

#1 NATIONAL
BESTSELLER

THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO

“Wildly suspenseful.”
—*The Washington Post*

STIEG
LARSSON

Praise for *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*

One of NPR's Top Five Crime and Mystery Novels of 2008

“Dazzling . . . Marvellous characters and a wonderful story built around the most difficult of all plots, the locked room, although here, it’s a remote island . . . It has everything a reader could want and more . . . Don’t miss it.”

—*The Globe and Mail*

“An utterly fresh political and journalistic thriller that is also intimate and moral. In spite of its dark unearthings Stieg Larsson has written a feast of a book, with central characters you will not forget.”

—Michael Ondaatje

“The ballyhoo is fully justified . . . The novel scores on every front—character, story, atmosphere, translation.” —*The Times* (London)

“Already a blazing literary sensation internationally, Swedish journalist’s dark-hearted thriller . . . is now poised to burn up bestseller lists in America . . . To the new breed of Watson and Holmes, *skoal!*” —*Vanity Fair*

“A striking novel, full of passion, an evocative sense of place and subtle insights into venal, corrupt minds.” —*The Observer*

“As vivid as bloodstains on snow—and a perfect one-volume introduction to the unique strengths of Scandinavian crime fiction.” —Lee Child

“Remarkable . . . Like a blast of cold, fresh air to read . . . It features at its center two unique and fascinating characters: a disgraced financial journalist and the absolutely marvelous 24-year-old Lisbeth Salander—a computer-hacking Pippi Longstocking with pierced eyebrows and a survival instinct that should scare anyone who gets in her way.” —*Chicago Tribune*

“Larsson’s novels are a danger to public life. Parks become clogged with readers; the working world is paralyzed—all because no one can let go of his books.” —*Bams* (Germany)

“What a cracking novel! I haven’t read such a stunning thriller debut for years. The way Larsson interweaves his two stories had me in thrall from beginning to end. Brilliantly written and totally gripping.” —Minette Walters

“More than a book, a drug.” —*Nouvel Observateur* (France)

“Swedish crime fiction, like the country itself, has both class and a social conscience. It was only a matter of time before it produced its own *War And Peace* . . . The plotting and pacing are masterful. No wonder Europe has gone wild over Blomkvist and his riveting sidekick.” —*The Sydney Morning Herald* (Australia)

“Combine the chilly Swedish backdrop and moody psychodrama of a Bergman movie with the grisly pyrotechnics of a serial-killer thriller, then add an angry punk

heroine and a down-on-his-luck investigative journalist, and you have the ingredients of Stieg Larsson's first novel . . . Larsson uses his reportorial eye for detail and an instinctive sense of mood to create a noirish picture of Stockholm and a small island community . . . showing us both the bright, shiny lives of young careerists and older aristos, and a seamy underworld where sexual and financial corruption flourish." —*The New York Times*

"When a writer delivers such a complex and fascinating portrayal like that of Lisbeth Salander all we can do is bow down in gratitude. It doesn't get much better than this." —*Gefle Dagblad* (Sweden)

"So much more than a thriller, *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* is a dazzling novel of big ideas. It tackles issues of power, corruption, justice, and innocence—all the while drawing you into the twists and turns of a frighteningly suspenseful mystery." —Harlan Coben

"A fascinating mystery of family and business dynamics with a splendid cast of characters . . . Sex, death, money, power, intrigue—this novel has them all." —*Edmonton Journal*

"Wildly suspenseful . . . Various a serial-killer saga, a search for a missing person and an informed glimpse into the worlds of journalism and business . . . Lisbeth is a punk Watson to Mikael's dapper Holmes, and she's the coolest crime-fighting sidekick to come along in many years." —*The Washington Post*

"A whip-smart heroine and a hunky guy who needs her help? This sexy, addictive thriller is everything you never knew you could get from a crime novel." —*Glamour*

“Dark, labyrinthine, smart, sexy, utterly original, and completely captivating, Stieg Larsson’s *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* delights at every level. Nuanced, sympathetic characters, caught in a tangle of unusual and compelling relationships, grapple with a baffling family mystery and with their own demons in the unique literary environment of modern-day Sweden. This book is artful and grand entertainment. I couldn’t recommend it more highly.” —John Lescroart

“A fine, complex and rewarding novel.” —*The Dallas Morning News*

“In nearly a half-century of reading mystery and crime fiction, I can remember no more captivating or original character than Lisbeth.” —Otto Penzler, editor of *The Black Lizard Big Book of Pulps* and owner of The Mysterious Bookshop

“A striking novel. Just when I was thinking there wasn’t anything new on the horizon, along comes Stieg Larsson with this wonderfully unique story. I was completely absorbed.” —Michael Connelly

“This novel is almost impossible to put down.” —*Times Colonist* (Victoria, B.C.)

“The biggest Swedish phenom since ABBA.” —*People*

“[Larsson] tells his crime story cleverly, but the zing in *Dragon Tattoo* is inked in its two central characters . . . Lisbeth Salander has earned a spot in the sorority [of] my favorite gutsy females.” —*The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland)

“I doubt you will read a better book this year.” —Val McDermid

“Offers compelling chunks of investigative journalism, high-tech sleuthing, and psycho-sexual drama. What a shame that we only have three books in which to watch the charismatic Lisbeth Salander take on the world!” —*Booklist*

“A compelling, well-woven tale that succeeds in transporting the reader to Sweden for a good crime story.” —*Los Angeles Times*

“Cases rarely come much colder than the decades-old disappearance of teen heiress Harriet Vanger from her family’s remote island retreat north of Stockholm, nor do fiction debuts hotter than this European bestseller . . . At once a strikingly original thriller and a vivisection of Sweden’s dirty not-so-little secrets, this first of a trilogy introduces a provocatively odd couple.”
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

“A rip-roaring serial killer adventure.” —*Mail on Sunday* (UK)

PENGUIN CANADA

THE GIRL WITH
THE DRAGON TATTOO

STIEG LARSSON (1954–2004), who lived in Sweden, was the editor-in-chief of the magazine *Expo* and a leading expert on antidemocratic, right-wing extremist and Nazi organizations. He died shortly after delivering the manuscript for this and the two subsequent novels of the Millennium trilogy. His second novel, *The Girl Who Played with Fire*, will be released in August 2009.

ALSO BY STIEG LARSSON

The Girl Who Played with Fire

STIEG
LARSSON
THE GIRL WITH
THE **DRAGON**
TATTOO



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PROLOGUE

A Friday in November

It happened every year, was almost a ritual. And this was his eighty-second birthday. When, as usual, the flower was delivered, he took off the wrapping paper and then picked up the telephone to call Detective Superintendent Morell who, when he retired, had moved to Lake Siljan in Dalarna. They were not only the same age, they had been born on the same day—which was something of an irony under the circumstances. The old policeman was sitting with his coffee, waiting, expecting the call.

“It arrived.”

“What is it this year?”

“I don’t know what kind it is. I’ll have to get someone to tell me what it is. It’s white.”

“No letter, I suppose.”

“Just the flower. The frame is the same kind as last year. One of those do-it-yourself ones.”

“Postmark?”

“Stockholm.”

“Handwriting?”

“Same as always, all in capitals. Upright, neat lettering.”

With that, the subject was exhausted, and not another word was exchanged for almost a minute. The retired policeman leaned back in his kitchen chair and drew on

his pipe. He knew he was no longer expected to come up with a pithy comment or any sharp question which would shed a new light on the case. Those days had long since passed, and the exchange between the two men seemed like a ritual attaching to a mystery which no-one else in the whole world had the least interest in unravelling.

The Latin name was *Leptospermum (Myrtaceae) rubinette*. It was a plant about four inches high with small, heather-like foliage and a white flower with five petals about one inch across.

The plant was native to the Australian bush and uplands, where it was to be found among tussocks of grass. There it was called Desert Snow. Someone at the botanical gardens in Uppsala would later confirm that it was a plant seldom cultivated in Sweden. The botanist wrote in her report that it was related to the tea tree and that it was sometimes confused with its more common cousin *Leptospermum scoparium*, which grew in abundance in New Zealand. What distinguished them, she pointed out, was that *rubinette* had a small number of microscopic pink dots at the tips of the petals, giving the flower a faint pinkish tinge.

Rubinette was altogether an unpretentious flower. It had no known medicinal properties, and it could not induce hallucinatory experiences. It was neither edible, nor had a use in the manufacture of plant dyes. On the other hand, the aboriginal people of Australia regarded as sacred the region and the flora around Ayers Rock.

The botanist said that she herself had never seen one before, but after consulting her colleagues she was to report that attempts had been made to introduce the plant at a nursery in Göteborg, and that it might, of course, be cultivated by amateur botanists. It was difficult to grow in Sweden because it thrived in a dry climate and had to remain indoors half of the year. It would not thrive in calcareous soil and it had to be watered from below. It needed pampering.

The fact of its being so rare a flower ought to have made it easier to trace the source of this particular specimen, but in practice it was an impossible task. There was no

registry to look it up in, no licences to explore. Anywhere from a handful to a few hundred enthusiasts could have had access to seeds or plants. And those could have changed hands between friends or been bought by mail order from anywhere in Europe, anywhere in the Antipodes.

But it was only one in the series of mystifying flowers that each year arrived by post on the first day of November. They were always beautiful and for the most part rare flowers, always pressed, mounted on watercolour paper in a simple frame measuring six inches by eleven inches.

The strange story of the flowers had never been reported in the press; only a very few people knew of it. Thirty years ago the regular arrival of the flower was the object of much scrutiny—at the National Forensic Laboratory, among fingerprint experts, graphologists, criminal investigators, and one or two relatives and friends of the recipient. Now the actors in the drama were but three: the elderly birthday boy, the retired police detective, and the person who had posted the flower. The first two at least had reached such an age that the group of interested parties would soon be further diminished.

The policeman was a hardened veteran. He would never forget his first case, in which he had had to take into custody a violent and appallingly drunk worker at an electrical substation before he caused others harm. During his career he had brought in poachers, wife beaters, con men, car thieves, and drunk drivers. He had dealt with burglars, drug dealers, rapists, and one deranged bomber. He had been involved in nine murder or manslaughter cases. In five of these the murderer had called the police himself and, full of remorse, confessed to having killed his wife or brother or some other relative. Two others were solved within a few days. Another required the assistance of the National Criminal Police and took two years.

The ninth case was solved to the police's satisfaction, which is to say that they knew who the murderer was, but because the evidence was so insubstantial the public prosecutor decided not to proceed with the case. To the detective superintendent's dismay, the statute of limitations eventually put an end to the matter. But all in all he could look back on an impressive career.

He was anything but pleased.

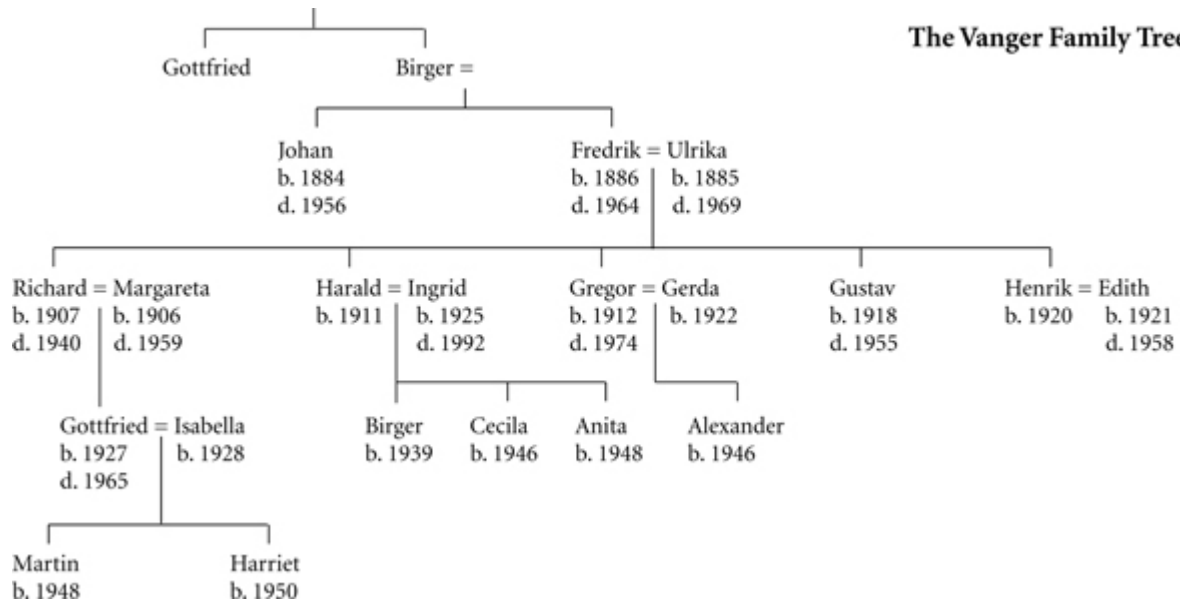
For the detective, the “Case of the Pressed Flowers” had been nagging at him for years—his last, unsolved, and frustrating case. The situation was doubly absurd because after spending literally thousands of hours brooding, on duty and off, he could not say beyond doubt that a crime had indeed been committed.

The two men knew that whoever had mounted the flowers would have worn gloves, that there would be no fingerprints on the frame or the glass. The frame could have been bought in camera shops or stationery stores the world over. There was, quite simply, no lead to follow. Most often the parcel was posted in Stockholm, but three times from London, twice from Paris, twice from Copenhagen, once from Madrid, once from Bonn, and once from Pensacola, Florida. The detective superintendent had had to look it up in an atlas.

After putting down the telephone the eighty-two-year-old birthday boy sat for a long time looking at the pretty but meaningless flower whose name he did not yet know. Then he looked up at the wall above his desk. There hung forty-three pressed flowers in their frames. Four rows of ten, and one at the bottom with four. In the top row one was missing from the ninth slot. Desert Snow would be number forty-four.

Without warning he began to weep. He surprised himself with this sudden burst of emotion after almost forty years.

The Vanger Family Tree



PART 1

Incentive

DECEMBER 20—JANUARY 3

*Eighteen percent of the women in Sweden
have at one time been threatened by a man.*

CHAPTER 1

Friday, December 20

The trial was irretrievably over; everything that could be said had been said, but he had never doubted that he would lose. The written verdict was handed down at 10:00 on Friday morning, and all that remained was a summing up from the reporters waiting in the corridor outside the district court.

“Carl” Mikael Blomkvist saw them through the doorway and slowed his step. He had no wish to discuss the verdict, but questions were unavoidable, and he—of all people—knew that they had to be asked and answered. *This is how it is to be a criminal*, he thought. *On the other side of the microphone*. He straightened up and tried to smile. The reporters gave him friendly, almost embarrassed greetings.

“Let’s see . . . *Aftonbladet*, *Expressen*, TT wire service, TV4, and . . . where are you from? . . . ah yes, *Dagens Nyheter*. I must be a celebrity,” Blomkvist said.

“Give us a sound bite, *Kalle Blomkvist*.” It was a reporter from one of the evening papers.

Blomkvist, hearing the nickname, forced himself as always not to roll his eyes. Once, when he was twenty-three and had just started his first summer job as a journalist, Blomkvist had chanced upon a gang which had pulled off five bank robberies over the past two years. There was no doubt that it was the same gang in every instance. Their trademark was to hold up two banks at a time with military precision. They wore masks from Disney World, so inevitably police logic dubbed them the Donald Duck Gang. The newspapers renamed them the Bear Gang, which sounded more sinister, more appropriate to the fact that on two occasions they had recklessly fired warning shots and threatened curious passersby.

Their sixth outing was at a bank in Östergöt-land at the height of the holiday season. A reporter from the local radio station happened to be in the bank at the time. As soon as the robbers were gone he went to a public telephone and dictated his story for live broadcast.

Blomkvist was spending several days with a girlfriend at her parents' summer cabin near Katrineholm. Exactly why he made the connection he could not explain, even to the police, but as he was listening to the news report he remembered a group of four men in a summer cabin a few hundred feet down the road. He had seen them playing badminton out in the yard: four blond, athletic types in shorts with their shirts off. They were obviously bodybuilders, and there had been something about them that had made him look twice—maybe it was because the game was being played in blazing sunshine with what he recognised as intensely focused energy.

There had been no good reason to suspect them of being the bank robbers, but nevertheless he had gone to a hill overlooking their cabin. It seemed empty. It was about forty minutes before a Volvo drove up and parked in the yard. The young men got out, in a hurry, and were each carrying a sports bag, so they might have been doing nothing more than coming back from a swim. But one of them returned to the car and took out from the boot something which he hurriedly covered with his jacket. Even from Blomkvist's relatively distant observation post he could tell that it was a good old AK4, the rifle that had been his constant companion for the year of his military service.

He called the police and that was the start of a three-day siege of the cabin, blanket coverage by the media, with Blomkvist in a front-row seat and collecting a gratifyingly large fee from an evening paper. The police set up their headquarters in a caravan in the garden of the cabin where Blomkvist was staying.

The fall of the Bear Gang gave him the star billing that launched him as a young journalist. The downside of his celebrity was that the other evening newspaper could not resist using the headline "Kalle Blomkvist solves the case." The tongue-in-cheek story was written by an older female columnist and contained references to the young detective in Astrid Lindgren's books for children. To make matters worse, the paper had run the story with a grainy photograph of Blomkvist with his mouth half open even as he raised an index finger to point.