



The Iron Wagon

Jason , Stein Riverton (Original Author)

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Exactly three quarters of a century ago, Agatha Christie stunned the mystery-novel world with *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, an Hercule Poirot novel whose final twist was greeted as either a brilliant trick or an appalling cheat. (More recent films and novels such as *The Usual Suspects*, *Angel Heart*, and *Fight Club* have used variations, but none has bettered the original.) As it happens, a Norwegian mystery writer who signed his work Stein Riverton beat Dame Agatha Christie to the punch by about 20 years, using exactly the same trick in his 1908 novel *The Iron Wagon*. An evocative murder mystery set in the Norwegian countryside, it, like all good murder mysteries, is a stew of passion, buried past crimes, revelations, and sharply defined characters who remain ambiguous to the very end. This novel has never been translated into English. Now, using a striking two-color drawing style and re-casting the story with his iconic animal characters from his previous graphic novel *Sshhhh!*, the acclaimed Norwegian cartoonist Jason has adapted *The Iron Wagon* into an original graphic novel that will appeal not only to fans of his work but also to mystery fans who will finally have a chance to experience Riverton's clever story. Surprisingly, this turn-of-the-century mystery thriller dovetails neatly with the concerns and obsessions of Jason's other comics (including the landmark *Hey, Wait...*, called the second best comic of 2001 by Time.com), and becomes a case of two wildly disparate craftsmen separated by a century merging their sensibilities for a unique work.

The Iron Wagon Details

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From Reader Review The Iron Wagon for online ebook

Tom Ewing says

A brief, atmospheric adaptation of a Norwegian 1908 murder mystery, and the first thing I've read by Jason, so I have no idea how it fits with his work or style as a whole. At first the cartooning and dialogue seemed a little too sparse, aimed at a flat affect that I found rather distancing - but gradually the sense of place asserted itself, and the flatness in the art became a reflection of the openness, emptiness and buttoned-down lives of 19th century Norway and its people. The story is straightforward, and the plot guessable (hardly the book's fault - at the time it must have been quite daring), but it's a comic that I'll be re-reading to look more closely at how Jason builds up his sparing but effective detail - an expression here, a two-panel dream sequence there.

Anthony Vacca says

Suck it, Agatha Christie! Stein Riverton's *The Iron Wagon*—which Jason faithfully and charmingly adapts here, graphically—came out twenty years before *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*.

Brad says

Jason comes into his own with this adaptation of a classic Norwegian mystery. He nails his beloved style down, having smoothed out the rough edges of his previous work (*Hey, Wait...* and *SHHHHH!*). No genre mash-up here, Jason plays it straight with a classic detective story (think pre-Agatha Christie Agatha Christie-esque goodness) with wonderful success. Great precursor to *Why Are You Doing This* and *The Left Bank Gang*.

Had to hunt this one down. Out of print, unable to inter-loan through my library and unwilling to pay through the nose for a copy off the inter-web, I have to thank the kind people of the Ryerson and Burnham Library at the Art Institute of Chicago for making this available to me. Made me feel like I was in college again, though at a much fancier university and in an alternate universe where I actually studied and stuff.

Brian Childs says

Loved it! Although I did have some difficulty with keeping track of who the cat was vs. bird man, etc. Jason's motif definitely took a story that wouldn't have been of that much interest to me and made it more fun and playful. I felt like I was watching a movie. After having read a number of Jason short stories, it was nice to have a longer one to sink my teeth into.

Michael says

Based on a 1909 murder mystery, this is Jason doing period writing with a noir edge. Being Jason, however, it's still slightly absurd, kind of humorous, and a lotta fun. Great pacing, strong art, very engaging fun.

Victoria says

El dibujo del autor y la forma de ir contando la historia me han gustado pero el misterio y su resolución me parecen de lo más común, trillados, nada originales y muy predecibles por lo que no ha acabado de convencerme su lectura.

O debuxo do autor e a forma de ir contando a historia gustáronme, pero o misterio e a resolución do mesmo parécenme do más común, trillados, nada orixinais e moi predecibles, polo que non acabei de disfrutar da historia.

Martine Rørstad says

Dette er min favoritt av Jason, truleg fordi den har meir tekst enn det han vanlegvis lagar. Men så er jo dette Stein Rivertons krimklassikar.

Andrew says

This book was great. Jason creates a world of intrigue and sets the mood perfectly for this murder mystery with (like most Jason books) an ending you might not have expected. If you reread it, you will pick up certain details you may have overlooked the first time. Recomended for any fan of Hitchcock films.

Rob McMonigal says

Jason tries his hand at adaptation this time, taking a novel by Stein Riverton by the same name which has never been translated into English before. That's a shame because the story is pretty good.

There's been a strange murder in a part of Norway that has a haunted legend associated with it--that of the iron wagon. The wagon comes out at times of death and this is no exception. A detective is called in, and with the reluctant help of a friend of the deceased, he'll find the truth behind the legend--and catch the killer as well.

It's fairly obvious who the criminal is, but as in a Columbo, the fun is seeing the detective break things down, waiting for just the right moment to bring down the hammer--possibly at great risk to himself. Jason's moody and descriptive artwork helps get this idea across perfectly, and he doesn't let the unusual amount of dialog (for him, anyway) get in the way of this.

If there's a problem, it's that towards the end as the denouncements are made, there's just a bit too much text. We probably could have dealt with a bit less words, but I still enjoyed this a lot. As with all things Jason, it's a keeper. (Library, 03/08)

Trebbys Take: A little different from his normal work, but good stuff. Recommended!

Sam Quixote says

The Iron Wagon is a graphic novel based upon a book by Stein Riverton, a Norwegian writer, which was published in 1909 but has never been translated into English. Jason creates the early 20th century without effort and the scenery of blank mountain scapes, spindly night forests, and open empty fields crossed by a dirt path, are beautifully drawn and wonderful to see. I've gone back to the book several times just to look at the individual panels.

Not having read the original novel I couldn't say how faithful an adaptation it is, however the story and contains a lot more dialogue than usually appears in a Jason book. It is a murder mystery story in the style of Agatha Christie (and contains a famous plot device used in one of Christie's most famous books), where a game keeper in the countryside of Norway is murdered walking home in the dark. An odd sound is heard and the story of the Iron Wagon, a ghostly apparition of a wagon and its driver who met with a grisly fate, is revealed. Is the death of the game keeper due to a ghost or is an earthly solution more likely? Why does the dead gamekeeper return each night to one of the hotel lodgers' rooms? And is that the last of the murders?

I can't recommend this book more but then I'm biased as I love all of Jason's books. He's a fantastic cartoonist and is becoming, rightfully, more famous. Strangely though some of his best books have gone out of print, The Iron Wagon being one of them. Let's hope with his readership growing Fantagraphics bring this one back (as well as Tell Me Something and Sshhhh!).

Frances says

Cross-posted from Nightjar's Jar of Books.

A short and strange graphic novel, based on the 1909 Norwegian novel *Jernvognen* by Stein Riverton, which has never been published in English. It tells the story of a writer whose friend is discovered murdered, and the investigation into his death – which seems like it may be tied to the local of the iron wagon.

The sentence “Why won’t he stay dead?” in the blurb of this book was what initially drew me to it, despite my general dislike of murder mysteries, and my indifference towards what I’d seen of the art style from a cursory flip-through. And, now that I’ve read it, my feelings towards it are slightly mixed... On the one hand, there was not much character depth or development, and I managed to guess both of the story’s major twists early on. On the other hand, I was second-guessing myself a lot, and although this wasn’t the ghost story I was hoping for, it did manage to retain the eerie atmosphere of one.

I’ve already said that the art didn’t initially grab me, but as I grew accustomed to it, I liked it more and more. I wasn’t a huge fan of the character design – which completely gave away one of the book’s two plot twists – but the black-red-and-white colour palette was incredibly striking, and really added to the unsettling tone of the story...

I feel that this is a book to be enjoyed more for its strangeness than for its story or characters (or even art), but I *did* find that I enjoyed it. And, as a book that only takes around half an hour to read, it’s well worth

picking up for anyone who's even a little curious. I'm not sure that I'd be likely to go looking for more of Jason's work (or Stein Riverton's), but I also wouldn't reject it out of hand.

Zana says

Jason cria absolutamente tudo, desde os desenhos às fontes tipográficas do livro (que são lindíssimas). Até as cores e a qualidade do papel escolhidos contribuem para que este seja, do ponto de vista gráfico, um objecto perfeito.

Desenhos extraordinários, com planos cinematográficos - perspectivas, afastamentos e aproximações dignas do movimento de uma câmara. Os olhos das personagens são vazios, mas não os olhares, um pormenor magnífico.

Há, no entanto, qualquer coisa que não funciona e que eu não consigo explicar porquê, dado funcionar para a maior parte das pessoas: o final, não sendo propriamente previsível, é pelo menos adivinhável, isto é, há uma hipótese que nunca me sai da cabeça e que se confirma no final, o que acaba por excluir o factor surpresa. Contudo, não é de descartar a hipótese de o autor estar consciente deste risco - afinal de contas, ele sabe que há dois ou três indícios ao longo da história que semearão a dúvida (um recurso típico para tornar o final mais plausível), se os mantivermos presentes mentalmente até ao fim.

Ou então eu sou simplesmente muito esperta.

Nota: os homens são (muito) mais giros do que as mulheres, algo que resulta do facto de eles serem cães (eheh) e elas pássaros - isto pode parecer não fazer sentido, mas a verdade é que os seus focinhos com grandes bicos as tornam estranhas. Se elas foram desenhadas para serem intencionalmente mais esquisitas não sei, mas na história não há dúvida de que elas são atraentes e altamente cobiçadas.

Monica says

I can't believe I'm criticizing a Jason title as being too wordy. Too much dialogue and not enough panache. This is an early work, and it feels like it at times. Still worth reading but this is definitely the weakest Jason book for me.

David Schaafsma says

Jason likes to play around with different genres and forms: Vampire stories, sci fi, romance, adventure thrillers, and look at them with tongue-in-cheek, minimal tools, and finding ways to make you laugh and/or cry along the way. It's not until recently (2017) that he crafts a memoir, *On the Camino*. His interest seems more about form than content, generally, different ways to tell stories. In *The Iron Wagon* he--for the only

time I am aware of—adapts a novel by someone else, written in 1908 by a Norwegian mystery writer, Stein Riverton, who employed a plot twist also later employed by Agatha Christie in one of her most famous mysteries, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Others use the twist, such as in *Usual Suspects*. He recasts the novel with animals for characters, but the intensity and surprise are still there.

Jason never elsewhere has used as much written language in any of his works, but he demonstrates that he can work with no words (as in *Shhh!* for instance) or many words, such as this, from someone else, with (almost) equal effect. The story, as I said a straight-up mystery, set more than a hundred years ago, is terrific, ambiguous until the end, and surprising, like the best of mysteries. Jason is one of the best; he can do it all.

I own this in a separate volume, but it is also collected in *What I Did with Hey, Wait and Shhhh!* This is a reread for me.

natura says

Otra genialidad de este autor. Esta vez nos metemos con el género policiaco tipo Agatha Christie-Sherlock Holmes de principio de siglo. Y aunque esté basado en un clásico de la novela negra nórdica (que por aquí no nos suena de nada el tal Stein Riverton), Jason la reinterpreta a su manera y vuelve a hacerte sentir toda la trama como si estuvieras allí o fueras cualquiera de los protagonistas.

El caso policiaco y su investigación tampoco es que sean la quinta maravilla, es la manera de narrarlo lo que hace que disfrutes otros aspectos de la historia.
