**Jussi Adler Olsen*, The Shadow Murders (Natrium Chlorid),* 2020**

**Happy New Year to all you friends of the National Danish Book Club.**

When we are talking about this book, it will be 2023, and we are heading into discussions of the last five books of our second season.

Of course, this book is a crime story, and I hope it keeps you turning pages and wishing for a happy end! (Well, maybe not!)

It is an independent continuation of the book by Jussi Adler-Olsen that we read last year, *Victim 2117*, and it encompasses some of the same themes while he is also adding a lot of new thoughts and perspective.

This book is number 9 in a planned series of 10, and Adler-Olsen is already hard at work finishing off the journey of Police Commissioner Carl Mørck and his trusted team of colleagues/coworkers: Assad, Rose, and Gordon.

Whether you are an avid reader of crime fiction or not quite a fan of Scandinavian Noir, I hope this book will entertain you, make you think, and – maybe – make you feel tempted to read the series from the very beginning in 2007, with *The Keeper of Lost Causes*. All the books have been translated, and the first four books have also been turned into movies.

**Questions to ponder – as always, please add your own:**

1. Discuss / comment on the structure of the book. How is the plot constructed? Is this common for crime stories – why, why not?
2. What are the rules for “family reunification” in Denmark (cf. the son of Assad) – and how do they compare to similar rules about immigrants and immigration in the US?
3. Jussi introduces a dilemma: we never want to believe that people we like and respect can be criminals. How is it possible to envision bad things about people perceived as good?
4. Serial killers have a special place in the history of crimes. How many do you know from the US and how many from Denmark – and how many do you think exist? What are the characteristics of serial killers according to the book?
5. How do you feel about the theory of immigrants being behind the killings? Is it racism? Are the sentiments relatable? Are they a sign of cultural differences or chasms?
6. What has happened to Ragnhild and why? How does it define her life?
7. How do ordinary people get radicalized? Think about the previous book, *Victim 2117*, if you read it and compare the sentiments expressed here.
8. Is there any way to prevent hate-mails, scams etc. in todays’ society. Think of Palle Rasmussen’s situation.
9. The book raises the important question about vigilantes in our society. How do you feel about Tabitha/Eva and her actions?
10. Comment on the use of private video-recordings to register or solve crimes (cf. that of Ragnhild)
11. Ragnhild loves action heroes (and movies) with people who take the law into their own hands. Do movies about this color our perception of reality in such a way as to glamorize violence? What is the attraction of heroes, such as e.g. Rambo, who take matters into their own hands.
12. Discuss the ethics of Reality-TV (and shows such as the ones suggested in the book).
13. Discuss the concept of a society governed by law where “even bastards have to be given a fair chance of surviving, if not for their own sake, then for the sake of maintaining the humanity they so blatantly disregard.” (235). Connect your thoughts to Assad’s statement about “how many bastards the killer has removed from the surface of the earth.” (307)
14. Is there a way to reduce gambling and its human consequences?
15. Discuss the ubiquitous use of God and religion as the excuse and reason for taking the law into your own hands, vigilante (violent) actions, and revenge. Does it allow the growth of a certain callousness in the perpetrators who see themselves as righteous?
16. The focus shifts to Carl being investigated and the attempt to avoid one more murder. Are all the many threads too confusing, or does the multifaceted plot keep you on your toes?
17. Should the protagonist detective ever be a suspect in a crime novel?
18. What does Gordon represent, and what is his role in the book?
19. How do you feel about the ending? What is the point?
20. Do people like Sisle Park really exist? Crusaders, vigilantes, self-righteous bigots? Do you find any similarity to our society today?