

## Readers Guide

1. After the electricity suddenly fails, a night guard at Oslo's National Gallery cries out when she discovers that Edvard Munch's iconic painting *The Scream* is missing. What did the police find when they searched the museum?
2. Megan Crespi, retired art history professor and Munch expert, is on vacation in Scandinavia with her little Maltese dog Button and her old friend Lili Holm. She receives an urgent e-mail message to contact Erik Jensen. Who is he and what does he want? What city is Megan in when he contacts her?
3. We meet Axel Blomqvist, Sweden's greatest private collector of Munch graphics. We also meet the shady Norwegian criminal, Pål Enger. What assignment does Blomqvist have for Enger and what is the relationship of Blomqvist to Sweden's greatest author, August Strindberg?
4. Megan agrees to fly to Oslo. What is it that the police and the public do not know about the stolen Munch *The Scream*?
5. Among the heroes of Norwegian ship-building tycoon Olaf Petersen, are Edvard Munch, Edvard Grieg, and Henrik Ibsen. With whom does Petersen share these idols and what is the Norseliga?

6. What stunning fact does Megan learn about the Munch robbery when she meets with the director of Oslo's National Gallery? Megan is told about three Munch collectors who might be suspects: Olaf Petersen of Bergen, Myrtil Kildahl, fabled founder of Myrtil Cosmetics, of Oslo, and the Swede we have met before, Axel Blomqvist. What is Megan's "assignment" concerning them?

7. We learn more about the beautiful, dark-haired, mysterious Myrtil Kildahl. With which woman in Munch's work does she identify and why? What happens when Megan visits Myrtil at her home?

8. Olaf Petersen finds poignant similarities between his life and that of Munch's. What are they and what might he show the visiting American professor Crespi when she arrives in Bergen to visit him?

9. We meet Max Linde of Lübeck, cyber-savvy great-grandson of Maximilian Linde, whose four sons were portrayed by Munch in 1903. He is a neo-Nazi. What is his Internet passion? How does the Norseliga fit into his cyber plans?

10. Why does Axel Blomqvist want Pål Enger to postpone the job he had commissioned him to do? What bold plan has Enger concocted?

11. The trio—Megan, Lili, and little Button—make the seven-hour drive to Bergen. What happens on the way?

12. Max Linde's cyber snooping brings up the question of whether Myrtl Cosmetics' riveting advertisements reflect the persona of Myrtl Kildahl herself. What do the images show and how is beauty conveyed?

13. In his bunker before meeting with Megan at ten that morning, Olaf Petersen contemplates his stolen version of Munch's *The Scream* and we learn some of its history and physical vantage point. What is the back story to this iconic painting? And what links Olaf to Munch biographically?

14. In Stockholm, Axel Blomqvist communes with the Munch portrait of his grandfather. Where is the picture kept? Can it be shared?

15. After Megan's prolonged visit with the strange collector Olaf Petersen in his Bergen mansion Norsehjem, Lili and Button arrive to pick up Megan. What happens when Button gets out of the car? What important thing do they find out about Petersen's back yard?

16. Max Linde's cyber search reveals much about the individual Norseliga members and their meetings. What does he learn and what did the Norwegian neo-Nazi Anders Behring Breivik do?

17. The Crespi trio visit Grieg's home, *Troldhaugen*. What happens when Megan goes to see his composing hut?

18. In Lübeck, Max Linde has broken into the Norseliga members private e-mail. What does he do and what decision does he make concerning Petersen's home in Bergen?

19. In that home Petersen is enjoying the "green hour," sipping his absinthe. Megan's throwaway comment that "the Munch loss may not be as big a catastrophe as might be thought" irritates him beyond measure. Why? What does he decide to do about it?

20. In Oslo, Erik Jensen makes a major decision that will impact the theft of his museum's *The Scream*. Why is the decision so startling?

21. In Stockholm, Blomqvist comes to a financial agreement with the city council. What does this allow him to do?

22. Because she wants to visit the newly reopened Munch Museum in Bergen, Megan decides not to comply with Petersen's urgent request that she return to his house. What does he furiously text her and how does she treat it?

23. We meet Isabell Farlig, hired by Petersen for a special mission concerning Megan. What is it and what does "Farlig" mean in Norwegian?

24. Snorre Uflak and Megan are both in the Bergen Munch Museum. What happens when he lunges at her? Who is in the crowd that gathers afterward?

25. Olaf Petersen's gardener has been given the task of digging a six-by-six by two-foot ditch behind the bunker. Why?

26. How does Button and Lili's entering the Bergen Munch Museum result in saving Megan's life?

27. Axel Blomqvist brings Munch's Strindberg portrait to the Blue Tower on the first Monday night he has access to the building. After looking at the foyer, the study, and the bedroom, he decides upon the perfect place. This is where it belongs, this is where it has belonged for over a century! Where is the perfect place?

28. Max Linde flies into Bergen. What is his vicious plan and is he successful?

29. Megan, Lili, and Button drive to Åsgårdstrand. Why have they decided to go there and what happens on the way?

30. Axel Blomqvist in Stockholm reads about his henchman Pål Enger's new and successful profession as an artist, exhibiting fourteen of his own works—portraits in the style of Munch with sly quotations of *The Scream*—at an Oslo gallery. What intriguing idea is sparked in Blomqvist's mind?

31. After the Norseliga members have seen and reverently reacted to Munch's *The Scream* in Petersen's possession they begin to leave. But the first to leave, the Tufte brothers, run back to

announce that they had all been “exposed.” What is this exposure? Who is responsible?

32. Myrtil Kildahl calls Olaf Petersen after hearing Erik Jensen’s surprising announcement on Norwegian TV. What has she heard and what happens to Petersen after he hears what Kildahl has to say?

33. In Åsgårdstrand, Snorre Uflaks follows the woman he believes to be Crespi into the crowd celebrating the summer solstice. What happens next?

34. Petersen calls the Norseliga members and assures them that it was not he who had sent an upsetting e-mail to them. He also tells them that it is Erik Jensen of the National Gallery who is lying. Lying about what?

35. By sheer accident Norseliga member Gustav Tufte of Skien meets the Crespi trio in front of a Munch site Megan was photographing in Åsgårdstrand. What does he invite them to do, how do they respond, and how does he feel about it later?

36. Megan pulls out from the Hotel Thon, but when she tries to back up, the brakes fail. Airbags are instantly deployed as the car hits the single tree lining the street. Who is responsible for this apparent accident? Are Megan and Lili hurt? Is Button all right?

37. Max Linde, looking at a neo-Nazi site online, comes across the pseudonym “Brunhilde.” Do you

think this will play a role later in the book, and can you imagine who Brunhilde might be?

38. Pål Enger is in Stockholm at Axel Blomqvist's request. Axel commissions Pål to paint his portrait holding the stolen Munch portrait of Strindberg. What are Blomqvist's conditions and what is their agreement?

39. After a pub dinner in Åsgårdstrand the Crespi trio retire early. But Megan's iPhone rings. It is Erik Jensen. "Turn on your television," he says. "The Munch Museum's *Scream* has been stolen!" The following chapter tells us how the picture was taken. Is it similar to the method used to steal the National Gallery's version of *The Scream*? What does the theft have in common with the Louvre's Mona Lisa robbery in 1911?

40. Olaf Petersen's underworld contact has come up with a man to replace Isabell Farlig. His name is Christian Drapsmann. What does Drapsmann mean in Norwegian? What does Norseliga member Haakon Sando propose to bring to Petersen and why is it so important?

41. Back in Oslo Megan appears as one of the panelists on a television show broadcast in English to all of Scandinavia. It is a Q & A session about Norway's two Munch thefts. The National Gallery's senior curator Katarina Kopi affirms she made an exact copy of *The Scream* but intentionally left out

the miniscule spire of Oslo Cathedral present in all four versions of *The Scream*. Olaf Petersen, watching in Bergen, goes crazy, rushes to the bunker and scrutinizes his *Scream* with a magnifying glass. What does he discover?

42. The national television show Megan was on has been watched by over thirteen million viewers in Scandinavia and Germany. Six of these viewers had particular interest in the show. In addition to Olaf Petersen in Bergen, they are: Snorre Uflaks and Myrtle Kildahl in Oslo, Max Linde in Lübeck, Axel Blomqvist in Stockholm, and Benno Landau in northern Norway's harbor city of Trondheim. Why are they so affected?

43. We learn more about Myrtle Kildahl and Sophia Grimm's ancestry and why so many of Myrtle Cosmetics advertisements feature dark-haired women. What is the real reason for these advertisements?

44. Megan does research for her essay on Edvard Grieg's "lost lady loves" at the Oslo National Library. Both Snorre Uflaks and Christian Drapsmann follow her there. What happens then?

45. Gunnar Tufte, irritated by Myrtle Cosmetics' dark poster girls, decides to call her and complain. She gets furious and hangs up on him thus crystallizing her master plan for the Norseliga. Can we guess what it is?

46. Megan flies to Trondheim while Lili and Button stay in Oslo. At the end of Megan's lecture two people leave during the Q & A period: Drapsmann goes to her hotel and awaits her return; Uflaks waits behind the museum's heavy glass entry door. Do we have any premonition as to what will happen next? Who is the uniformed policeman who comes up to Megan at her hotel and how does he persuade her to get into his waiting car?

47. In the car, the "policeman" knocks Megan unconscious with a stun gun after taking her shoulder bag and cellphone from her. But not before she manages to send a text to Peter Jensen in Oslo: "help kidnapped bergen." What happens during the car trip to Bergen? Do they make it there?

48. At the office, Myrtil takes damaging evidence files concerning the other five Norseliga members' shady business practice and lays them out on her desk with instructions to Sophia to release them to the newspapers if she does not return from Bergen that evening. She leaves a second note, sealed in an envelope addressed to Sophia, simply telling her how much she loves her. What does she then remove from her safe? What does that tell us about her ominous plans?

49. After a sudden encounter with a mountain reindeer causes their car to crash, an ambulance takes Megan and Drapsmann to the ER in Førde

where the attending physician wants to keep the slowly recovering Megan until late afternoon. Why doesn't Megan tell the ER staff that she has been kidnapped?

50. In Bergen, Myrtl's chauffeur picks up four Norseliga members at the Bergen airport and delivers them to Petersen's Norsehjem home. After painting their faces with the customary temporary Viking tattoos, they all go to the bunker where Petersen has them look for the steeple in the "original" Munch's *Scream*. What unthinkable event happens next?

51. Lili, Button, Erik Jensen, and police detective Finne Raske arrive at the Bergen airport and head for Petersen's home. There, Myrtl's chauffeur, on a walk with her dog Magnus, hears shots. He runs back to the house. Sven the butler hears them too and running toward the bunker encounters Myrtl, who shoots him down. She flees toward the back of the bunker and suddenly disappears. How? Raske has the police cars taken round behind the house as he is sure Megan's kidnapper will be delivering her to Norsehjem any minute. Is he right? What role does Button play in this unexpected denouement? And why does Norway have good reason to rejoice?

52. Megan, Lili, and Button arrive at Bentley's Hotel on Drottninggatan in Stockholm. The next morning they visit the Strindberg Museum just doors away

and Megan notices that the Beethoven mask over the author's upright piano is crooked. We know why but she does not. Will this figure later in the plot?

53. At Stockholm's Museum of Modern Art, Megan has a delightful conference with the curator Ingrid Konstrom, who shows her the room where Munch's portrait of Strindberg was stolen. She also mischievously tells Megan what Axel Blomqvist's "other" great collecting passion is. What is it? Does it have anything to do with Munch?

54. Megan visits Stockholm police officer Berndt Hammar who tells her about Pål Enger's having been spotted at the front door of Axel Blomqvist's home. He asks that when Megan meets Blomqvist that afternoon she be on the watch for any hint that he might be involved in the Strindberg heist. What happens when she, Lili, and Button arrive for their four o'clock appointment with Blomqvist? Whom does he think Lili looks like and why is that so meaningful for him? And what is the sudden proposal he makes to them? What makes them accept?

55. Late Monday afternoon, after a relaxing stay on the island of Runmarö, Blomqvist drives the Crespi trio back to Stockholm. Once there he takes them, by way of a short stop at his home to pick up a large flat package protected by bubble wrap, to the Strindberg Museum. His hefty financial deal with the city

council allows him entry with a private key code on Monday evenings after the museum is closed to the public. He takes the Crespi trio up to Strindberg's library on the top floor and leaves them there while he goes down to the writer's apartment and hangs Munch's portrait of Strindberg. Where exactly does he hang it?. Blomqvist then returns to his guests and brings them down and into the apartment. Megan and Lili behold the portrait in place and are speechless. A series of sudden events then takes place that results in the arrest of both Pål Enger and Axel Blomqvist. What are these events? And how does Button play a role in the startling discovery that is made? A discovery that no one could have imagined and which will make either Sweden or Norway—they will have to fight it out—very happy?