

**DAVID  
LAGERCRANTZ**

**DARK  
MUSIC**

Only he can solve the crime  
But who will save him from himself?



*David Lagercrantz*

DARK MUSIC

*Translated from the Swedish by  
Ian Giles*



MACLEHOSE PRESS  
QUERCUS · LONDON

First published as *Obscuritas* by Norstedts Förlag, Stockholm, in 2021

First published in Great Britain in 2022 by

MacLehose Press  
An imprint of Quercus Editions Limited  
Carmelite House  
50 Victoria Embankment  
London EC4Y 0DZ

An Hachette UK company

Copyright © David Lagercrantz, first published by Norstedts, Sweden, in 2021  
Published by agreement with Norstedts Agency / Brave New World Agency  
English translation copyright © 2022 by Ian Giles

The moral right of David Lagercrantz to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

Ian Giles asserts his moral right to be identified as the translator of the work.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN (HB) 978 1 52941 319 9  
ISBN (TPB) 978 1 52941 318 2  
ISBN (EBOOK) 978 1 52941 320 5

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, organisations, places and events are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or particular places is entirely coincidental.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Designed and typeset in Cycles Eleven by CC Book Production  
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.



Papers used by Quercus Books are from well-managed forests and other responsible sources

2003



## ONE

The assistant commissioner was an idiot.

It was a load of meaningless shit. The lot of it.

Chief Inspector Fransson was delivering a long, peevish exegesis and Micaela Vargas could no longer listen to it. It was far too hot in the car, and outside lay the splendid mansions of Djursholm.

“Haven’t we gone too far?” she said.

“Calm down, young lady – this isn’t exactly my usual stamping ground,” Fransson said, fanning himself with his hand.

They drove on down towards the water, stopping at a tall gate with a CCTV camera and an entry phone. It opened after a few words from Fransson and they rolled into a large courtyard, past a fountain and up to a sumptuous mansion built from ochre-coloured stone, its large windows and colonnaded frontage overlooking the sea.

Micaela felt more nervous still. She was actually a local community beat cop, but this summer she’d become part of a murder inquiry because she possessed certain knowledge about the suspected assailant, Giuseppe Costa. She had mostly been tasked with running errands and doing basic checks. Nevertheless, she had been permitted to come along today to visit Professor Rekke, who would be able to assist them with their investigation – or so the assistant commissioner said.

White stone steps led up to the house, and standing on the terrace

at the top was a woman in white cotton trousers and a blue blouse that fluttered in the wind.

“I suppose that must be the wife,” Fransson said.

The woman looked like an actor in a film. Micaela got out of the car feeling sweaty and uncomfortable, and crossed the raked gravel to the house.

## TWO

More often than not, Micaela would arrive at work early. But that morning, four days before they would go to the big stone house, she was sitting in the kitchen eating breakfast although it was past nine o'clock. The phone rang. It was Jonas Beijer.

“We have to go and see the assistant commissioner,” he said.

He didn't say why. But it was clear it wasn't optional. She went to the mirror in the hall and pulled on her sweatshirt, an extra large one that sat on her loosely, flapping about. *You look like you want to hide*, her brother Lucas would have said. But she thought it suited her. She brushed her hair and combed down her fringe so that it almost concealed her eyes, then headed off to the Tunnelbana.

The date was July 15, 2003, and Micaela had just turned twenty-six. There weren't many people on the Tunnelbana. She had a whole group of seats to herself and was soon lost in her own thoughts.

It was no surprise that the case was of interest to the top brass. The murder itself might have been an outburst of madness, a drunken act. But there were other elements that explained the attention given to the investigation. The deceased – Jamal Kabir – had been a football referee and a refugee from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, and he had been beaten to death with a rock after a junior football match at Grimsta IP. It went without saying that Falkegren wanted a piece of the action.

She got off at Solna Centrum and continued towards the police

station on Sundbybergsvägen, thinking to herself that today was the day she was going to put her foot down and make clear what she thought was wrong with the investigation.

Martin Falkegren was the youngest assistant police commissioner in the country; he was forward-looking, and wanted to keep up with what was new. People said that he wore his ideas like medals across his chest, which he guessed was not meant kindly. But he was proud of his openness, and this time, yet again, he had tried a different approach. They might get angry. But, as he had told his wife, it was the best lecture he had ever heard. It was definitely worth a try.

He set out extra chairs and bottles of Ramlösa mineral water as well as two bowls of liquorice his secretary had bought on her mini-cruise to Finland, and listened for the sound of footsteps in the corridor. No-one seemed to be on their way yet, and for a moment he pictured Carl Fransson standing before him. He imagined his hefty body and critical gaze. Frankly, he thought to himself, he couldn't blame him. No chief investigator wants the bosses involved in his inquiry.

But these were special circumstances. The murderer, a batshit, narcissistic Italian, was manipulating the shirts off their backs. It was an embarrassment – nothing less.

“Sorry, am I the first to arrive?”

It was the young Chilean. He couldn't recall her name, but he remembered that Fransson wanted her off the team – he'd said she was bolshy.

“Welcome. I don't think we've had the pleasure,” he said, proffering a hand.

She took it in a firm handshake and for a moment he looked her over from head to foot. She was short and stocky, with thick curly hair and a long fringe combed down over her forehead. Her eyes were big and restless and shone with a dark intensity. There was something about her that immediately attracted him yet also kept him at a distance, and he

was tempted to hold onto her hand a little longer. But her expression warned him against that, and he muttered instead:

“You know Costa, don’t you?”

“I know *of* him,” she said. “We both come from Husby.”

“How would you describe him?”

“He’s a bit of a showman. He used to sing to us outside the flats. He can get pretty aggressive when he drinks.”

“Yes, that much is obvious. But why is he lying to our faces?”

“I don’t know whether he’s lying,” she said, and he didn’t like that.

The thought that they might have the wrong guy did not exist in his world of ideas. The evidence was substantial and they were preparing to charge him. All that was missing was a confession. But he didn’t have time to tell her that. He heard the others approaching along the corridor and stood up to congratulate them.

“Good job. I’m proud of you chaps,” he said, and while it was not an entirely fitting turn of phrase given the presence of the Chilean, he did not correct himself.

His attempt to sound collegial wasn’t any more successful, and he ended up saying:

“What a senseless incident. And all because the referee didn’t award a penalty.”

It may not have been the most nuanced statement, but it was just a quip, a conversation starter. Fransson, however, seized the opportunity to lecture him and said that it was far more complicated than that. There was a clear motive, he said, which might not be a motive to the likes of you and me, but it was to an alcoholic football dad without any impulse control who lived for his son’s successes on the pitch.

“Yes, yes, of course,” he said. “But my God . . . I saw the match tape. Costa was completely insane, while the referee . . . What’s his name again?”

“Jamal Kabir.”

“... while Jamal Kabir was the picture of calm. Talk about moral stature.”

“That’s what they said.”

“And him waving his hands. Elegant, right? As if he were controlling the whole match.”

“It is a rather unusual style, it’s true,” Fransson said, at which point Martin Falkegren turned his gaze away from him and resolved to regain the initiative.

He wasn’t there for chit-chat.

Micaela fidgeted. The atmosphere was not exactly relaxed, despite Falkegren trying his best to be part of the gang. But that was a hopeless project from the very start. He was different, and not just because he always smiled. He wore a shiny suit and loafers with tassels.

“How’s our evidence looking otherwise, Carl?” he said. “I spoke briefly with . . .”

Falkegren looked at her. But he didn’t seem to remember her name, or his thoughts were elsewhere, because he left the sentence hanging in the air until Fransson interjected and outlined the evidence. As always when he was speaking, it sounded convincing. It was as if all they lacked was a final court judgement, and that might have been why the assistant commissioner wasn’t really listening. He muttered:

“Absolutely, and nothing in the evidence is directly weakened by the observations in the P7.”

“Nope, I think that’s right,” Fransson said, and Micaela looked up from her notepad.

The P7, she thought. The bloody P7. It had come into her possession some ten days ago and she had not been entirely clear what it was. It seemed to be the report on the preliminary examination conducted by the forensic psychiatrist, ahead of the main one. She had read it with a certain degree of expectation, and had been disappointed almost right away. Antisocial personality disorder was the conclusion. Probable

antisocial personality disorder. Costa was, in other words, some sort of psychopath. She didn't believe it.

"Exactly," said the assistant commissioner with new fervour in his voice. "That's where the keys to his personality are."

"Well, yes, perhaps," Fransson said, fidgeting.

"But it's important we get him to confess."

"Of course."

"And you've come close?"

"Up to a point."

"And I happened to play a role in that drama, didn't I?" Falkegren said, and for a moment no-one responded even though they understood full well what he meant, which was why it was no surprise when he added:

"I asked you to try a new interrogation technique."

"Yes, right, it was a good tip," Fransson muttered, taking care to sound grateful but not too impressed.

After the P7, Falkegren had suggested they stop pushing Giuseppe Costa and instead ask for his psychological insight, which had sounded a little odd. But Falkegren had stood his ground. "His self-image is grandiose, and he thinks he knows everything about football," he said, and eventually they agreed to give it a try. One day, when Costa was boasting more than usual, Fransson provoked him.

"Surely, given your extensive experience, you must be able to tell us what's on the mind of a person who does something as senseless as beating a referee to death," he said, and Costa sat up and spoke with such empathy that it felt as if he were making an indirect confession. It was certainly an interesting moment in the investigation. But Micaela had not understood until now that it had been such a moment of pride for Martin Falkegren.

"It's a well-known trick. There's a famous example," he said.

"Is there really?" Fransson replied.

"A young journalist interviewed Ted Bundy in prison in Florida."

“Sorry?”

“None other than Ted Bundy,” he repeated. “The method was very successful on Bundy. He’d studied psychology and when he was given the chance to shine as an expert, he opened up for the first time.” Micaela was not alone in looking sceptical at this point.

*Ted Bundy.*

He might as well have name-dropped Hannibal Lecter.

“Don’t get me wrong,” Falkegren said. “I’m not making comparisons. I just want to explain that there’s new research in the area, and new interrogation techniques, and that in the police we . . .”

He hesitated.

“Yes?”

“. . . have major knowledge gaps. I would even go so far as to say we’ve been naive.”

“Really?” Fransson said.

“Oh yes. The very term psychopath has long been considered antiquated and stigmatising. But that’s changed, thank heavens, and just the other day I was at a lecture – a fantastic lecture, I must say . . .”

“I can tell.”

“Exactly. It was thrilling. It was as if we were all glued to our chairs; my goodness, you should have been there. The lecturer was Hans Rekke.”

“Who?”

The men looked at each other. It was clear none of them had heard of him, let alone cared one jot.

“He’s Professor of Psychology at Stanford University – an incredibly prestigious position.”

“Impressive,” Fransson said with audible irony.

“Truly,” the tone-deaf Falkegren replied. “He’s been cited in all the leading journals.”

“Fantastic,” Ström said, just as ironically.

“But you mustn’t think he’s off in the clouds – he’s not. He’s a

specialist in interrogation techniques and has helped the San Francisco Police Department. He's amazingly sharp and knowledgeable."

These words did not hit the mark either; rather, they reinforced the "us and them" feeling in the room. It was him – the boss and career-ladder climber who had gone to a lecture and seen the light – versus Fransson and his blokes, the hardworking, rational police detectives with their feet on the ground, who didn't immediately fall for every new fad.

"Professor Rekke and I understood each other right away – we hit it off," Falkegren said, thus managing to imply that he was hyper-intelligent too. "I told him about Costa."

Fransson raised an eyebrow. "Oh, you did, did you?"

"I told him about his grandiose and narcissistic traits, and the somewhat ticklish situation we're in, without any forensic evidence," Falkegren said.

"OK," said Fransson.

"And that was when he mentioned that trick with Bundy, and said we might want to try it."

"Well, that's good, now we know the background," Fransson said, eager to draw the conversation to a close.

"But then afterwards, when it was such a success – when Costa really opened up – I thought to myself: Good God, if Rekke could help us like that from a distance, just imagine what he'd be able to do if he was more familiar with the case."

"Hmm, yes. I suppose you might very well ask that," Fransson said, looking troubled.

"Exactly," Falkegren continued. "That's why I asked around a bit . . . Well, you know I have my contacts. Nothing but praise. Sheer praise, gentlemen. I therefore took the liberty of sending our files over to Professor Rekke."

"You did *what*?" Fransson exclaimed.

"I sent the investigation to him," Falkegren said, and it was as if they hadn't quite understood.

Fransson leaped to his feet.

“For Christ’s sake, that’s a breach of confidentiality during the preliminary investigation!”

“Calm yourself, calm yourself,” Falkegren said. “It’s nothing like that. Rekke will be like a member of our team. After all, he has his own duty of confidentiality as a psychologist. If I’m perfectly honest I think we need him.”

“Bullshit!”

“You’ve done a good job, as I said, no doubt about it. But you don’t have a watertight case. You need a confession, and I’m convinced that Rekke can help you with that. He tracks contradictions and gaps in witness statements like no-one else.”

“So what is it you think we should do?” Fransson said. “Let the professor take over the investigation?”

“No, no, for God’s sake. I’m just saying you should meet him and listen to him. See whether he can give you a new way in, a new idea. He’ll see you at two o’clock on Saturday at his home in Djursholm. He promises to have reviewed the files by then.”

“There’s no bloody way I’m using another Saturday off for some pointless crap,” said Axel Ström, the eldest in the group, who was approaching retirement age.

“OK, OK, fair enough. But I’m sure a few of you can go. What about you, for example?” Falkegren said, pointing to Micaela. “In fact, Rekke asked about you in particular.”

“He asked about me?”

She looked around in concern, convinced it was a joke.

“Yes, you led some interrogation with Costa that he thought was interesting.”

“I can’t imagine—” she began.

“Firstly, Vargas can’t go alone,” Fransson interjected, turning to Falkegren. “She doesn’t have enough experience, not by a long shot, and

secondly, with the greatest of respect, Martin, you could have informed us in advance. You went behind our backs.”

“I admit that. You have my apologies in that regard.”

“Well, things are the way they are now. I’ll tag along.”

“Good.”

“But I don’t intend to follow one word of the professor’s advice if I don’t like it. I’m heading this inquiry – no-one else.”

“Naturally. But do go with an open mind.”

“I always have an open mind. It’s part of the job,” he said, which made Micaela want to snort or say something crushing.

But as usual she held her tongue and nodded with a serious expression.

“I’ll tag along too,” Lasse Sandberg said.

“Me too,” said Jonas Beijer. And that was that.

The following Saturday, they met outside the police station and headed off to the big house in Djursholm: Vargas, Fransson, Sandberg and Beijer.