyri; and Hlynur with a guilty secret from his past which has come back to haunt him.

In an increasingly frustrating investigation, neither man can possibly know what a dark turn this case will take. With key witnesses in the investigation hiding truths from the police, and the victim himself having a seemingly murky past, nothing is quite as it seems. And yet, unknown to them all, an innocent victim's life hangs in the balance. As the ash clouds darken the sky over once Siglufjörður more, every minute they waste brings them one step closer to having more blood on their hands.

'Black Out' is the third instalment in Ragnar Jónasson's Dark Iceland series. Set two years after the first story, 'Snow Blind', this starts to bridge the gap in Ari Thór's story. We catch up with Ari Thór when all of

his personal life seems to be falling apart. Separated from Kristin after having confessed to his fling with Ugly, and being ignored by Ugly after finally admitting to having had a girlfriend, Ari Thór is at a personal low. Work is all he has. And what a case he is faced with.

This is a complex story, so many threads weaving together to make what is a real who-dunnit of a mystery. The story is darker than the previous two novels, the themes involved very topical and sensitive in nature. I won't say too much as it may spoil the plot but there is an element of abuse running throughout, although more implied than gratuitously described, and also of one of the most common and enduring criminal plagues of modern times, human trafficking.

As always, Jónasson has created a claustrophobic, almost suffocating sense of atmosphere, not simply because of its timing among the volcanic eruptions of 2010. I remember that time well. It almost stopped my trip to Vietnam. Even on the tail end of it travel wise, I can only imagine what the impact was like in Iceland itself, the threat of a potential second, more devastating eruption from neighbouring Katla always in the mind of those who live there. Through 'Black Out' you do get a sense of this, the way in which the darkness envelopes everyone and everything in spite of what should have been a hot summer of long days and short nights, adding an extra level of menace to an already dark story. And creating the perfect, oppressive setting, while still giving the reader a sense of the beauty that makes up the Icelandic landscape, is what Jónasson does so well. This story is no different.

We learn a little more of Hlynur in this story too. He has a chequered past, one which he would rather forget but one which someone, somewhere, is determined that he cannot escape from. It is somewhat of a surprise, but then perhaps explains his motivations and actions in 'Snow Blind' where he always sought to expose the bad and protect those who he felt were innocent or abused in some way. It is hard to know exactly how I felt about Hlynur by the end of the novel, sympathetic or apathetic, but at least, I understood him.

The narrative moves from past to present, each aside informing the action more and building a gradual understanding and tension. When the true consequences of the murder become clear at the start of part two, the sense of urgency for the reader picks up, although the investigation remains frustratingly slow for the police who know nothing of what the reader is privy to. This is a brilliant twist, bringing the reader into an exclusive club, understanding what is at stake but unable to do anything other than will someone to stand up and tell the truth for once. And then Ari Thór's actions towards the end, leaving the investigation when it is so close to resolution and running Kristin instead, stand to surprise you once again, and to make you wonder if this is another loose thread which will be tied off in the remaining novels.

I am thoroughly enjoying the Dark Iceland series. Stunning setting and imagery, tight and twisting plotting, and absolutely engaging, if somewhat moody characters, in truly gripping stories told by someone who has a clear passion and love of his characters and his country. Yet another brilliant translation by Quentin Bates, and the third book I have listened to on audiobook, it has made long journeys to Scotland and back simply fly by. I absolutely cannot wait for the final books in the series, and yet I say that with a certain amount of trepidation as, when they get here, this fabulous journey will end. I'm not sure I'm ready to think about that just yet.

A chilling, dark and atmospheric 5 stars.

Heidi says

I love the bleakness and stark setting of Nordic noir and have become a great fan of the Dark Iceland series for exactly those reasons, as well as a fondness for detective Ari Thor Arason, who finds himself marooned in the small fishing village of Siglufjörður in the remote North of the country for his first police placement.

Whilst the first book in the series saw the village engulfed in winter and virtually cut off from its surroundings, we now get to see it in summer, and the 24-hour daylight that can be as strange as the winter darkness. The rest of Iceland is engulfed in smoke and ash from two volcanic eruptions, which adds the somewhat foreboding atmosphere that is so characteristic of Jonasson's writing. Ari Thor takes a bit of a backward step in *Blackout*, as we are introduced to young journalist Isrun, who is investigating the same crime as Ari Thor – the brutal murder of a man in the neighbouring town of Skagafjörður. Ari Thor's superior Tomas and his colleague Hlynur also make a repeat appearance, as does Kristin, his ex-girlfriend, who has met a new man after her split with Ari Thor.

I really liked Isrun and enjoyed the different angle her investigation added to the case. Like every other character in the book, Isrun comes with a troubled past that added extra depth to the story. But as usual, it is the setting that adds the richest character of all, shaping people's thoughts and actions and drawing the reader deeply into this wild and remote place. Perhaps it is the armchair travel that has me so utterly addicted to the series, but I emerged from the pages slightly dazed as if I had awoken in a different world completely alien to my own. Such is Jonasson's skill that the atmosphere perpetrates deeply into the reader's psyche, until it almost seems like reality.

I will not go into the plot of this whodunit, other than to say that it is a classical police procedural with the added angle from Isrun's rogue investigation, and all the strings tie together very satisfactorily in the end. I thoroughly enjoyed this latest instalment in the Dark Iceland series and have already purchased *Nightblind*, which is the 2nd book in the series but chronologically takes place a few years after this one – and I look forward to see what life is holding for Ari Thor five years on!

In summary, if you like Nordic noir and haven't discovered this series yet, I urge you to do so! Jonasson's writing is atmospheric and will transport you to a wild and remote place, where murder has that extra chill factor that characterises the genre.

3.5 stars

Thank you to Netgalley and St Martin's Press for the free electronic copy of this novel and for giving me the opportunity to provide an honest review.

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Sue says

While I have enjoyed all I have read of the Dark Iceland series, *Snowblind* and *Nightblind*, *Blackout* is now my favorite. The combination of a complex, multilayered plot with a wide cast of new characters, all of whom seem to be hiding or outrunning something in the past that won't stay behind them worked well for me and kept me glued to the book the last two days. Even Tomas and Ari Thor, the well known local police, have other things on their minds along with their duties. Is all of this because they are now living in summer with near 24 hours of light? Or is it somehow related to ash from the recent volcano eruption falling increasingly over Reykjavík, clouding that city and worrying even those who live at a distance? Many, if not most, people who live in this small island nation have heard tales of past volcano eruptions, of life being turned upside down by ashy blackouts.

Here in northern Iceland the blackouts are more metaphoric, where the sun may be bright almost

continuously but there are lies and half truths and unspoken thoughts interfering with a murder investigation; a man has been found outside of a home he has been helping to build, beaten to death.

There are many strands to this story but I urge patience. You will be rewarded. There are several moments in this book where I felt truly satisfied with what Jonasson had accomplished. And I highly recommend this book.

One note on this series. This is listed as book three in the Dark Iceland series. It is the third to be translated into English. The action of this story actually takes place before that of Nightblind, listed as D.I. #2. I have read these books in the order of the English translation. This may lead to some temporary confusion as you begin Blackout, since you are moving backward in time, but I had no major difficulty with it. Some are reading these two books in reverse order. I would have to investigate further to find how they were published originally in Iceland but I will leave that for another. I recommend all of the books I have read and I plan to read the rest of the Dark Iceland series when they are available.

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher through NetGalley in return for an honest review.

Beata says

I am grateful to Netgalley for the ARC in exchange for the honest review.

An interesting read with Icelandic volcanos in the background whose ash is all around covering some secrets and traumatic experience from childhood which have their tragic consequence in adult life. The descriptions of the locations add a lot to the ambience of the novel.

Christine says

Oh yes Ari Thor is back in Nightblind. I could not be more thrilled!

This is the third in the Dark Iceland series published by Orenda Books. Chronologically, it takes place after Snowblind and before Nightblind. Blackout takes us back to small town Iceland, where murder shocks the claustrophobic small community and Ari Thor is on hand to investigate. The time frame is 2010, when the ash clouds were looming over Europe. I remember that well.

This is a tale of a police investigation into a violent murder. Ari Thor and his colleagues are looking into the death of Elias, a local contractor and charity worker found murdered. Who was he? Ari Thor is a little distracted by the breakdown of his relationship with Kristin. There is also more on Ari Thor's colleague, Hylnur. We see how the events in Nightblind will play out for him. Simultaneously a young journalist Isrun is doing her own private investigation into Elias. What are her motives?

As usual with Jonasson, there is a huge sense of an oppressive atmosphere in the small community. The clouds of ash just add to this. They are drowning out the daylight and making it even more tough for the town's inhabitants. Slowly we follow the investigation from both sides, wondering whodunnit. Isrun seems that little bit more determined than Ari Thor to find answers. When we find get to the truth, there is a poignancy about the level of human depravity.

I would like to give a shout out to the translator, Quentin Bates. He truly makes this an incredible and beautiful crime read. Sometimes it is hard to imagine this was written in Icelandic. Thank you!

If you have not heard of this series or have just been considering them, give them a go! Do not be put off by the Icelandic names. They are a modern day crime classic, with a great detective in Ari Thor! Add my name to the growing legion of Ari Thor fans.

Chelsea Humphrey says

While I have yet to read Rupture, Blackout is by far my favorite in the series that I have read to date. Yes, each installment in the series features that dark, oppressing nature, but this one had something even more sinister lying between it's pages. Even though these books are deeply atmospheric and slow burning in pace, I found I couldn't absorb the information fast enough as I was dying to get to the big reveal in the end. Ragnar has a way with taking a seemingly normal story and twisting it into the unreal; these books are completely in the realm of the natural, but the setting is so rich that it gives the books an otherworldly feature. I had none of this book figured out and was surprised by every last turn; I couldn't give this book anything less than 5 stars in good conscience. Those who are fans of the series will be blown away by what the author has crafted in this entry and by where he is taking the characters we have grown attached to.

***Many thanks to Karen at Orenda Books for providing my copies; it always feels like she's doing me a favor by allowing me to review these books!**

Laura Rash says

I'm confused as to the reading order of this series bc this book continues right after Snowblind but you're supposed to read it after Nightblind. But Nightblind recaps what happened in Blackout. So I'm a little let down bc one huge aspect of this story was known to me from the beginning. Other than that I enjoy these books.

Paula Kalin says

What a wonderfully well done follow-up to Snowblind in this dark thriller series!

Blackout again brings the oppressive and menacing atmosphere to this small fishing village in Northern Iceland. A volcano erupts and covers the town with suffocating ash instead of the sun-filled summer the inhabitants are use to. The feeling of isolation is there with you throughout the book.

Ari Thór Arason returns as the most recent addition to the small police force on the hunt again for a murderer. A nice twist is added with a female journalist looking to solve the same crime, but on a different path than Ari (unbeknownst to him).

Blackout brings a slow burn suspense through many subplots with secrets that enhance the enjoyment of reading this novel. The character development is outstanding.

Highly recommend this series.

Many thanks to Minotaur Books and NetGalley for the ARC.

4 out of 5 stars
