

Crime Fiction Meets Counter-Espionage in Wartime Finland

From author **Tapani Bagge**:

Red Shadow

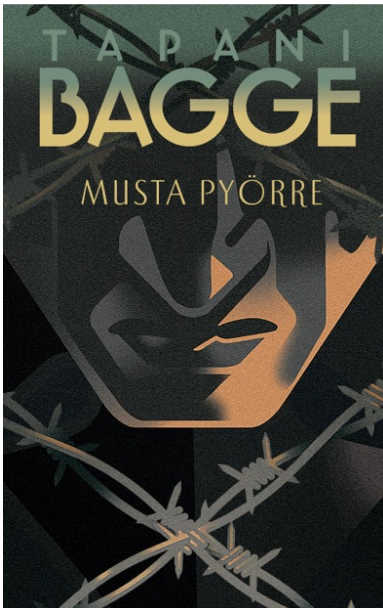
Original title: *Punainen varjo* | To be published in 2013 | Publisher:
Crime Time
Class: Crime Fiction | Pages: 300

Agent Mujunen's war has just begun.

“These are dreadful times”, says the prime minister of Finland in 1944. A peace treaty has just been concluded between Finland and the Soviet Union and Finnish troops are now fighting their former Nazi allies in Lapland. The Soviet Control Commission has occupied the Torni Hotel in downtown Helsinki, casting a long shadow over the entire country. Agent Mujunen is interrogating prisoners of war, but is called to investigate the murder of a Russian captain – and to report to the Commission. Are the Russians using the murder as an excuse to occupy Finland?



The Black Vortex



Original title: *Musta pyörre* | Published: 2012 | Publisher: Crime
Time | Class: Crime Fiction | Pages: 350

**The black whirlpools of fate spin Agent Mujunen from
Helsinki to East Karelia.**

The time is late summer, 1942, and the offensive phase of the Finnish Continuation War has bogged down in the trenches. Former State Police Senior Agent Mujunen thinks his life is over, but then two femmes fatale and a nighttime air raid draw him back to work.

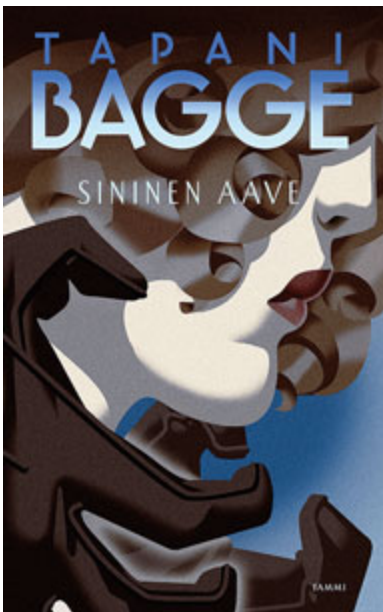
Communist prisoners escape from Riihimäki, north of the capital, and, soon after, a time bomb goes off in an anti-aircraft ammunition depot in West Helsinki. One of the perpetrators is apprehended, but he escapes. One of these saboteurs, now disguised as a military lieutenant, is on the loose in Helsinki, as is the German Reichsführer of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, whose life Mujunen is obliged to protect. At the same time, Mujunen

experiences a torrid romance with a co-worker and does his best to save the Jewish refugees whom the leadership of the State Police intend to expel to Germany – meaning certain death. Himmler offers the same fate for all of Finland's Jews.

On the trail of vandals and murderers, Mujunen ends up in Finnish-occupied Petrozavodsk, which has been rechristened Äänislinna, in the Finnish concentration camp and the Karhumäki amusement park set up near the front for the troops. He finally finds the truth in Berlin, but whose truth is it? Can a counter-espionage agent maintain his humanity during wartime, or is that just an unnecessary luxury?

Tapani Bagge has outdone himself again. Strong period description and precise character development combine in a fast-paced, exciting story that will also move you.

The Blue Phantom



Original title: Sininen aave | Published: 2011 | Publisher: Tammi |
Class: Crime Fiction | Pages: 232

Finnish crime fiction has a new, humane protagonist.

The year is 1940. Detective Sergeant Mujunen, familiar to readers of *White Heat*, is swept up in a new, more poignant chain of events. Mujunen, in mourning for the death of his wife, meets the Lithuanian dancer Ilse Anders at the cemetery, and his heart skips a beat. But his troubles are far from over.

A Finnish commuter plane vanishes after taking off from Tallinn, a bank is robbed in Kerava, and riots flare in Helsinki, the protesters demanding peace and brotherhood between Finland and the Soviet Union. Also involved is a big time gangster, Finnish-American Bill Kovanen, arrived too late to take part in the Winter War. Crime journalist Ossi Koho and photographer Sanna Rytönen suspect a conspiracy: what if everything is connected with the accident where actress Sirkka Sari fell into the chimney of the Aulanko Hotel? The last act is played out on the windy

shore of the Ice Sea, where Mujunen's faith in mankind is put to the test.

"The Blue Phantom is a high-quality, fast-paced thriller, which any friend of detective novels is sure to enjoy." – Pertti Ehrnrooth, *Keskisuomalainen* newspaper

White Heat



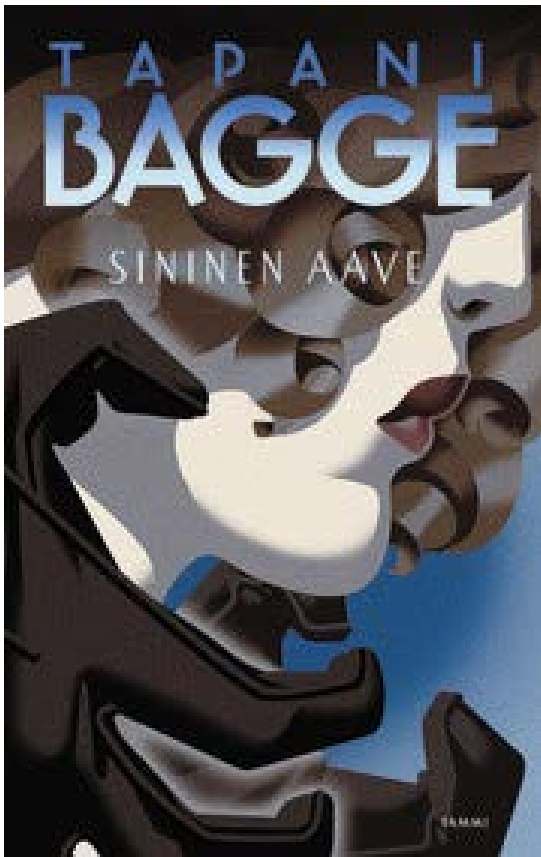
Original title: Valkoinen hehku | Published: 2009 | Publisher: Tammi | Class: Crime Fiction | Pages: 294

A coup in Finland in 1938? This mosaic crime novel reveals what might have happened. In August 1938, Soviet Captain Helander is awaiting execution in the courtyard of a Spanish monastery. A familiar white heat, which Helander has seen before, appears in the eyes of the leader of the detachment. A moment later, a bullet flings him backwards into the mass grave. In Finland, Minister of the Interior Kekkonen is preparing to receive the Independence Day commemorative parade, but under the surface, things are boiling. Several assassins are plotting a hit against Kekkonen. Mujunen, the chief inspector of the State Police is hunting down the private secretary of a German arms dealer and secret documents. And banker Vähämäki's new chauffeur looks oddly familiar. He is seeking the sparkling white plunder he lost in Spain, and is concurrently struggling to return to the past and

avenge his father's death.

"The narrative is dynamic —The many characters are vividly described, with humour blossoming even in the midst of sobering issues." – Umami

Reading Sample



The Blue Phantom

Written by Tapani Bagge

Publisher: Tammi, 2011

Original title: *Sininen aave*

Language: Finnish

Format: Hardcover

Length: 232 pages

Sample translation by Owen F. Witesman

Length: 4,000 words

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PUBLICATION

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Mujunen was in the center of the chaos. A chestnut horse threw its rider and stampeded towards a little girl. Mujunen snatched the girl up in his arms just from under its hooves, throwing himself to the side. As panic-stricken people churned over him, the girl bit him on the finger, and the mare's hoof swept the bowler off his head. Would he be going the same way Maire had?¹

He had thought he had seen Anders among the protesters and tried to push his way through the crowd toward the young man. Now Anders was nowhere in sight.

Even the police horse was galloping away, hooves clattering on the cobblestones. Mujunen tried to stand, despite the surging sea of humanity buffeting him. Now the little girl bit him on the nose. Then a severe-looking working class woman kicked him in the kneecap and tore the child from his arms, following up by swinging a full milk can at his temple. Luckily it was only a two-liter can. Mujunen remained upright, swaying and almost managing to dive out from under the blow of the brawny, blond-haired patrolman's baton. More's the pity, he ran out of space halfway. The blow thudded into his shoulder, numbing it, and a second immediately followed. This struck his forehead. Mujunen fell, sitting on the pavement. Behind the policemen he noticed Nikkilä from Army Intelligence, who surely recognized him.

"No need to hit them quite that hard. They are Finns too after all," was all Nikkilä said, his face blank.

"This one certainly looks like a Russki," the policeman with the angelic curls who was beating Mujunen said. "And sounds like one too. There's a hollow echo in his nut where the brains are supposed to be."

"I'm a Valpo agent! I'm state police!" Mujunen cried from under the protection of his bruised arm.

"I can confirm that," Nikkilä finally said.

¹ Translator's note: earlier in the book, the reader learns that Mujunen's wife was killed by a spooked horse.

“But he looked so much like a Russki,” the officer grumbled and then choose a new target for his truncheon.

Mujunen glanced around. A man with a Roman nose with blond hair, straight this time, who looked like Anders was moving off through the crush of humanity towards the Lines. Mujunen plucked up his trampled bowler, reshaped it a little, set it on his head with both hands, and took his first step after Anders. Then he received a jet of water from a fire engine in his face and chest and flew onto his back.

Rocks and water flew through the air, sending people bumping this way and that in a dense mass. Screaming. It was futile for the SPFS² shock troops to try to maintain their discipline. Mujunen scrambled upright again, his bowler lost once and for all, and found that his left knee worked but not without agony. He could also smell smoke. The back edge of the square blazed red, but no longer from the sunset.

“Fire!”

“The wood pile is burning!”

The panic intensified even further. Mujunen had to work up a sweat to make any progress towards the Lines. The others were pushing more directly away from the inferno. Except for the fire brigade, whose first water jets were hissing ineffectually into the tall flames. The smoke only thickened.

When Mujunen finally reached the edge of the square and went limping up Second Line Street, he looked back. There weren't many of the protesters visible anymore, but a crowd had already started to gather in the vicinity of the burning wood piles, and the patrolmen, warmed up by the riot, were driving them off with their sticks. The mounted police were content to watch that the last protesters dispersed or at least didn't head off south across the Long Bridge. The Soviet Union's automobile delegation had also disappeared.

A shot rang out up on the rocks.

² Translator's note: Explained in Chapter 3. The “Finland–Soviet Union Peace and Friendship Society”.

“A pistol!” a female voice cried out up ahead. “Somebody shot a pistol!”

Mujunen sighed heavily. He was soaking wet, his arms and shoulders were black and blue, the marks of a little girl’s teeth were imprinted on his forefinger and nose, his left knee was smashed, his old war injury was gnawing at his right ankle, and his bowler hat and Ilse’s brother were both missing. And then of all things he just had to run into a shooting—and Rytönen and Koho.

The duo from the newspaper were already attacking the outcropping of bedrock. Sanna Rytönen was fumbling her camera out of its bag and Ossi Koho was either digging a notepad or a flask out of his jacket pocket. Agent Mujunen rushed after them as fast as his knee would allow.

By the time Mujunen managed to climb high enough that he could see the scene, the incident was over. A man was lying prone on the ground, and a swarm of gawkers was standing and squatting around him.

“Mujunen, Valpo,” Mujunen said, descending the gentle slope to the small flat area where the deceased lay. Or was he still alive?

“Oh, he’s dead,” Koho said, his index finger on the man’s carotid artery and looking toward the camera. Rytönen snapped a picture.

“Who pulled the trigger?” Mujunen asked.

The people around were mostly nonpolitical workers who had been watching the events in the square from up here. The miscreants had already legged it.

“Lukander went after the shooter,” a lady in her fifties said. “Officer Lukander that is.”

“They headed off that way up Suonio Street towards the church,” her husband added. Even wearing a cap the man was a full head shorter than his wife, but it didn’t seem to bother them.

No signs of pursuit were visible on Suonio Street, just folks from the neighborhood banged up in the riot returning to their homes.

“Description?” Mujunen asked the lady, digging his notebook out of the pocket of his suit jacket.

“Medium height, heavy-set, about fifty, dark hair, bug-eyed, thick mustache,” the woman listed off.

“I’m sure Agent Mujunen didn’t mean his own description,” said Koho, the journalist, who was standing next to the woman.

“I wasn’t describing him,” she corrected, “I was describing Lukander. The policeman.”

Mujunen felt a headache coming on. He rubbed his temples and groaned when his fingers hit the contusion left by the milk can. He opened his eyes and looked at the lady with deliberate calm.

“And the shooter? Did you see him?”

“I didn’t see anything of him but his bald head. He was already heading up the street like a jackrabbit by the time I realized I should be looking in that direction.”

“He had on a nice, gray suit,” the husband added. “And a thick head of hair.”

“But...your wife just said the man was bald,” Mujunen huffed.

“My wife?” the man said, confused, and looked at the woman, shaking his head. “A fine lady like that!”

“Thank you,” the woman said, blushing. “But I’m no fancy lady...my husband is just the custodian of the building there across the street.”

Mujunen continued his questioning. Soon uniformed patrolmen arrived on the scene from the square, and Mujunen handed over responsibility for taking statements to them. He sent one to call the switchboard from the nearest police box and request the homicide team, the police doctor, and a hearse. Then he turned to Koho and Rytönen.

“How did you know to be here?”

“The deceased asked us to come,” the photographer, Rytönen, said.

“To witness his murder?”

“I doubt he thought he was going to die,” Koho said. “He promised us information about Sirkka Sari’s murder.”

“Don’t forget the Kaleva³,” Rytönen said.

“Or the Alamo,” Koho added.

“What the hell?” Mujunen asked. “How are those related?”

“The Alamo isn’t,” Koho confessed. “It just popped into my head.”

Mujunen waved his hand.

“You two clear off now and stop contaminating the crime scene. But stay close. I’ll question you more carefully in a minute.”

A dark-haired beat cop with an imposing mustache was coming down Suonio Street to the base of the rocks. His face was as red as a fire truck, and he was almost as wet as Mujunen. Mujunen didn’t think his own eyes protruded that much, but otherwise it was hard to deny the resemblance.

“Got...over...the damn...wall.... He...got...away,” the police officer said, fuming, once Mujunen had introduced himself.

“Did you recognize him?”

“I couldn’t...from behind....”

Mujunen nodded and bent down over the body. At the nape of the neck was a dark-rimmed hole with the hair around it singed. Mujunen turned the victim carefully on his side and found that the man was missing pieces of brain, his whole nose, and part of this forehead. They had undoubtedly flown some distance and already been trampled into the tall grass.

Despite these deficiencies and the spatters of blood, it was easy to identify the corpse. Mujunen had finally caught up with Ilse Anders’ little brother.

How would he tell her?

³ Translator’s note: An airplane that crashed earlier in the book.

“First, the good news,” Lieutenant Henttunen said from behind his massive desk in his office on Sofia Street. He sucked flame into his pipe, waving the match and laying it in the ashtray. “Several of the eyewitnesses had a sharp mental picture of the shooter. Now, the bad news: all of their pictures were different.”

Mujunen, sitting on a worn leather sofa, didn't react one way or the other. He was looking at Henttunen but couldn't see him properly. There was too much haze in the air. Or there was something wrong with his eyes. He rubbed them, but it didn't help.

“Fortunately, you were able to identify the victim.”

“Fortunately?” Mujunen asked.

“Yes. He didn't have any kind of identification on him. Are you sure he wasn't a Jew?”

“How so?” Mujunen asked, confused.

“The nose they found in the grass was so big. Anti-Semitism could have been the motive for the murder.”

“Perhaps the killer took him for a Jew,” Mujunen admitted. “Or a friend of the Soviet Union. Or a personal enemy.”

“According to the eyewitnesses, they knew each other and spoke together briefly, apparently in English. Only, none of the bystanders understood what they were saying.”

“Too bad.”

“Mmm. In any case, a dispute broke out, and the other one, the one who was bald or bushy-haired or had antlers, took hold of Anders' arm, twisted it behind his back, and forced him to his knees before shooting him in the neck.”

“Right there in front of people,” Mujunen observed matter-of-factly. Nothing surprised him anymore.

“If you’re brazen enough, you can do anything,” Henttunen said. “That’s plain enough from looking at Hitler. And the other dictators.”

Mujunen poured more water from the carafe and drank. There was still the taste of smoke in his throat. Smoke and ashes. After examining the deceased, the police doctor had looked Mujunen over and proclaimed him alive and free of any serious injuries. The bruises and scrapes and teeth marks would heal on their own, but he should take it easy on the knee for a couple of weeks. He had probably pulled a ligament.

Mujunen still hadn’t told Henttunen where he knew Anders from. He just said that Anders was indirectly connected to a Valpo case.

He would have to tell Ilse about Anders’ fate before she read about it in the paper or heard it on the radio. They still hadn’t released the victim’s nationality or name to the press, but Koho knew he was a foreigner and would undoubtedly put at least that much in the paper. And preliminary investigations always seemed to spring leaks.

“Did Anders really know something about Sirkka Sari’s death or the destruction of the Kaleva?”

The lieutenant’s question surprised Mujunen.

“What would there be to know?” Mujunen wondered aloud. At the same time, he was thinking about what Ilse might say when she heard about her brother.

Goodbye?

That night Mujunen was waiting for Ilse in her dressing room after the show. The crowd at the Grand had grown accustomed to seeing him in Ilse’s company, and the usher let him through the locked door without a second glance. After being left alone, Mujunen sniffed the perfume and powder floating in the air. He picked up Ilse’s violet silk scarf, stroking it with his fingers and looking around as if for the last time. You never knew.

Maire had often advised him in business matters, but when he was stopping by home just now

and asked her how he should present this to Ilse, she had kept mum. Surely Maire wasn't jealous? Mujunen never would have betrayed his wife while she was alive and hadn't for half a year after the funeral either. He had already been close with Ilse a couple of times.

The trumpet solo was picking up speed in the hall two walls away. "Mirage." Is that what this had been? He had tried to grab hold of life one more time and ended up empty handed.

Mujunen pulled the only chair in the room under himself and looked in the mirror. A beaten man. Beaten, but not broken. At least he had tried. He had something to remember during the rest of the quiet journey to his place in the grave by Maire's side.

The touch and smell of a young woman. The softness of her lips, the warmth of her breath. The agility and power and intensity of a dancer...

The piece began nearing its conclusion. Mujunen perked up, stood, and lowered the silk scarf onto the back of the chair. At the same time his gaze fell on a book lying on the table its pages like a bud bursting into bloom it had been read so much. *Mein Kampf*. Under it was a red, leather-bound notebook.

Mujunen was still staring at *Mein Kampf* when the door opened and Ilse rushed in, hot, sweaty, and red-faced in her skimpy stage outfit. She was still aglow with the intoxication of the dance and immediately threw her arms around Mujunen's neck.

"How lovely! I have an admirer in my dressing room! Where are the flowers?"

"I..."

"Oh, what do I need with flowers when I have my Mujunen!"

Mujunen did not try to say anything for a moment. Ilse hugged and kissed him as if he was her one and only. In the end Mujunen sat down in the chair with Ilse in his lap stroking the tip of his nose with her forefinger.

"Who have you been with, with these teeth marks on your nose?"

"And my finger," Mujunen said, showing his index finger. "The thanks of a little girl for pulling her out from under the hooves of a horse."

“I thought I was your little girl,” Ilse said, looking sulky, but then she sucked on Mujunen’s finger with her lips.

Behind her the usher discreetly closed the door so the performers and stage crew walking by couldn’t see in.

“A little girl approximately five years old,” Mujunen clarified. “Her mother kicked me in the knee and smacked me in the head with a milk can too.”

“My hero,” Ilse said breathily, smiling and kissing the contusion on his temple. Then she ran her fingers along his neck and loosened his tie. She opened his collar button, then the next. “Was it the mother who gave you all of those bruises too?”

“A patrolman softened me up with his billy club. He thought I was a friend of the Soviet Union.”

“Well then I understand. You aren’t, are you?”

“No. And I’m not much of a friend of Germany either.”

“Neither am I,” Ilse said and then noticed Mujunen’s eyes slide over *Mein Kampf*. “I found it in the boarding house. I haven’t even gotten through it once yet.”

“Why are you reading it at all?”

“‘Know your enemy.’ Isn’t that the saying? I’ve read Marx and Lenin too.”

Ilse shifted in Mujunen’s lap, turning towards him and sliding her left leg onto the other side of the chair, straddling him. She was still smiling, and there wasn’t much of melancholy in her face anymore.

“Do you have a pistol in your pocket?”

“I’m just happy to see you.”

When Ilse went to lock the door, Mujunen quietly pleaded in his mind for Maire to forgive him. He did not even remember Ilse’s brother anymore.

Not for a little while.

August 7, 1940

WEDNESDAY

12

Mujunen had seen cleaner flophouses than Hotel Pallas, but it was probably pointless expecting to see any palaces in a neighborhood like Kallio. The old, two-story wood building with flaking, white exterior paint looked as though it was perpetually wondering whether it was really worth clinging to that slope on Third Line Street or whether it should give up and just let itself slide down the hill.

The landlady, Salme Niemi, had given up wondering. She had obviously been going downhill for a long time now and was hastening her decline with sustained, low-intensity tipping. She was only in her forties, but the liquor had gouged her face like water running down crumbling granite, and her voice brought to mind a poorly-greased stone crusher. However, she was a respectable citizen and a taxpayer, so she was entitled to police services and state benefits. At least so she always claimed.

Mujunen was letting her maintain this belief as long as he was able to milk her for information. He had left Karlsson to wait behind the wheel of the Citroën. On these streets it did not pay to leave such a valuable vehicle unattended. It still had gas in its tank after all.

And the boy would only have cocked up the interrogation anyway.

“Just like I already said on the telephone, I had to go all the way to Häme Road to call from a café since our line is out—surely some sort of misunderstanding—all the bills have been paid on time.... But I was just going to say that I’m sure that kike killer was living here and left his bill unpaid. He never came back last night, even though he claimed he would be staying for several more weeks.”

“What did he look like?” Mujunen asked. There wasn’t any point trying to correct her. For

her, the deceased was a Jew, regardless of any evidence to the contrary. The newspaper had said that he was a foreigner.

“Bald, but still young. Much younger than you, Mr. Agent Mujunen. Thirty and a little, let’s say. I have a sharp eye. Especially with my glasses on.”

Mujunen said he believed it.

An incredibly overfed gray cat was sprawled on the counter. It had probably needed lifting up there. This kitty wouldn’t be much for rat hunting, even if they were pulling it by the whiskers. Judging from the condition of its nose hairs, they had actually been plucked.

“So was this Kovanen individual a Finn?” Mujunen asked.

“An American Finn. He spoke full Finnish, but sort of Americany. He wrote his name as William Kovanen in the register. You can look there. But he said to call him Bill. Just like some cowboy from the Wild West.”

“When did he arrive?”

“He came in the spring. Mid-March. Supposedly he had set out to defend the land of his fathers but got stuck in Europe. At that point there wasn’t any way to get here from just about anywhere. He finally came through up north in Petsamo on a Finnish cargo ship. And when he made it to Helsinki, the headlines about the shameful Moscow treaty were waiting for him at the train station newspaper stand.”

Mujunen nodded.

“What did Kovanen live on here? Did he work?”

“Work . . .” the landlady repeated, exploding with laughter as if he had told the best joke she had ever heard. “Definitely.”

“Where?”

The woman put her thin yet wiry arms on her hips.

“I have one principle in the running of this hotel: I do not ask about my customers’ business, and I don’t pass that information on either.”

Unless you think it will get you something, Mujunen continued in his mind. Out loud he asked, "Did Kovanen have any visitors?"

"I didn't see any."

"And what if it were to influence our compensation for your losses?"

"I still didn't see any. I do have other things to do than keep watch on my guests."

Mujunen said he believed that too.

"Are Kovanen's belongings still in the room?"

"I haven't started cleaning it yet," Niemi said and poured a little more of something clear into her glass under the counter. "I've been busy."

Mujunen could see that too. She relieved her glass of some of its contents and leaned on the counter with her dirty dressing gown hanging far too open. Dry, persistent coughing carried from somewhere in a back room. The sewage line smelled like it was backed up.

"Could I have Kovanen's room key?"

"Are you sure the state is going to pay his bill?"

"Just as sure as my name is Karlsson," Mujunen declared. He was also sure there was no getting into this hotel without paying for a room in advance.

Niemi threw the key onto the counter from the wall board and raised her glass to Mujunen.

"Room 23, second floor. You may investigate it at your leisure. Just bring the key back to the counter afterwards."

The steep stairs creaked like an old sailing ship in a storm. Mujunen didn't dare touch the railing, which was already swaying of its own accord. It also just looked that filthy.

The creaking continued in the upstairs hallway. The hall lamp failed to light no matter how he snapped the switch. Luckily it was a bright morning and some amount of light managed to get in through the window at the other end of the hallway. Mujunen had a splendid view of the old newspaper wallpapering that was tearing off in large chunks and the bulbless light socket in the ceiling.

The poison-green door of room 23 wasn't far. It was the second on the right, on the courtyard side.

The smell of sewage was noticeable even on this floor, despite the toilet being downstairs. Mujunen fitted the key in the lock and turned it. The lock clicked open. He put his hand on the sticky handle and paused for a moment to listen. Someone was snoring in the room across the hall, and one door down someone was vomiting. Farther along the hallway a loud, drunken argument was under way.

But behind door number 23 it was quiet.

With one motion Mujunen turned the handle and pulled open the door. The smell became unbearable, as if the toilet had been in that very room. Still he plunged quickly into the room because he saw the curtain swing, a dark figure disappearing behind it.

“Stop!” he cried. “Police!”

No one stopped. The window was already open, so the dark figure was trying to get out through it. Mujunen just had time to grab a shoe that was disappearing out the window. The shoe remained in his hand, but the fugitive continued on his way.

Head first.