



## My Soul to Take

*Yrsa Sigurðardóttir*, Bernard Scudder (Translator), Anna Yates (Translator)

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“Top notch crime fiction.”

—*Boston Globe*

American readers first met Icelandic lawyer and investigator Thóra Gudmundsdóttir in *Last Rituals*. In *My Soul to Take*, internationally acclaimed author Yrsa Sigurðardóttir plunges her intrepid heroine into even graver peril, in a riveting thriller set against the harsh landscape of *Smila's Sense of Snow* territory. A darkly witty and continually surprising suspense tale that places Yrsa Sigurðardóttir firmly in the ranks of Sue Grafton, Tess Gerritsen, Faye Kellerman and other top mystery writers, *My Soul to Take* is ingenious Scandinavian noir on a par with the works of Henning Mankell and Arnaldur Indridason. Stieg Larsson (*The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*) fans should also take note.

### My Soul to Take Details

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Author : Yrsa Sigurðardóttir , Bernard Scudder (Translator) , Anna Yates (Translator)

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## From Reader Review My Soul to Take for online ebook

### Rebecca Martin says

My feeling about this book: What the heck is everyone so excited about? I read several very positive reviews of the book, but I found it extremely hokey and old-fashioned and the writing....well, I can't take Sigurdardottir to task because I have no idea what the original prose is like, so let me just complain about the atrocious translation instead. I recall having the same feelings about this author's earlier novel, Last Rituals. The prose is flat and only rises in interest when the choice of vocabulary is jarring. The "ghost story" would be comfortable in 18th-c fiction. And if Steini was only able to drive in a specially-equipped car, how did he and (name suppressed) exchange cars? And, please, a cat?

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### Jeanette says

I'm a fan. Reading them out of order, I come back to #2 in the Thora series. This one is "away from home" and Thora's client has trouble after a large land sale. They want recompense in value; the site of their spa hotel seems haunted.

But that's not the crux of difficulty, unless a ghost is killing people. Thora has also managed to escape from Mom duty and kinder nurturing- well, at least for a couple of days. Hannes (ex-husband) will fill in. NOT!

Others will think these slow and rather staid. Not the crimes, nor the criminals as much as the lawyer and her German banker. But I think, just the opposite. Although this particular plot is not shabby either.

Iceland, wit and the dogged nature of Thora's relentless inquiry and nosiness! Three winning pulls of connection. Yes, there is more quantity in proportion Miss Marple than Dirty Harry. And yet the number of priceless quotes and asides are greater than either, IMHO. In this one she gives about 5 of those back to Matthew who clearly seems he is taking more than a vacation?

All three kids step up to the plate too, and at the same time become 4 upon the return home to Reykjavik. Another lesson on why, if you receive a large cash bonus case reward, you don't go and blow it all on a trailer for use on your future dreamed, rosy colored glasses possible family outings.

Thora is late 30's in this one. I do think you need to have some life experience re decades of reversals, or have walked years upon the parenthood tightrope to get her. IMHO, these Yrsa Siguroardottir books featuring Thora Guomundsdottir won't much appeal to the younger adult set. Possibly I am prejudice, but I don't think her nervy, blunt, "because I said so" attitude, would translate. And not only from Icelandic, either.

Also, I should warn. All of these Thora books start out with a rather grim to gruesome first 4 or 5 pages, that you know little about or have any context to for the first half of the book. I do not like that chewy nasty level as these absolutely are. But they do set the stage. Regardless, 80% of the book has far less aspect of noir shock than in the first few pages. The best is in the middle to the ending. Slow and minute to minute, similar to actual life. No perp closure in 3 hours or 3 days in a Thora case. Closer to a sleepless 4 hour down and 1 hour to go colic night while walking a hallway so the other ones don't wake up. So not the kind of "action" you'll see on Cop TV.

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## Emily says

Πρ?κειται για το 2ο βιβλ?ο της σειράς της Yrsa με ηρω?δα τη δικηγ?ρο Θ?ρα.

Σαφ?ς καλύτερο απ? το πρ?το, τον "Κ?κλο του κακο?". ?σως και να πα?ζει ρ?λο η εξοικε?ωση του αναγν?στη με τη Θ?ρα, η οπο?α εμφαν?ζεται πιο συμπαθ?ς και με περισσότερο χιο?μορ.

Η ιστορ?α ε?ναι ενδιαφ?ρουσα και το περιβ?λλον που διαδραματ?ζεται υποβλητικ?. Ε?ναι ?να κυριλ?το ξενοδοχε?ο και χ?ρος αν?παυσης/ανασυγκρ?τησης στην εξοχ?. Παρ?χει υπηρεσ?ες σεξουαλικ? συμβο?λου, πνευματιστικ?ν αναζητ?σεων και ολιστικ?ν προσεγγ?σεων. Ο ιδιοκτ?της του βρ?σκεται μπλεγμ?νος και η Θ?ρα καλε?ται να βοηθ?σει. Σ?ρνει μάζ? και τα προβλ?ματα της με τον πρ?ην σ?ζυγο και σχεδ?ν σε ?λο το βιβλ?ο βι?νει το ?γχος το? πο? θα αφ?σει και τ? θα κ?νει τα παιδι? της.

Μ?σα σε ?λα αυτ? ?χουμε να κ?νουμε με φαντ?σματα που υποτ?θεται πως υπ?ρχουν γ?ρω τριγ?ρω, πτ?ματα που αραδι?ζονται με ανατριχιαστικ?ς περιγραφ?ς, κλ?ματα παιδι?ν στο σκοτ?δι, σπ?τια με υπ?γεια γεμ?τα ιστορ?α ...

Χαριτωμ?νο στην ?λη ιστορ?α βρ?κα τον τρ?πο προσ?γγισης της εφηβικ?ς εγκυμοσ?νης με πατ?ρα τον 16χρονο γιο της Θ?ρα. Χωρ?ς υστερικ?ς κορ?νες, η Θ?ρα ετοιμ?ζεται να γ?νει γιαγ? στα 36 και τα παιδι? παρουσι?ζονται ?πως ακριβ?ς ε?ναι : δυο παιδι? που το ?να ?χει κοιλ?τσα και το ?λλο ε?ναι ο πατ?ρας. Η σκην? της γ?ννας ε?ναι πολ? πετυχημ?νη, προς το τ?λος του βιβλ?ου.

Για ?σους ?χουν ως ?νειρο να μ?θουν την ισλανδικ? γλ?σσα αφιερ?νω παρακ?τω μια μικρ? πρ?ταση :

"Ο Γκο?δμουνδουρ π?ρε τηλ?φωνο τον Γκο?δμουντσον για να π?νε να βρουν τον Θ?ρολφουρ" .... και π?ει λ?γοντας ...

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## Chris says

Thora Gudmundsdottir has some problems. To wit they include (a) her son got his girlfriend pregnant (b) her two children hate spending time with their father (her e husband) because he plays the Icelandic version of Guitar Hero too much, (c) her secretary (d) her relationship with Matthew and, finally, (e) her client who is charged with a murder and who is considering legal action about a land deal because the place might be haunted.

Iceland is apparently like England in this regard.

The ghost is, of course, connected to the mystery of who killed the architect of Thora's client's hotel/spa/New Age Retreat, not to mention the guy who got stomped to death by an Icelandic Horse.

Thora also has a problem with the trailer she brought. She's a bit rash that way.

And I think that is why this book actually works. Thora is just so weird and normal. She might live in Iceland but any reader will know at least one family like hers. The mystery itself does have to do with families and stories, so it too ties into the normalcy despite the almost craziness of the situation.

## Maria João Fernandes says

"Os pecados antigos crescem tal como as velhas dívidas." - Uma citação desprovida de uma significação específica, de um livro igualmente liberto de reflexões de maior.

"Ladrão de Almas" é o segundo livro da série de Þóra Guðmundsdóttir. Com excepção do prólogo, que remota a acontecimentos passados no ano de 1945, a acção desenrola-se num hotel que privilegia eventos espirituais e se foca em tratamentos de bem-estar. Situado na península de Snaefellsnes, na Islândia, este local vai ser o palco de um assassino que, curiosamente, espeta alfinetes nos pés das vítimas, de forma a impedir que voltem como espíritos.

Thora é advogada do dono das instalações, Jonas Juliusson, e é a pedido deste que se vai instalar lá para investigar os espíritos que o andam a atormentar. Apesar do seu cepticismo em relação ao mundo sobrenatural, Thora sente-se entusiasmada por ver a sua rotina alterada. Durante o desenrolar da história vão-se lhe juntar o namorado alemão Matthew, ambos os filhos e a futura mãe do seu futuro neto.

O livro começa com uma promessa de um enredo misterioso e estimulante. Porém, o ritmo da narrativa torna-se cada vez mais cansativo e previsível. No final, nem o tom de humor cativante de Yrsa Sigurðardóttir consegue salvar o enredo.

Relativamente às personagens, com excepção do casal principal, desde os clientes e funcionários do hotel às pessoas que vivem na vizinhança, todos parecem estar envolvidos numa aura de indiferença: as suas personalidades são isentas de características interessantes e o seu poder de atracção é mínimo, para não dizer inexistente.

Ao longo da história, no decorrer da investigação e procura pela resposta ao enigma, o leitor depara-se com eventos passados. Thora descobre a história de uma família que está ligada ao acontecimento que nos introduziu a obra. Quero manifestar o meu desagrado em relação à complexidade desnecessária deste fio condutor e a irrelevância de algumas situações descritas. O número excessivo de personagens e as fracas descrições das suas relações apenas contribuem para uma maior alheamento em relação ao livro.

O que mais me agradou, tal como no livro "O Último Ritual" foi a personalidade de Thora, a personagem principal, da sua família invulgar e da forma como todos se relacionam entre si. Os desafios domésticos da advogada e a sua relação amorosa com o bancário alemão - com quem comunica em Inglês - conferem ao romance uma atmosfera divertida. Contudo, mesmo neste detalhe, senti que a autora não desenvolveu o suficiente as personagens e várias ideias parecem ter sido apenas parcialmente postas em prática. Os diálogos que, inicialmente, começam por ser escritos de uma forma perspicaz e dotados de observações engraçadas, acabam por se tornar maçadores e repetitivos. O mesmo acontece com as descrições.

A temática do nazismo é abordada tão superficialmente que me questiono acerca da sua contribuição para o enredo. O prólogo que prometia uma viagem por um passado obscuro revelou-se uma desilusão.

Apesar dos inúmeros suspeitos com quem Thora se depara ao longo da sua estadia no hotel, o desfecho revela-se muito pouco surpreendente. Os motivos do assassino são tão desinteressantes, que seria melhor que a autora islandesa os mantivesse apenas para si.

O ponto alto do livro "Ladrão de Almas" é o caso que Thora tem em mãos no início da narrativa: um casal deixou de receber a sua correspondência devido ao facto de a caixa do correio se encontrar demasiado

próxima do chão, o que vai contra um regulamento particular da Islândia. A partir desta premissa poderia ser escrito um mistério bastante mais envolvente do que aquele que se segue e em que nada lhe está relacionado.

Podia vos dizer que estou ansiosa pela leitura do "Cinza e Poeira", que aguarda a sua vez na minha estante, na esperança de me ver envolvida num enredo de qualidade superior, mas estaria a mentir.

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### **Natalie says**

Hearing babies cry in the fog and shadowy images of young girls in mirrors can be chalked up to skittish nerves and flights of fancy, not ghosts, as far as Thora Gudmundsdottir, single mother and attorney at law is concerned. Her client, Jonas, on the other hand is a true believer and he has promised her an all expenses paid indulgent weekend at his New Age resort if she will come and see these supernatural occurrences for herself.

She travels to the newly renovated health resort that was erected on the grounds of an old farmhouse with a bizarre history. Thora barely settles into her posh room when the resort's architect is found murdered. Her body found bludgeoned, raped and with pins inserted into the soles of her feet is but the first victim that will suffer such hideous degradation.

Thora quashes her doubts of the continuing eerie events and delves into the disturbing secrets of the past to discover who is responsible for the macabre killings in this chilling, Icelandic thriller.

From prologue to epilogue My Soul to Take by Yrsa Sigurdardottir keeps you fastened in your seat!

I admittedly stuttered over the names of most of the characters (well, and the author's too), but forged on because the storyline was so fascinating. She conveys the culture and atmosphere of Iceland with finesse and her heroine, Thora, has the doggedness of someone I would definitely want in my legal corner if the need ever arose.

This is the second book in the Thora Gudmundsdottir series. It is has warranted not only keeping a lookout for the next in the series, but seeking out the first as well.

This review was written for Armchair Interviews at [www.armchairinterviews.com](http://www.armchairinterviews.com)

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### **Cristina Boncea says**

Thora este avocata lui Jonas care este ulterior acuzat de moartea a doi oameni dintr-o localitate din Islanda. Birna, arhitecta sa ?i cititorul de aure care lucra la hotel au fost uci?i cu bestialitate. Thora, împreun? cu partenerul s?u Matthew afl? c? f?pta?ul este defapt Berta ?i prietenul ei invalid Steini. Aceasta a omorât-o pe avocat? pentru c? dorea s? construiasc? o anex? a hotelului deasupra locului unde a fost îngropat? de vie o feti?? acum mai bine de 60 de ani iar pe cititorul de aure l-a ucis pentru c? o ?antaja, f?r? vreun motiv mai solid. Cam asta e povestea ?i pare destul de simpl? dar NU E CHIAR A?A.

Sunt o gr?mad? de personaje puse ca s? induc? atât cititorul cât ?i pe avocat? în eroare. Nu le-am re?inut numele ?i nu le-am în?eles pozi?ia în cronologie. Cartea începe cu povestea lui Kristin, feti?a care a fost l?sat? s? moar? de c?tre un b?rbat doar pentru c? era un copil din flori iar acesta probabil dorea mo?tenirea

pe care copilul ar fi primit-o, dar b?rbatul ?i-a luat via?a dup? faptele sale. Thora este chemat? de c?tre Jonas ini?ial pentru c? acesta auzea plânsetele unui copil ?i i se p?rea c? i-a v?zut stafia în oglinda sa ?i dore?te s? cear? desp?gubiri de la fo?tii proprietari ai terenului din cauza acestui lucru. Thora interogheaz? to?i oamenii de la hotel ?i din jurul acestuia ?i mai ales pe oamenii care au leg?tur? cu cele dou? ferme din Snefalssness (nu a?a se scrie), Kirkjustet ?i Kreppa (din nou, sunt sigur? c? nu a?a se scrie). Pe plan personal, cei doi copii ai Thorei vin dup? ea la hotel iar la final, fiul ei devine tat? la o vârst? fraged?. Kristin este îngropat? al?turi de mama ei dar plânsetele înc? se aud.

Nu a? putea spune exact de ce mi-a pl?cut a?a de mult cartea. Pe bune c? de multe ori m-a speriat... Descrierile sunt impecabile ?i am aflat foarte multe lucruri despre Islanda. Chiar o simpatizez pe Thora ?i umorul s?u dar mai ales umorul partenerului s?u Matthew. Îmi doresc s? mai citesc c?r?i din această colec?ie.

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## Luisa Fer says

I chose this book because the writer is Icelandic. I'm on a European author streak. I'm choosing to read a book by an author of each european country and even though I'm not choosing the obvious, I tend to find good reviews and recommendations.

I read a review about "Ashes to dust" which was published in English this August, and the reviewer was very enthusiastic about her.

Unfortunately this book was disappointing. I ploughed through it because the central intrigue was well conceived but nothing else could pull the novel together. The main character, a lawyer who "sticks out her tongue" when her boyfriend teases her, has some detective skills and nothing characterises her as a lawyer except when the author reminds us. The rest of the time she is questioning other characters, and conducting a murder investigation as if she were a real detective. This leaves me puzzled, why didn't the author just make her a detective?

When elements in a novel lack credibility, from characters to timelines, to situations, the case or mistery is not enough to make a good book. Everything seemed forced, when something didn't have a reasonable explanation, the next paragraph magically offered an answer.

When the character was -out of character- there were bits of information sprinkled in a line or two that seemed to pull it back into some coherence.

Sadly I don't think I could endure another Thóra Gudmundsdóttir mystery.

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## ΔΕΣΠΟΙΝΑ Ντρ?κη says

?ΟΙ ΧΑΜΕΝΕΣ ΨΥΧΕΣ? ΤΗΣ ΣΙΓΚΟΥΡΔΑΡΝΤΟΤΙΡ ΙΡΣΑ

Μετ? το ανατριχιαστικ? θρ?λερ 'Εκδ?κηση' της συγγραφ?ως δι?βασα κι αυτ? το βιβλ?ο της. Ε?ναι καθαρ? αστυνομικ?-μυστηρ?ου που η πλοκ? του θυμ?ζει πολ? Αγκ?θα Κρ?στι. Η συγγραφ?ας πετυχα?νει με εξαιρετικ? τρ?πο να υπ?ρχει σασπ?νς και συνεχε?ς ανατροπ?ς στην πλοκ? της ιστορ?ας. ?λοι οι ?ποπτοι ε?ναι πιθανο? α?τιοι για τους φ?νους και μ?χρι το τ?λος δεν μπορε?ς να καταλ?βεις ποι?ς ε?ναι πραγματικ?. Υπ?ρχουν και φαντ?σματα τα οπο?α συνδ?ονται με μια

ιστορ?α που ?γινε 50 χρ?νια πριν και που δ?νουν και με την υπ?θεση των φ?νων ?μμεσα. Η Θ?ρα η δικηγ?ρος, που προσπαθε? να βοηθη?σει τον εντολ?α της που κατηγορε?ται για τους φ?νους, μαζ? με τον αναγν?στη σκαλ?ζει την υπ?θεση και ενω στην αρχ? δεν πιστε?ει στην ?παρξη φαντασμ?των, αρχ?ζει να εξετ?ζει και αυτ?ν την περ?πτωση, μετ? την ανακ?λυψη οστ?ν ζ?ων και εν?ς μικρο? κοριτσιο? στην υπ?γεια αποθη?κη του ξενοδοχειακο? συγκροτ?ματος ?που συμβα?νουν ?λα. Αν σας αρ?σουν αυτο? του ε?δους τα βιβλ?α σας το προτε?νω. Οι λ?τρεις της ?Εκδ?κτησης?δεν θα τρομ?ξουν ο?τε θα ανατριχι?σουν, αν αυτ? περιμ?νουν. Το μυστ?ριο ?μως υπ?ρχει ?φθονο και θα το ευχαριστηθε?τε.

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### **Maria Altiki says**

Μετ? την ολοκλ?ρωση κ του 2ου βιβλ?ου της μπορ? πλ?ον να π? ?τι ε?ναι μια πολυαγαπημ?νη μου συγγραφ?ας. Νομ?ζω ?τι τα βιβλ?α της ε?ναι καλογραμ?να κ πληρο?ν ?λες μου τις προυποθη?σεις για ?να καλ? αστυνομικ?. Μυστ?ριο, αγων?α, σασπ?νς, συνεχε?ς ανατροπ?ς, κινηματογραφικ?ς περιγραφ?ς, ιντριγκ?ς, θρ?λοι, μ?θοι σε ?να λαχταριστ? κοκτ?ιλ. θα επαναλ?βω πω? ?χω εκστασιαστε?!

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### **Lesley says**

Well for me the best part of the book was the iceland descriptions of the landscape. I could really picture the beach and fog with a dead whale carcass smell and a dead body! I didn't really care for the main character, Thora. She is a lawyer but acts like a detective but then she is full of side issues, with her kids, the ex, and Matthew. I guess I wouldve preferred the story centered more on the actual mystery.

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### **Anna says**

Iceland's perhaps best known *accidental detective*, Thora, investigates ghosts and two deaths in a holistic spa in the rural Ireland.

World, or those who missed Last Rituals, meet Thora: a single mum and lawyer, 40ish, who is definitely not your standard alcoholic loose cannon detective. Imagine an adult Nancy Drew... a single mum Nancy Drew who's much more a 40 year old Bridget Jones (charm, clumsy awkward things she says, thinks, wears, and does)... gone Angela Lansbury. With her, like in the first book, is her German boyfriend Matthew, and her kids.

Thora gets a nice break of her typical cases involving e.g. older folks who don't like the Icelandic rules of where the opening for mail delivery should be located on the door when a friend and client asks her to investigate ghosts and bad spirits in his holistic spa far away from everything. Since that'll be a nice break she accepts, and soon she finds herself investigating the death of the architect who was planning the renovation of the hotel. I still don't know if the book, like the first one, is supposed to be funny, or is it just me who finds Thora like soaps in TV; seeing how she's awful in mostly anything (financially a disaster, and has no problems when her 15 years old son knocked up a 14 year old girl, and who now drives her SUV and

winnebago she can't afford, without a licence... for which the legal age in Iceland is 18 by the way. That's just a few examples), she makes everyone else feel good about themselves. The story is again told much from Thora's point of view, so there are plenty of moments when you'd want to smack her, but it's getting better. The story has good elements, lots of interesting characters that could work in a lot of twisted ways for the resolution. The location, Iceland, the bits of myths and history are interesting too.

Yet for a while again I was wondering why I read the book. Well, I had got this book before I read the first one (I wasn't that impressed with the first one, by the way). It has still the same kind of awkward and funny pieces in both Thora's thinking or her dialogs, and in the general telling that I did add on the first book's notes. Thora's still awful. But it had it's grace - the elements and possibilities in the story, some of the delicious and way more interesting characters than Thora. But it still had also Thora, and it still felt too much of a Bridget and a bad soap. If Thora was ever to be made in films or TV series, I'd want to see either a really fattened up Renee Zellweger or a fat version of Amanda Freitag (from Chopped in Food Network) play her, as I can't think of any ladies to do the bridgetness better.

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## Denise says

4.0 out of 5 stars -- A chilling and absorbing read -- Nordic noir.

The second book in this series featuring the lawyer Thóra Gudmundsdóttir and her lover, Matthew Reich, is just as absorbing and interesting as the first. The setting is modern day Iceland, almost a character in itself, with its uniqueness and history. In this mystery, Thora is asked to represent the owner of a New Age spa and resort who wants to sue the previous owners who he claims misrepresented the old farmstead and sold him a haunted property. Although Thora doesn't hold with the supernatural, she goes to stay at the health resort in Snaefellsnes and is immediately drawn into an different sort of investigation there when the owner, Jonas, is accused of the murder of the architect who was working for him after her mutilated body is found on the beach nearby. As Thora starts digging into the case, she unearths some photos and information about the brothers, their wives and children who had lived on and owned the farmstead property many years ago. Then a second person is murdered. Thora and Matthew must figure out why these two were killed and who committed the crimes.

With a huge cast of characters and with the Icelandic names, it can be a feat just to keep everyone straight! But alternate point of view narration provides some clues that there is much more going on here than first thought. The mystery is well-plotted and complex with mutiple red herrings and I was glad not to be able to be sure that my guesses were correct until the final few chapters. I like the personality and character of Thóra Gudmundsdóttir -- divorced mother of two, about to be a grandmother. She's snarky and intense, definitely not damaged, and has a good sense of humor. I enjoy all the details about Iceland and its culture and landscape. I like the writing style and the translation flows nicely as well.

This is the third book by this author that I've read (#1, #2 and #5) and I have plans to read #3 and #4 as soon as I can get hold of copies. I really like this series. I guess you could say I'm hooked on crime fiction and the unusual setting.

Please send me any recommendations of other authors/series of this type and unique settings.

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## Gisela Morales says

Interesante Historia que te lleva a pensar que todos son culpables. Me gustaría Conocer Islandia.

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### **Wanda says**

I wish I liked this series of books more than I do. But I remembered, as I read this novel, that I felt the same ambivalence about the first one. After thinking it over for a while, I realized that I just don't connect to the main character, Thora. I don't care about her. Its like the author looked at other successful Scandinavian fiction and just created a checklist: Divorced? Check! Problematic ex-spouse? Check! Kids being challenging? Check! Foreign love interest that she's not sure about? Check! But just because Thora fits all those checklist items doesn't automatically mean that I'm going to like her. I find the author does a lot of telling instead of showing. Don't tell me that she cares about her children--show her doing loving things for them. And the dialogue seems stilted--but I'm not sure if that's the author or the translators? Since I'm never likely to learn to read Icelandic, I can't answer that question. The plot was good--that's what kept me reading. Can I blame this on the author being an engineer? Probably unfair. But I think I will save my reading time for other Scandinavian authors in the future. Good but not great.

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