



## Hitman Anders and the Meaning of It All

*Jonas Jonasson , Rachel Willson-Broyles*

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From the author of the international bestseller *The 100-Year-Old-Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared*, a brilliant satirical novel set in modern Sweden a story of idealism and fanaticism, gangsters and entrepreneurs, sensationalism and spirituality, that explores the values that matter in contemporary life.

In a former brothel turned low-rent hotel, the lives of three unusual strangers a former female priest, recently fired from her church; the ruined grandson of an ex-millionaire working as a receptionist; and Killer-Anders, a murderer newly released from prison accidentally collide with darkly hilarious results.

Seeing a lucrative opportunity in Killer-Anders, the unlikely trio form an unusual new business. The Priest and The Receptionist will handle strategy and public relations, and coordinate Killer-Anders missions. Using the media's obsessive need for sensational, headline-making stories to advertise their talents superb skill, they quickly build a clientele of rich Swedish gangsters. Suddenly, they're making an altogether different kind of killing of their own.

But when Killer-Anders begins asking deeper questions about purpose and meaning, his curiosity leads him to an unexpected discovery: he finds Jesus. Desperate to save the money machine they've built, The Priest and The Receptionist devise an audacious plan utilizing Killer-Anders newfound and decidedly fervent faith.

Mischievous yet big-hearted, filled with Jonas Jonasson's trenchant humor and delightful twists, *Hitman Anders and the Meaning of It All* is a delightful comic adventure that reminds us it's never too late to start over and to discover what truly matters.

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## Hitman Anders and the Meaning of It All Details

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## From Reader Review Hitman Anders and the Meaning of It All for online ebook

### Imogen Kathleen says

I rated this book as 2 stars as more of a reflection of my personal enjoyment of the book than as a reflection of the quality of the book. On one hand, I am sure that this book is a good book for some, but it just did not suit my sense of humour and I felt the jokes were repeated so often that they just became dull and irritating to read.

I had previously read 'The Girl Who Saved the King of Sweden' and enjoyed it; this book just didn't hold the same charm for me. After around the first 100 pages, I ended up almost skim-reading parts of it as I had almost completely lost interest and even considered DNFing at one point.

That being said, I did enjoy the religious aspects and found the priest to be one of my only liked characters. This is sad for me as I adored the characters in TGWSTKOS...

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### Giss Golabetoon says

the original title of the book is Hitman Anders and His Friends, but I must say i like the translation title better, and i like the translation as much as i like Johansson's way of narrating everything, it is so objectively subjective, so pleasantly familiar and surprising, so overwhelmingly simple, and so elaborately complicated.

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### Sam Quixote says

I suppose “minor spoilers ahead” but do yourself a favour and avoid this crummy novel altogether.

A dim-witted thug called Hitman Anders is taken advantage of by a receptionist and a priest as they advertise his criminal services in the papers and pocket a managerial fee. He's sort of a PG-Hitman in that he breaks arms and legs but doesn't kill anyone (though he has done in the past). Then one day he discovers Jesus and gives up his wicked ways. Whatever will the receptionist and the priest do for cash now? ... zzz...

Incorrectly billed as a comedy by a desperate PR department, Hitman Anders and the Meaning of It All is a dreary crime caper that thinks it's clever by making the highly original observations that, 1) Christianity is a bit of a silly religion and 2) tabloid newspapers are trash. Who. Knew.

The novel is so very poorly plotted. Hitman Anders becomes a celebrity for breaking people's arms and legs – really, why would the public venerate an ordinary gangster? And why aren't the police arresting him? He's literally advertising that he will hospitalise people for money and admitting to assault in the national papers – isn't that evidence enough for the police to at least have a chat with him? But no, apparently the Swedish police are useless, or else grievous bodily harm isn't a crime in Sweden. Maybe that's the satirical element – is Jonas Jonasson saying that Swedish gangsters get away with blatant crimes? Who knows. But towards the end of the novel, Anders finally gets put away when he assaults a guy from the government – I guess that's the line in the sand? Yeah, that's not at all contrived. One minute it's fine for Anders to go around breaking people's arms and legs then suddenly, when the story needs that to change, it's not.

Later on, Hitman Anders, the receptionist and the priest are on the run from a group of mobsters they've

swindled out of millions of kroner. So instead of fleeing the country and hiding, they decide to set up a church and begin advertising it with Hitman Anders' well-known name – why?? That's the opposite of what they should've done! Now the gangsters can easily find them and guess what? They do! This is such a stupid story!!

In addition to these baffling decisions, our characters don't seem to have any actual obstacles – things tend to work out really well for them whatever they do which doesn't make for a very exciting read. Speaking of the characters, none are especially well-written, interesting, or remotely convincing. They're poorly created cartoons, especially Hitman Anders, and impossible to take seriously let alone care about.

When Anders gets Christianity, he says “Hosanna” a lot without knowing what it means – that's the “comedy” by the way. If you laughed then, you'll love this book because it's full of, ahem, “jokes”, like that. Maybe when Anders becomes pastor of his church Jonasson is saying organized religion is run by crooks? Never heard a sentiment like that uttered before... Criticising Christianity is so passé these days – aren't we over this yet? I'm not religious at all and firmly believe religion does more harm than good but I'm extremely bored with people pointing and laughing at Christianity. It's easy and it's been done people, move on or else have something original to say about it, which Jonasson doesn't.

This unfunny supposed satire cum crime novel has nothing clever to say about any of its chosen subjects and, far from being entertaining or amusing, is deeply irritating and boring. I'd heard good things about this author's previous books but I was very disappointed with his latest, pitiful effort – I won't be looking for more novels from the hacky Jonas Jonasson and his dull writing.

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## Anna says

Απ? το συγγραφέα του "100χρονου που π?δηξε απ? το παρ?θυρο και εξαφαν?στηκε" (το προτε?νω ανεπιφ?λακτα) και της "αναλφ?βητης που ?ξερε να μετρ?ει" (δεν το ?χω διαβ?σει, αλλ? καλ? θα ε?ναι, το προτε?νω κι αυτ?, αν δεν σας αρ?σει σιγ? μη με βρε?τε να μου ζητ?σετε τα ρ?στα), ?ρχεται το καινο?ριο ?πος, "ο ?ντερς ο φονι?ς και οι φ?λοι του". A.k.a. φ?λοι του μια παστ?ρισσα που δεν πιστε?ει στο Θε? αλλ? ?γινε κληρικ?ς γιατ? την π?εξε ο πατ?ρας της να τιμ?σει την οικογενειακ? παρ?δοση και ?νας ρεσεψιον?στας που για ?λα κατηγορο?σε τον παππο? του που απ? εκατομμυριο?χος πτ?χευσε, αφ?νοντας την οικογ?νει? του (δηλαδ? τον πατ?ρα του, πολλ? χρ?νια προτο? γεννηθε? αυτ?ς) στην τ?χη τους. Και ο ?ντερς, μη φανταστε?τε ?τι ε?ναι κακ?ς ?νθρωπος, απλ? κ?ποια στιγμ? παραφ?ρθηκε, συνδ?ασε αλκο?λ με χ?πια, ξ?ρετε τ?ρα, ατυχ?ματα συμβα?νουν - και ?ταν αυτ? καταλ?γουν με ακ?φαλους ? τρ?πιους απ? σφα?ρες ανθρ?πους, σου βγα?νει το ρημ?δι το ?νομα χωρ?ς να φταις....

Αυτο? οι ?νθρωποι, λοιπ?ν, που εκτ?ς των ?λλων μισο?ν το ?παν σ?μπαν και εν?οτε ο ?νας τον ?λλο, αποφασ?ζουν να κ?νουν επιχε?ρηση, ?στε να π?ρουν π?σω αυτ? που το Σ?μπαν τους στ?ρησε... τρεις επιχειρ?σεις κ?νουν στη δι?ρκεια του βιβλ?ου (ναι, οι δυο π?νε ελαφρ?ς στραβ? για εντελ?ς διαφορετικο?ς λ?γους η καθεμ?α), δι?τι δεν υπ?ρχει καλ?τερο συνα?σθημα του να προσφ?ρεις, απ? το να πα?ρνεις.. Το λ?ει και η Β?βλος... καλ?, μπορε? και ?χι ?τσι ακριβ?ς.

Σημαντικ? η συνεισφορ? της Θε?ας Κοινων?ας - βασικ? μ?νο του εν?ς συστατικο? της, του Α?ματος του Χριστο?, γιατ? το Σ?μα δεν κ?νει κεφ?λι και δεν φ?ρνει χρ?ματα - και σε φιλικ? συμμετοχ? ο Ιησο?ς.

Κ?ποιες σελ?δες του βιβλ?ου ?σως προκαλ?σουν εκνευρισμ? σε θρ?σκους αναγν?στες...

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## Antonomasia says

The opening chapters are promising, as translator Rachel Willson-Broyles tries to channel Douglas Adams' dry humour. And the paragraphs introducing hapless naif Per Persson are as typically, amusingly Jonasson as anything in the author's hit debut *The Hundred Year Old Man*, creating absurd levity from a crummy situation: his destructive family, and his job manning reception at a run-down former brothel, now a budget hotel popular with ex-cons and other shady sorts - and the character's everyman name works even better in English.

I thought I was really going to like *Hitman Anders* despite the unpromising 3.11 Goodreads average rating mostly from Swedish readers. I'd been apprehensive about Jonasson's previous book, *The Girl Who Saved the King of Sweden*, with its heroine from Soweto, and a title in several European languages that translated as "The Illiterate Who Saved the King of Sweden". (She's actually a near-genius intellect, it's just that at the start of the book she hadn't been to school). I was braced for crass, unintentional racism, but it was more or less fine, and also a lot of fun. (For certain values of fine that I was likely to notice, not having a detailed knowledge of the place behind the news: black South African readers may disagree.) Contemporary light reading is so often based in one of a handful of genres, and Nombeko's zany, farcical adventures were an enjoyable exception just as Allan Karlsson's had been in *The Hundred Year Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared*. So after one pleasant surprise followed low expectations, I anticipated that I'd like book number three just as much. Sweden's most popular comic novelist takes on the Scandianvian speciality of crime fiction? Sounds great. What's more, thug-as-born-again-Christian sounds like a premise with plenty of comic potential, at least on this side of the Atlantic.

Like the author's previous outings, *Hitman Anders* was a low-effort read that rattled along at a fair pace. And once again there is that curiously flippant way of describing dark and painful events, no matter who they affect, which makes classic British understatement look like Italian melodrama. Having noticed similar in other Swedish authors' light fiction, A Man Called Ove and, more so in The Readers of Broken Wheel Recommend, I'm getting the impression that it may be a national thing, not just a Jonas Jonasson thing: Scandinavian stoicism. I like it, and it makes me feel a little more stoic whilst reading, even whilst I imagine it may offend or bewilder some other readers.

The book has some significant flaws, however. After the main characters had been introduced, it was a lot less funny, albeit not without the odd laugh. Maybe every thirty to fifty pages.

One of those main characters never quite came together: agnostic, money-grubbing priest Johanna Kjellerman, somewhat sympathetic thanks to her tyrannical minister father who resembled a sketch from a Bergman or Dreyer film. I couldn't imagine what she would say or think about anything that wasn't in the book.

The acknowledgements mention *editor Anna ... for her fantastic single-handed rescue work at the last minute..* I was surprised to see it set out so boldly at the end, but this always felt like a novel which had had problems and editorial salvage attempts. Among the early signs was Per describing Johanna as the strangest woman he'd ever met: a way of saying to the reader, "No, it's not just you". I don't think I couldn't make sense of her just because she's so far from the modern CofE type, like the lead character in *Rev* (who's also similar to a couple of friends of friends who had thought of becoming clergy, though they also had a quietly donnish side). Jonasson's worlds may not contain elves, but they are still fantastical and require some suspension of disbelief; Johanna required too much and was more plot device than person. Perhaps she, sometimes reminiscent of pre-Counter-Reformation indulgence-sellers, or fraudulent televangelists, is meant

to symbolise negative aspects of the church in a country where people still pay taxes to it, and where freedom of religion was made legal much later than in Britain. But, whilst Johanna and Per both crave material wealth as a substitute for emotionally nurturing parents, I'm damned if I can see what any character other than Johanna is meant to symbolise individually - and besides, that sounds a bit high-concept for a Jonasson novel.

There's a switch-around for Part Two, in which Hitman Anders becomes more sympathetic, and Per less so. I don't have a problem with this: *anyone who took Per Persson's genetic heritage into account could find, if not an excuse, at least an explanation. He had inherited his moral compass from his father, the drunkard (who had abandoned his son for a bottle of cognac when the boy was two years old), and from his grandfather, the horse dealer, a man who had dosed his foals with precise amounts of arsenic from birth onwards so that they would grow used to the poison and be in tip-top shape not only on the day of sale but, in slowly declining degrees, on the days, weeks and months after that.* But can see fewer Anglo-American than Swedish readers taking to it. The authorial voice mysteriously backing Per and Johanna, regardless of their actions, kept me on side to an extent, but this sort of beach read novel needs a touch more outright likeability; the second, more nefarious scheme is short on that: (view spoiler). This episode is at least mitigated by some entertaining supporting characters who are themselves no saints. *Hitman Anders* isn't reflective literary fiction, or a textbook on psychology and social problems: it's a silly comic novel with [anti-]heroes readers need more reasons to root for. Allan Karlsson's unworldliness meant he could get away with sometimes doing the wrong thing and still be likeable. As a reader open to the explanation of their backgrounds, and wanting to laugh at the book I still kept wishing they would stop, even if I didn't want them to get shot or arrested or any of the other things one sees pissed off Goodreads reviewers say about characters who annoyed them.

Ultimately, the characters' journey seemed very Scandinavian, connected to the central Swedish value of *lagom* (enough; moderation as an approach to all aspects of life). It turned out to be a story with a moral, not just a caper. (view spoiler)

*Hitman Anders* may not have lived up to the author's previous books (and it was strange to preview it in March when Jonasson was otherwise a summer read for me... these sentence structures belong in sunshine) – still I'm glad I read it. It may not win the author many new fans, but has enough of the formula to satisfy those who really liked both his earlier novels. It's left me (and I daresay publishers) wondering whether Jonasson is ever going to produce another *The Hundred-Year Old Man* ever again, or change direction, or if this is pretty much it - but the narrative still kept me interested in what would happen to the characters, and aside from a few moments of cringing, it was relaxing and escapist, which is, after all, the purpose of books like this one.

*This was a free advance copy received in exchange for an honest review, via Netgalley and the publisher, Fourth Estate (HarperCollins UK).*

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## **Britt-Marie Kullin says**

Betyg: 3 av 5.

För fem år sedan så läste jag "Hundraåringen som klev ut genom fönstret och försvann" och den fick en fyra i betyg från mig.

För två år sedan så läste jag "Analfabeten som kunde räkna" och den fick en femma i betyg från mig.

Nu har jag läst "Mördar-Anders och hans vänner (samt en och annan ovän)" och den får en trea i betyg från

mig.

Helt okej bok, bra skriven, dråplig och underhållande. Men tyvärr så fångade den inte mig på samma sätt som Jonas Jonassons två tidigare böcker har gjort.

Rekommenderar ändå boken till er som har tyckt om författarens tidigare böcker.

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### **Tamsien West (Babbling Books) says**

DNF at 65% I really enjoyed Jonasson's other books, but the narrative style and plot structure felt tired in this iteration. Like paper that has been recycled too many times it has lost its integrity.

None of the characters were in any way relate-able, which isn't always a bad thing, but in this case it just meant that the poorly structured plot stood out, rather than hiding behind quirky but amusing personalities.

This book was a disappointment, but it doesn't tarnish my enjoyment of his other work.

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### **Susan says**

Hitman Anders and the Meaning of It All by Jonas Jonasson is a hilarious well written book about three extremely different characters coming together in an extraordinary scheme.

This story plot literally can be described as "A GANGSTER, A VICAR AND A RECEPTIONIST WALK INTO A BAR" and you get a funny read about an atheist female Protestant vicar, a hitman who has be released from prison and plans to keep "clean" and receptionist at a 1-star hotel (who happens to be currently homeless). However, the three come together with a hilarious business which could make them all very wealthy. It would have worked out very well and was until Hitman Anders finds Jesus in his life.

I found myself laughing out loud and really enjoy this story. I really do enjoy this author's work and in particular really liked The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared.

I am giving this book **4 stars** because I really needed a hilarious read to save me from a potential reading slump!

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### **Hákon Gunnarsson says**

Since I read The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared I have been a fan of Jonas Jonasson. He is in my view is one of the best humor writers in Scandinavia at the moment.

This book has a very similar humor as was in The Hundred Year Old Man, but somehow the scale of it is much smaller. It's not a globe-trotting affair, but sticks to Sweden completely. Even so it works on the same principle, a certain kind of "unusual" heroes, and a wildly improbable plot. All of which made me laugh out loud quite often, which must be a good thing for a humor book to do.



agents for the hitman.

The cover describes the three as “likeable characters pushed into absurd situations”, but in fact only the rather unintelligent hitman fits this description. Both the priest and the receptionist start off OK: robbing gangsters and giving money to charity has a Robin Hood element about it (although the giving is instigated by the hitman, who has found Jesus). But when their money-making scheme targets well-meaning churchgoers, they become much less appealing.

When they frame their companion and send him to jail, they are even less so. When they go to live cheaply on an island in Gotland and wreak environmental havoc in the process, they lose all remaining appeal. By the time they finally decide to be less selfish, their good intentions will have been lost to many readers. While it starts well, and Jonasson’s third novel is perhaps a slight improvement on the second, the formula of zany characters in absurd situations has worn rather thin. Ho hum.

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## **Eva Lucia says**

Also posted on Eva Lucias blog (detailed review)

Jonas Jonasson has a special place in my heart.

I read his two first novels and was expecting a lot of this one - of course, I wasn't disappointed!

Blog ~ Facebook ~ Instagram ~ Youtube ~ Spotify ~

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## **John Martin says**

Some people would hate this novel. I loved it and I’m pretty sure I’m not alone.

I honestly haven’t laughed as much at this kind of religious irreverence since I read God Knows, by Joseph Heller (who also wrote Catch 22). So the writer of this book, Jonas Jonasson, is in good company indeed.

I knew from the start I was going to like this book.

It takes black comedy to new heights. It’s farce. It’s madcap. It takes the funny bone and gives it a damn good thrashing.

I suspect the author delivers some underlying messages about the meaning of it all. But don’t ask me what they are. I’m just not that deep.

I know this though: the book should come with a warning about drinking any kind of beverage, especially Moldovan red wine, when reading Hitman Anders, lest liquid come out of your nose, when you snort at the one of the many funny, clever sentences. This reminds me of Joseph Heller too.

I loved most of the characters. They are caricatures for sure, but I could picture most of them.

The book moves along at a fair pace and there are twists and turns.

So why would anyone hate the book? I suspect the violence might offend some. I’d argue it’s cartoon violence though.

The Bible certainly comes in for ridicule.

You’d have to hope God has a sense of humour.

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## Rowizyx says

Devo dire che sono rimasta molto delusa da questo terzo romanzo di Jonas Jonasson, anche perché ho amato tantissimo i primi due.

Qui mi è mancata la verve, forse anche per i personaggi anonimi... Non so, il Centenario e i personaggi dell'Analfabeta erano molto forti e carismatici, qui il gruppetto di punta non solo non convince nel suo tentativo di riscatto, ma porta avanti tanti di quei progetti abietti che non viene proprio da fare il tifo per loro. Né l'assassino, né il portiere né il prete riescono a portarti dalla loro parte, almeno non ci sono riusciti con me, e la storia si trascina. L'idea finale che giustifica la copertina col Babbo Natale l'ho trovata carina, ma dopo quattrocento fastidiose pagine non mi ha dato comunque soddisfazione.

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