

Sample Translation (pp. 35–43, pp. 58–72)

# **LATE FROST**

by **Roman Voosen • Kerstin Signe Danielsson**

Translated by Simon Pare

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Publication: September 2012 (Paperback)  
384 pages  
ISBN: 978-3-462-04449-2

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Iris Brandt: [ibrandt@kiwi-verlag.de](mailto:ibrandt@kiwi-verlag.de)  
Aleksandra Erakovic: [aerakovic@kiwi-verlag.de](mailto:aerakovic@kiwi-verlag.de)

## SUNDAY

The Volvo sped through the half-darkness. Stina Forss was perching on the back seat, peering towards the front. At the wheel was her colleague Anette Hultin, who was in her early thirties, had chin-length blonde hair and that morning was wearing a sporty fleece top with the words *Peak Performance* on it. She was handling the car with the practice and acceleration of a rally driver. Ingrid Nyström sat in the passenger seat. There were already a few streaks of silver in her short, dark hair.

Forss looked out of the window into the early Sunday morning light. It wasn't long since Nyström had rung and woken her. She saw woods with mist between them and old snow in dips in the ground. From time to time, the lead-grey surface of small lakes flickered through the trees. They were taking the country road to Skårtaryd, then on past small villages, residential developments and old farms to Dädesjö. From there they would drive on to Ramnåsa.

Nyström turned round. 'The dead man is Balthasar Melchior Frost, an Englishman who'd been living here for many years.'

'Did you know him?'

'Depends what you mean by "know". I went to a talk he gave at the town library. On insects. That must have been in 2007 — Linné Year.'

'What?'

'Linné Year. Carl von Linné. A scientist who came from around here. He invented our system for classifying plants and animals. You know, those Latin names. He went to school in Växjö. 2007 was the 300th anniversary of his birth. There were lots of exhibitions and talks like the one Frost gave. The local paper, *Smålands Posten*, even printed a long piece about him.'

'About Linné?'

Nyström burst out laughing. 'Him too, but I meant Frost.'

They turned off the road and made their way along a windy track. Outside, the dark sky was gradually brightening between the trees. Scraps of cloud hung so low over the ground that they obscured the treetops. The rain had relented and given way to an almost invisible drizzle. The car pulled up outside a yellow, two-storey wooden house.

There were four cars and two uniformed police officers in the driveway. The three women walked towards the house. In the open doorway stood Hugo Delgado. He nodded to them. He was rolling himself a cigarette and looked tense. Nyström and her colleagues entered the house proper, but Forss lingered in the entrance; she could think better on her own. She looked

around. A large, spacious hallway. A staircase led upstairs to her right, its steps, like the floor, made of light-blue-lacquered logs that were worn down in the middle. Just inside the front door was a colourful, coarsely woven rug, and there were similar ones at the far end of the room and on the stairs.

A round, opaque glass lamp hung from the ceiling. Along the left-hand side of the room three windows with white-painted frames looked out onto the street. Underneath them stood a pale wood sideboard and next to that hung a kidney-shaped mirror, above which there was a line of pegs with woollen coats and cardigans dangling from it.

Forss lifted a brown cardigan from its peg and sniffed the wool. It was damp, but she detected a more intense smell. Not aftershave, not eau de toilette; more like perfume. She put the cardigan back and carried on into the living room. It ran the full length of the back of the house — a welcoming, open room with large windows offering a good view of the garden. In one corner was an inviting cantilever chair. Forss took a closer look at it. An original late-fifties model designed by Alvar Aalto and Bruno Mathsson. She sat down. In the centre of the room stood a dining table and chairs from the same period. Originals too, presumably. A serving trolley with two large and two smaller wheels was parked beside them. From the ceiling hung a white lamp shaped a bit like a lipstick. All designer furniture. Whoever the deceased was, she thought, he had taste. And money.

She plucked at a silk cushion. She'd put on the obligatory plastic gloves upon entering the house. Two more cushions lay on the floor, and one on each dining chair. Below one window was a knee-high shelf with an old Braun stereo system on it. There was a single on the turntable: the Rolling Stones' *Mother's Little Helper* — every pill-popper's anthem, the thought fleetingly crossed her mind. She got up and went over to the window. A little way off stood a large greenhouse at least fifteen metres long and six metres wide. Through its transparent sides she could see a dozen police officers hurrying to and fro. Her eyes carried on exploring the room. There were three framed pictures on one wall. Large formats — A2, A1 or even bigger. Calligraphy: Japanese characters or maybe Chinese. They went surprisingly well with the Nordic-style furniture, she thought.

A few framed photographs hung on the adjacent wall. Black-and-white prints of cities and buildings, all showing a good sense of an angle and a good eye for a subject. Paris was there, so were Tel Aviv and a US city. Chicago, she guessed, but she might have been wrong.

She went back to the armchair and sat down. On the smooth coffee table in front of her were two cups and a teapot — an Asian tea set. She picked up one cup and held it to the light. Clean. There was a little tea in the bottom of the other.

At Nyström's call she got up and went out through the back door towards the greenhouse, stepping out directly onto a covered terrace. The garden was

bigger than half a football pitch. The lawn ended at an oval hollow with reeds growing in it, which in turn stretched to the edge of the woods.

Nyström beckoned to her. She was standing in the greenhouse door with Lars Knutsson at her side. Forss walked towards them. Nyström's expression was grave.

'The deceased is in here. Maybe you should take a look for yourself first and then we'll have a chat.'

Forss nodded. Knutsson held out two purple shoe covers. Her eyes lingered on his hand for a second. Was it shaking? Maybe it was just the cold. She pulled on the plastic things and entered the greenhouse. To the left she saw a workbench covered with seed trays from which seedlings and small plants sprouted. Rakes, spades and tongs were leaning against it. There were a number of small beds laid out at right angles to it. As she forced her way through a curtain of plastic strips, her face hit a wall of moist heat; the curtain was a sort of air lock. It was three degrees outside, maybe thirteen in the antechamber and thirty in here. The air was heavy with water and she started to sweat. She took off her coat and laid it over her arm.

Palm trees, ferns, head-high bushes: it was like a rainforest. There were banana plants, a lemon tree and Spanish moss. Metal heating pipes ran along the ceiling, a couple of water pipes too, and over there was a sprinkler. She had come to the edge of a pool with ornamental fish in it. A koi carp rose to the surface and gulped for air. It was orange and white, and its mouth made a large O when it breathed. Forss walked slowly around the pool. She wiped a bead of sweat from her forehead, although it might only have been condensation.

Then she saw the dead man.

The corpse was slumped in an upright, seated position against a pile of sacks of potting compost. His head was tilted back, chin jutting into the air like a church spire. His mouth was open, as if the dead man were trying to suck the water out of the air of his glasshouse. But the most striking thing was his eyes: the man no longer had any. Where they would have been, there were now only two milky, blurred balls. No pupils, no colour, no expression. Nothing. He was sitting there like some monstrous doll. One of his eyeballs was so wrecked that it had begun to ooze from its socket. The tissue in the socket, on the sides of the nose and around the mouth was red, like cooked crabmeat, and swollen, as if the deceased had been attacked by a swarm of wasps. One could only guess how he might have looked before.

Forss moved closer. The corpse was dressed in a flannel shirt, threadbare cord trousers and brown shoes. There was a large puddle on the floor beneath the corpse. Cautiously, she patted one trouser leg. It was sodden. So were the shirt and shoes. Her first thought was urine, but then she noticed that even the strands of hair combed across the dead man's skull were wet. She saw a dark patch where his head was resting on the uppermost plastic bag of peat. She took a biro out of her bag and scratched gently at this patch. It looked like

dried blood. The dead man must have a wound on the back of his head. She crouched down and studied the corpse's hands resting on the concrete slabs alongside his thighs. Unnatural, like a doll. As if he'd been positioned there. Only at second glance did she realize that one of his little fingers was missing.

## 2

Nyström stood at the centre of a circle of her colleagues outside the greenhouse. Knutsson was there, Delgado and Bo Örkenrud, the forensics chief, and also her friend Ann-Vivika Kimsel, the coroner. Nyström's hands were numb with cold inside her thin plastic gloves, but she felt another kind of numbness too. A few metres away lay a dead man without a face. An elderly dead man whose finger had been cut off. These things shouldn't happen, she thought. Not here, not in sweet little Småland. Her mind turned automatically to Gunnar Berg. Now, though, it was her job to make decisions. There was work to be done and tasks to be assigned. That's just the way it is, she thought.

## 3

Forss had been standing near the lifeless body for several minutes now. Something puzzled her about this glasshouse in this heat, something peculiar here in the muggy air, though she didn't have a clue what it was. Something that heightened the brutality with which the man's corpse had been mangled. She'd thought of a swarm of wasps when she caught sight of the bloated face. But it was something else.

Her eyes roamed over the bushes and beds.

The lush vegetable beds.

The sophisticated irrigation system.

To the left stood a few oblong boxes that looked like beehives. They were covered with taut fine-mesh netting or panes of glass and contained caterpillars, larvae and hatched moths. Sticks and twigs had been suspended horizontally above them, and from these empty cocoons dangled and caterpillars in various stages of pupation.

And there was even something fluttering. A butterfly, a white one. Another one was perching on the bush beside the pool: a red butterfly with a black dot on each wing. And one on the glass. And on the rattan chair.

On the banana plant sat a brown moth bigger than her hand. At first it beat its wings only gently, but then all at once it catapulted itself into the air, did one loop-the-loop, then a second and eventually landed on one of the steel girders holding up the roof. Forss watched it for a little longer as it hung there beneath Småland's grey skies, then lowered her eyes to the floor again. To the dead man. Butterflies and a dead man. Like in that film with the young FBI agent, she thought. Jodie Foster. The film was called *The Silence of the Lambs*. That was clearly ridiculous, though. There was no similarity between

that and this here. There were no cannibals in real life, no clothes made of human skin.

She tore a leaf from a plant she thought was mint and put it on her tongue. It tasted of nothing. She went back out into the chill February morning. As she stood on the lawn, putting on her coat again, Nyström came over to her.

‘What do you reckon?’ Every syllable formed a cloud in the wintry air.

Forss arranged the sentences in her mind. Some Swedish words still felt alien to her mouth and cheek muscles.

‘Someone paid the old man a visit. You can’t inflict those kinds of burns on yourself. And the severed finger, that wasn’t an accident.’

Nyström nodded.

‘And that dampness is weird,’ said Forss. ‘Why’s he so wet?’

‘Maybe he was drowned. Maybe he was outside to begin with, in the rain, and then someone brought him in.’

‘That’s possible.’ Forss was cold now. She buttoned up her loden coat and hunched her shoulders. ‘Who found him?’

‘A friend, Frederik Axelsson. He lives in Växjö and was due to meet up with the deceased last night. They saw each other regularly. Axelsson was worried when Frost didn’t turn up and he heard nothing from him. He drove over here this morning and found the body.’

‘And where’s Axelsson now?’

‘They called an ambulance for him. He was in a terrible state, apparently. It’s amazing that he could even raise the alarm. No chance of him running away.’

Forss nodded, then started hopping about on the spot because she still couldn’t get warm, pulled a face, hissed through her teeth and glanced at Nyström, who was grinning at her.

‘Something wrong?’

‘Stina,’ she said, ‘you’ve got a bit of green stuck in your teeth.’

Forss climbed the final few stairs. Reaching the upper floor, she looked around. She thought back to Berlin where she'd once had to search a child's bedroom after an eight-year-old girl was murdered. The perpetrator had kidnapped the girl, abused and then killed her. The girl's mother had wept as she went through the child's things — the plastic doll's house, the pink satchel, the stiff, washed-out clothes smelling of cheap washing powder. It had almost driven her mad. The family lived in Marzahn in a tower block where the flats had only two or three rooms and the walls weren't especially thick. Every couple of minutes, Forss had gazed out of the window past the other tower blocks to the TV tower for something to focus on and allow her to think clearly.

She walked along the landing, opened the first door and stepped into a kind of study. There was a desk with nothing on it, a revolving chair and an armchair. Bookshelves all around. Forss ran her forefinger along the spines. Most of the books were Swedish, but there was the odd English volume here and there and, to her surprise, even a few in German. She identified encyclopaedia, biological reference works, specialist literature on insects and plants, a book on tai-chi. Balthasar Melchior Frost had kept a few very expensive-looking books in one section with a sliding glass front. She took a volume from the shelf. It had a high-quality hard cover decorated with several characters like the ones in the living room. She held it up to the light. The book was hand-painted, and the title, *Calligraphy: A Comprehensive Guide*, was wreathed with two poppies. Forss returned it to the display case and slid the glass back into place.

She continued to scour the shelves. There were books about ancient cities and sites: Athens, Rome, Pompeii. Swedish literature — Vilhelm Moberg, Karin Boye, Tomas Tranströmer — but they didn't mean much to her. Then a book she knew well caught her attention: *Nils Holgersson* by Selma Lagerlöf. Her father had read it to her when she was little, and later she had watched the cartoon series on TV too.

She sat down on the revolving chair and opened the top drawer of the desk. Files bulging with figures, bills and what looked like handwritten accounts. As far as she understood, they were related to stock trading. She studied the dates on some of the sheets. The oldest documents dated from the fifties. There were records from the sixties, seventies and into the eighties. Nothing after that. She laid the documents out on the desk. Someone else could deal with them.

Next, she went into the bedroom. Directly above the living room, it was spacious with big windows that let in a lot of light. Against the wall there was a heavy double bed made of dark wood with small tables on either side of it. A tall, old wardrobe stood opposite the bed. The bedroom smelled of age, sleep



and lavender — not unpleasant, actually rather comforting. Next to the wardrobe was a dressing table with a handsome wood-framed mirror on top. The same dark wood as the bed, the wardrobe and the dressing table. In front of the mirror stood an enamel washbasin, which must once have been white but now had a patina.

She opened the top drawer of the dressing table. Inside were hairbrushes of various sizes, a dark-red glass perfume atomizer and a collection of powder compacts, all covered with a film of dust. It looked like a museum exhibit.

She picked up the atomizer and pressed the button. Nothing happened. She shook it and tried again. This time it worked. She sprayed a little on her wrist and sniffed it. Not her taste, but certainly not cheap. Old-fashioned. A woman's fragrance, possibly Chanel. It might have been the scent she'd caught on the cardigan on the coatrack.

The other drawers contained jewellery boxes, little bottles and flacons of nail varnish, a variety of flat, fat, broad and thin tins of cream and makeup. Forss opened the wardrobe. She ran her finger along the hangers and over the compartments. Suits, shirts, jackets, sweaters, followed by dresses, skirts, silk blouses and tights. Fine fabrics, red, burgundy, antique pink, flowery patterns from the sixties and seventies. A select yet outdated lady's wardrobe, the kind of things you might find in a vintage store in a hip part of Berlin.

Nyström had said that Balthasar Frost was single and had lived here alone, but that might not always have been the case. She closed the wardrobe and went into the bathroom. There was a mirror cabinet on the wall above the washbasin. Lined up on a shelf between the two were a host of little bottles and containers: aftershave, shaving foam, anti-ageing creams, eyeshadow, eyeliner pencils, lipsticks. Some curlers lay on a floating shelf by the window. Certain items appeared to be years or even decades old and hadn't been used for a very long time. She picked up a lipstick, went over to the window and held it up to the light. It was labelled in French and still had the price sticker on it. Forty-nine francs.

She returned to the washbasin and opened the mirror cabinet. Ah, the medicine chest. She rifled through the medicines, but none struck her as strange. Most of the packets were well past their expiry date.

She found Nyström in the living room. The detective chief inspector was flicking through a photo album. Forss held out the French lipstick.

'Frost lives on his own?'

'Yes. Or didn't he?'

'Recently maybe, but probably not always. Take a look at the bedroom and bathroom upstairs.'

'You think he didn't live here alone?'

'It looks like he lived here with a woman. For a while at least.'

Nyström held up the photo album. 'No women in here, though. Nondescript photos of congresses, meetings, that kind of thing. Some of the

pictures in here must really be pretty old. Look at the hairstyles. Same goes for his address book.'

'Maybe they broke up years ago? Or she died a long time back.'

'Whichever way, we need to find out who this girlfriend or partner is.'

'Or was.'

There was a knock on the open living room door. A young man in a beat officer's blue uniform came gingerly into the room, holding in his right hand the cap with the three gold crowns on it that was actually supposed to be on his head. Nyström and Forss turned to him.

'I'm sorry to interrupt, but I'm looking for Detective Chief Inspector Nyström.'

'That's me,' said Nyström. 'What's so important?'

The young man didn't really know which way to look. He glanced at Nyström, then at Forss, then at the floor and back at Nyström. Someone else who's new to the job, thought Forss.

'I . . . I overheard the others talking outside about the dead man. The victim, I mean. This Frost guy.' His eyes were now glued to a point on the living room wall.

'Balthasar Melchior Frost. That's the dead man's name. So?'

The young man was now turning his cap this way and that in his hands, as if he were wringing out a towel. 'I think I know him.'

'You know the deceased?'

'Yes, um, I think so. He's the guy from the YouTube video.'

'YouTube video?' Nyström looked at the young man in bewilderment.

'Yeah, this Frost guy. The dead man. The victim. He's the grandpa in the YouTube video, the one about the aeroplane on the cathedral.'

'Oh I see, you mean the Småland flyer!'

Forss was now totally lost.

The young man nodded eagerly. 'That's the one! Frost is the old man in the YouTube video about the Småland flyer!'

## 10

They were all sitting in the meeting room at police headquarters: Ingrid Nyström, Stina Forss, Hugo Delgado, Anette Hultin, Lars Knutsson and Göran Lindholm. Delgado had connected his laptop to a beamer and was strutting back and forth in front of a screen with a pointer in his hand.

'As you surely know, the cathedral has been the emblem of our proud and glorious town of Växjö since time immemorial. To this day, the presence of a bishop on the town's coat of arms is a sign of its status as a royal capital and

testifies to its importance as a place of pilgrimage. The first wooden church was built in the eleventh century following the town's conversion to Christianity, and this was then replaced in the twelfth century by a stone structure. The use of a more valuable building material may have done wonders for the worship of God's splendour or for the bishop's or the cathedral's sponsor's reputation, but it did little to prolong the building's lifespan. The church burned down in the thirteenth century, and this was to be its recurring fate over the centuries that followed. Having been enlarged into a splendid hall church with its two characteristic towers in the fifteenth century, it later fell victim several times to torch-bearing Danes bent on arson.'

'Those bloody Danes,' Knutsson interjected.

'Thirty years after that, the proud building was to humiliated once again by the addition of a ridiculous snub-nosed, crested roof to the church tower, and subjected a good hundred years later to a further tragic architectural whim, when the tower was furnished with Victorian-style step gables. It was only in the 1950s that a certain Lord von Schmalensee plucked up his courage and restored the church's late-medieval exterior with the soaring, copper-green pointed gables, like a heavy metal fan making the sign of the horns . . . ' — here Delgado raised the forefinger and little finger of his left hand — 'a semiotic reinterpretation the irony of which Lord von Schmalensee could not possibly have foreseen. King Gustav VI himself came from Stockholm to attend the church's solemn consecration. In the glow of the setting sun, its crimson-stained façade is still an awe-inspiring sight and, combined with its shimmering green roof, forms a complementary contrast of an intensity that forces evening strollers to stop and stare.'

'Hear, hear!' Knutsson cried, smirking.

'Did you learn that off by heart from a guidebook?' Hultin asked drily.

'Just my natural rhetorical talent, that's all,' Delgado said with a grin.

'What about the Småland flyer?' Forss asked impatiently.

Delgado cleared his throat. 'Why the maniac who would later become known as the "Småland flyer" chose our cathedral of all places as the target of his "attack", even Homeland Security's sprawling investigation could not establish. The amateur pilot's motive remained equally mysterious. What, other than insanity, could possibly make someone fly a glider into a church tower? The entire investigation found not a shred of evidence indicating radical religious beliefs, either Islamist or otherwise. According to experts, the man had either pulled off a brilliant aerial manoeuvre or had an incredible stroke of luck. The cockpit protecting the pilot in the Czech GFK Banjo aircraft was shorn of both its wings, which had a combined span of thirteen metres, but got wedged between the cathedral's two pointed gables. Had he approached from a slightly different angle or a little further to the left or right, then the tiny glider would have splintered and plunged more than thirty metres straight down the church wall to the ground, and the international

community of gliding enthusiasts would have had a martyr to mourn. But the aircraft got stuck — like a cigar between a smoker's fingers.

'The whole operation was so ludicrous that it seemed like an overreaction for Homeland Security to take responsibility for the investigation, but the symbolic parallel with the 9/11 attacks — aircraft and twin towers — was so striking that the hysterics got their way. The man the fire service eventually freed from his unfortunate predicament, later identified as Oskar Håkan Zetterberg, had been sitting in our interview room, defiantly silent and chewing his nails, for less than half an hour when officers from the security services burst into the office and stripped us of the case.

'They didn't come up with very much. Initially, rumours circulated in the media about the pilot possibly having political objectives, with reports of anything from a protest against the Israeli settlements in the West Bank to a demand for a reduction in petrol tax. A few days later, the media went oddly quiet and the tabloids soon lost interest. Later, more serious news outlets suggested a diagnosis of schizophrenia, the influence of alcohol and a troubled childhood. Even before he went on trial for endangering public safety and causing material damage to the church, the Småland flyer vanished into a secure unit north of Stockholm. Oskar Håkan Zetterberg was in the same category as Mathias Rust, not Mohammed Atta.'

'Crazy bastard!' Knutsson growled.

'The entire incident would never have attracted so much international coverage if there hadn't been any footage. But by chance, a camera team from SVT2 regional TV had set up that same sunny mid-July afternoon on the busy Sandgårdsgatan and was interviewing a local man in front of the imposing backdrop of our cathedral when Zetterberg crash-landed between the church's copper-tipped twin towers. The skilful cameraman was on the ball and cut away at just the right moment from the leisurely interview to film the spectacular crash taking place in the background.

'And so the Småland flyer became the leading story on many news bulletins and then a YouTube hit, racking up nearly four million clicks. Only Swedish-speaking viewers saw it originally until some smart-arses added English subtitles, but what turned the clip into a worldwide comedy classic was the soundtrack. The old bloke was wittering on in the original interview about mating butterflies and their daredevil flying feats. That man, we now know, was our own Balthasar Frost.'

Delgado played the one-minute film several times before eventually pausing it, freezing Frost's features into a grotesque expression. A death mask projected on to a screen by a beamer. Delgado tapped on his laptop and another picture appeared. Frost again, but here he looked alive.

'This photo is from his identity card. It was issued in 1992 and states that he was born Balthasar Melchior Frost in Hull, England. He never drew police attention nor did he ever apply for Swedish citizenship. He wasn't married and didn't have any children, at least none known to the authorities. It's the

most recent official picture of him I've been able to get hold of. Here, though, you can see two newer photos of him from a 2007 report in *Smålands Posten*. During Linné Year they hauled in front of the camera just about anyone they could find who knew a little about plants or insects or the natural world and couldn't put up a fight. The article says he bred butterflies including silk moths. They spin silk and feed on mulberry leaves.'

'His garden's full of them. Mulberry trees, I mean,' said Hultin.

'Anyway, he was really into silk and had actually made fabric from it, painted it and so forth. You can make paper from mulberry trees too. For Japanese calligraphy.'

'We need to question Axelsson about that again tomorrow,' said Nyström.

'Axelsson?' asked Knutsson.

'The guy who found him,' Delgado replied. 'Another silk painter. I've had nothing from England so far. There are thousands of Frosts in London alone, and we can't ring every one. So for now I've focused on his time in Sweden. He came to this country in 1949 and lived for a few years in Blekinge province, in Karlskrona. He then started trading in stocks. Three years later he moved here to Kronoberg province, first to Alvesta, then to that place on the other side of Dädesjö. He's recorded in the land registry as the owner of the house and paid 64,500 kroner for it — a lot of money at the time. Judging by everything I've been able to find, he traded until the late eighties, during the heyday of the stock market. He needed little more than a phone and the right contacts to do so. I've emailed various smaller banks in Stockholm. Let's wait and see what comes back, but twenty years is a long time. That must have been the end of his professional career. I think he spent more and more time on his hobbies. Beginning in the early nineties, he published a few articles in specialist journals. Insects, beetles and above all butterflies. You know, that kind of stuff.' Delgado shut his laptop and disconnected the leads. 'I have nothing more for you right now.'

Nyström was grateful that Delgado was on her team. He was smart and a quick worker and took care of all the many time-consuming things such as internet searches, digital archives, social media. Unlike her, Delgado had grown up with them. His fluency made her feel secure. She sensed it was different on this case.

Her mind went back to the horribly mutilated face. The missing eyes. The finger. Those things had no place here, not in Växjö in Småland. Of course there was violence, hatred and death here too. Who knew that better than she? She'd conducted twelve murder investigations with Berg. Visited twelve crime scenes, examined twelve corpses, vetted twelve lives. Twelve perpetrators had been arrested, every one a poor sod. Two knifings while drunk, two wives beaten to death, one so-called honour killing. Alcohol had played a part in five of the twelve cases. Greed, jealousy, uncontrolled rage. Those were things she

knew and could classify and understand. But what had happened to Balthasar Melchior Frost seemed different somehow.

Forss was sitting between Hultin and Lindholm, who was wearing a fashionably nerdy glasses and very tight jeans. They'd known each other since university. The conference table was covered with notepads, empty drinks cans and cheeseburger wrappers from the *Oxgrillen* snack bar.

'You probably saw back in Germany that Ikea's trying to make the world think we Swedes love our traditional food.' Delgado was holding a massive burger and talking with his mouth full. 'It's a lie. In fact we're total fast-food fanatics. Växjö has more pizzerias than Naples. And most of those world-famous *köttbullar* are straight from the freezer.'

Hultin looked at him accusingly. 'Rubbish! We don't want Stina thinking your prattle is true. Lots of people here cook very traditionally using regional ingredients!'

She sounded spiky, almost angry, and gesticulated wildly with a half-eaten hamburger in her hand.

'Oh sorry, I'd completely forgotten that you spend the evenings slaving over your stove, making jam from blueberries you've picked yourself.' Delgado's voice was dripping with irony, which was audible despite his stuffed mouth. He turned to Forss. 'You see, our Anette is very, very proud to be a Swede, and her sense of national identity obviously embraces our Swedish cuisine. And yet she's the biggest fast-food junkie of us all. She should be called Burger Queen!'

'Oh, shut your mouth!'

'Yeah, yeah. Sieg Heil, Anette!'

'Be quiet, both of you!' Knutsson thundered. His Småland accent was so broad it sounded as if his mouth was full of hot mashed turnip. Then he glanced across at Forss, grinned and shrugged his shoulders as if apologizing for his colleagues.

Nyström listed what she considered to be the most important questions on a clipboard.

'Who was he expecting for tea? Who was the woman he lived with? Is she still alive? His address book provides no answers to any of those questions.'

Knutsson leafed through the dog-eared address book. 'There's almost nothing but contractors in there, as far as I can see. Nilsson's Roofers AB, Lindgrens Landscaping Services, various banks. Even Åke Bingström is in there.'

'Bingström the estate agent and town councillor? The golf club chairman?' Hultin asked.

'The very same. Although he didn't use to be an estate agent. He was a plumber. Did you know that? U-Bend Åke,' muttered Knutsson. 'That's what

they used to call him. Doesn't want to hear that nowadays, though, our posh Mr Golf Club Chairman.'

Nyström coughed. 'The picture's very murky, in my opinion. An old man is found dead and mutilated among his butterflies in a greenhouse out in the woods beyond Dädesjö. Apparently he has no relatives and little contact with the outside world. Who could have a motive for killing him? And killing him in such a horrible manner, no less. We don't have a single lead, apart from that he was obviously expecting someone for tea. And I've run out of ideas for today — I can't even begin to imagine what might have happened out there.'

She paused and massaged her forehead. Outdoors, on the other side of the tinted windows of the meeting room, night had long since fallen. A gusty east wind was buffeting the crows that lived on the roof of the snack bar and lived off scraps from the bins. The thermometer had dipped below zero again. Nyström felt her fatigue. And how much she missed Gunnar Berg. He would spot something, even in a blurred picture. Something to home in on; a landmark. But maybe it was still too early for that.

'Let's go home,' she finally said. 'It is Sunday after all.'

Or what's left of it, she thought.