



Norwegian by Night

Derek B. Miller

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He will not admit it to Rhea and Lars - never, of course not - but Sheldon can't help but wonder what it is he's doing here..

Eighty-two years old, and recently widowed, Sheldon Horowitz has grudgingly moved to Oslo, with his grand-daughter and her Norwegian husband. An ex-Marine, he talks often to the ghosts of his past - the friends he lost in the Pacific and the son who followed him into the US Army, and to his death in Vietnam.

When Sheldon witnesses the murder of a woman in his apartment complex, he rescues her six-year-old son and decides to run. Pursued by both the Balkan gang responsible for the murder, and the Norwegian police, he has to rely on training from over half a century before to try and keep the boy safe. Against a strange and foreign landscape, this unlikely couple, who can't speak the same language, start to form a bond that may just save them both.

An extraordinary debut, featuring a memorable hero, Norwegian by Night is the last adventure of a man still trying to come to terms with the tragedies of his life. Compelling and sophisticated, it is both a chase through the woods thriller and an emotionally haunting novel about ageing and regret.

Norwegian by Night Details

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Author : Derek B. Miller

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From Reader Review *Norwegian by Night* for online ebook

Larry H says

Sigh. I really wanted to like this one.

Derek B. Miller's *Norwegian by Night* tackles a lot of weighty issues—growing older, how we deal with grief, being a stranger in an unfamiliar place, reconciling our spiritual identity, unrest among Eastern European countries, and bonds that form between strangers. It's a pretty ambitious mission for a book that's supposed to be a bit of a thriller.

Sheldon Horowitz is nearing the end of his life. His beloved wife Mabel has died, and he has never gotten over the death of his son Saul during the Vietnam War. Whether or not he's suffering from dementia is a matter of debate, as is the question of what he did during the Korean War—Sheldon insists he was a Marine sniper, although there's no evidence of that as far as Mabel ever knew.

"His memories were just becoming more vivid with age. Time was folding in a new way. Without a future, the mind turned back in on itself. That's not dementia. One might even say it's the only rational response to the inevitable."

Begrudgingly, Sheldon agrees to leave his longtime home in New York City and move with his granddaughter Rhea and her husband Lars to Norway. It's more than a bit of a shock for Sheldon, being in a country where he doesn't speak the language, and where he's only one of 1000 Jews. So he expresses his displeasure with generally refusing to do what Rhea asks of him, and being increasingly more cantankerous.

One day when Sheldon is home on his own, he hears the woman who lives upstairs quarreling yet again with a man whose voice he hears quite frequently. That day the screaming becomes more strident, and before he realizes what is happening, Sheldon protects the woman's young son from what appears to be impending violence. The two hide, and when Sheldon realizes what has happened, he knows the boy is in danger, and the two of them flee.

As the pair begins their journey to find safety, they make an unlikely duo—an 82-year-old man who spends a lot of time in his head remembering people and times past, and a young boy that Sheldon calls Paul, a boy who speaks no English and isn't quite sure what has happened. For Sheldon, protecting the boy seems like an opportunity for a second chance, and it brings back memories that he has carried with him all these years.

If this book was just about Sheldon and Paul's search for safety and the people hunting them down, this could have been a really fascinating and heartfelt thriller. Unfortunately, Miller took the plot all over the place—it was often difficult to determine when Sheldon was reminiscing and when he was focused, there was a lot of conversations among the people hunting for the boy and discussion of the plight of Kosovo at the time, and the plot also got hijacked by the chief police inspector as she tried to find Sheldon before the bad guys did.

I know some people really enjoyed this book, but it was just too scattered for me, and there was so much stuffed into one story I found it hard to keep my interest. I liked many of the characters, so I might consider reading another of Miller's books (it looks like he's just written another, *American by Day*, which features the chief police inspector) in the future. I just wish this one worked out a little better, because it had so much potential.

See all of my reviews at itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com, or check out my list of the best books I read in 2017 at <https://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com/2018/01/the-best-books-i-read-in-2017.html>.

Shawn says

I wanted to like this book. In fact, I was all prepared to love it. The premise was intriguing, the writing decent. However, two things ruined my ability to even get all the way through it. First, it is told at times in the voice of an elderly man believed to be suffering from a touch of dementia a'la old age. Fine, I get that. He's in his 80's so, could be. But, his telling can in no way be trusted. Again, that's not necessarily a bad thing -- unreliable narrators I can do. Not, though, when the story jumps from present-to-past-to-fantasy-to-past-to-delusion-to-present-to... Do you see what I mean? One minute he can barely navigate his thoughts, the next he's orchestrated the covert takeover of a heavily guarded boat -- all with wanted fugitive minor in tow? I have trouble trusting a novel once the author has made what I consider to be incredible breaches in common sense or believability.

And, the one that I just couldn't move beyond was the storyline that had the elderly character's deeply concerned, frantic, panicked daughter discover a bloody murder scene in the apartment her grandfather was now missing from, and she and her husband decide to head out to a family cabin for a few days for a little R&R. What? You have got to be kidding Me? Who does that? When characters are written to do ridiculous, unbelievable things just to move plot points along, I must opt out. And, I think it safe to predict that I'll not be opting in for any additional offerings from this author.

Phrynn says

I am a bit late to the party on this book but I am so glad I finally read it!

Funnily enough, although the story contains a murder and a police case it still does not feel like a mystery or a thriller. To me the overall feeling was rather like *The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out of the Window and Disappeared*. The main theme in both cases being that of an elderly man who breaks out of the position society expects him to hold and goes on one last adventure. Due to his life experiences and an awful lot of luck he escapes capture and manages to achieve his goal.

And there is so much more in this book. There is a lot of humour and also lots of discussion on serious topics such as war, politics and religion. Norway is presented very beautifully as a country and occasionally gently mocked as a society but only for the good things about it! And of course there is a police hunt with Police Chief Inspector Sigrid Odegard and Petter making a great team. I enjoyed the way the author structured the story so that the runaways, the baddies and the police all made their way to the ultimate destination in different ways.

The ending was sad but fitting and I am sure Sheldon would have wanted it that way. An excellent book and a delightful read:)

Diane S ? says

If it wasn't for a few of my Goodread friends, this book probably would not have come to my notice. I would have missed a book that was wonderful, had all the elements that that I look for in something I read.

Sheldon, a Jewish man who served in the Korean War, moves to Norway with his grand-daughter and her

husband. There he finds himself as a defender to a young boy whose mother has been killed. Sheldon is a wonderfully complicated character, said to be suffering from dementia, he is sharper than I can ever hope to be. There is humor, political fall-out, and a man who suffers from survivor guilt and the guilt he feels over the death of his only son in Vietnam.

This is well written adventure story, a personal odyssey by a man who feels he has little left to loose. Even the ending was just so darn perfect, if sad. So glad I didn't miss this one.

Helen (Helena/Nell) says

I started to read this book while staying with my mother, who has Alzheimer's dementia. My sister recommended it, and lent me her copy, and there was a kind of relevant link in that the main character, Sheldon Horowitz, may also have dementia. He's an old man, and he's the hero.

When I began reading, I got confused. I don't know whether this was something to do with staying with my mother, whose illness always seems infectious. I'm much more easily confused with her, and by her, than elsewhere. But the central character in *Norwegian by Night* has flashbacks, which are also dreams, and his life is populated not only by living characters but dead ones. And there are three different wars influencing the action: the Korean War in which Sheldon once fought and in which a close friend was blown to bits, the Vietnam war in which Sheldon's son was killed, and the more recent Yugoslav wars, whose ripples are being played out in present day Norway, where the novel is set.

Even as I write it down I can see that sounds confusing. The dead are as real as the living. The guilt and horror of the past plays itself out in the present. A small child stands to lose everything.

Anyway, I got to page 67 and lost the plot. Then I left my mother's house and started again at page 1. This time, I got it. I got it completely.

This is a murder thriller, with a Norwegian (female) detective. A touch of noir, yes. But it's much more a character study, in which the reader (even me) increasingly identifies with an old man, struggling to make sense of both present and past, and with a small boy and a grown-up daughter to protect. It's a genre novel that defies genre description, though there is a brutal murder, and a journey, and violence, and survival; and everything builds towards a riveting climax.

I found myself deliberately stopping reading. Laying down the book and going to make a cup of tea, or getting up and paying attention to a non-urgent, because I was enjoying it so much, I didn't want it to end.

A particular thing that makes it special is the way all the characters have back story, even the minor villains. They aren't just Bad. Things have made them Bad, and you can see how they're all victims, as well as perpetrators. All this and it's wry and funny and edgy as well.

I *warmly* recommend this book. Oh, and the dementia, in the end, was a red herring. I didn't think he had dementia. I thought the past was as real to him as the present, which is a somewhat different matter.

Jill says

Let's start with the good stuff: Derek B. Miller's novel is refreshingly original. What other book can YOU name that takes an octogenarian widowed American Jew who mourns a son "who named his daughter for a Greek Titan before being killed by a Vietnamese mine in an effort to please his Marine father who was once a sniper in Korea."

Just – wow! Add to the fact that the American Jew – Sheldon Horowitz – may be suffering from dementia and also harbors a great deal of guilt for the death of Saul, his only son...and further add his witnessing of a violent argument between his Balkan upstairs neighbor and a scary stranger – and there is plenty of plot to propel this book forward.

The first 100 pages were extraordinary. Derek Miller masterfully creates a new twist to the "stranger in a strange land" story. Sheldon Horowitz says to his granddaughter, who has convinced him to emigrate to Norway: "A thousand Jews! I read it in the Lonely Planet guidebook! Five million people and one thousand Jews. The Norwegians do not know what a Jew is. They only think they know what a Jew is not."

There's a lot of real meat here: a combination of sociology and theology, deep insight into Norway's culture, and the frosting on the cake – Scandinavian thriller-type elements.

Sheldon is a watchmaker by trade who wants to fix time. As he strikes out – Huckleberry Finn style – with Paul (a stand-in for Saul), the young, mute son of his murdered upstairs neighbor – the novel takes a turn. Spiriting his war-learned skills, Sheldon is able to hide both of them in plain sight, eluding his worried family, the police, and the rather one-dimensional Albanian war criminal who started this mess going in the first place.

Much of the ensuing chapters are a combination of merged real and fantasy-driven memories, fueled by flashbacks to the Korean and Vietnam War. For this particular reader – who tends to shun war tales – the result was less than satisfying, yet this is – admittedly – subjective. Interspersed with these tales are some gems and a true journey of discovery. For example, here is Sheldon reflecting: "He begins to sense that silence itself is a kind of language. There is more there than death and memory. More than the voices of the lost."

In short, this is a genre-crossing book that will not appeal to every reader. For those who are open to an original story that highlights Norwegian life and tackles broad themes of making amends with the past and journeying to a sense of self, this is well worth the read. For those who prefer plot-driven books as evidenced by many current Scandinavian thrillers, it may not be. It's not a perfect book. But it's well worth the read.

Terri says

Derek B. Miller has written an intelligent thriller that takes the reader to Oslo, New York City and the jungles of Vietnam. His fascinating and well-written character "Sheldon Horowitz" was one of the 30,000 Jewish veterans that served in the Vietnam war and he is haunted with secrets. His own wife of many years, who dies in the beginning of the book, did not believe that her husband was a sniper. She tells him he is going senile in old age and that he was a only a clerk. Sheldon proves to be so much more as the story moves

along and that is the fun part. He rescues a child from a dire situation and goes on the run with him. There is a very serious thread running through the book about how war-criminals escape and are allowed into Scandinavian countries without any vetting. The police know these people are murderous thugs but the politicians let them in because they are refugees. I imagine the author who lives in Oslo, has strong feelings about this subject. I found it interesting considering what is going on politically these days. I plan on eagerly reading Mr. Miller's next book and I heard that this book will be made into a movie at a later date. May I suggest either Michael Douglas or Timothy Dalton as Sheldon.

Libby Chester says

4.5 * 'Norwegian by Night' by Derek B. Miller is not just a suspense thriller; it's an articulate and intelligent character study. The cover, which I did not notice at first (it's understated), is absolutely perfect which becomes clear only as the story unfolds. My cover is different than the one shown on GR. It has the shadow of an older man with a boy beside him wearing a Viking helmet.

Octogenarian Sheldon Horowitz moves to Norway with his granddaughter Rhea and her Norwegian husband Lars. Sheldon's wife, Mabel died eight months ago and there was nothing left to hold him in New York. There's a couple that lives above them that fight like cats and dogs. Sheldon has the basement apartment with it's own entrance, allowing him some autonomy.

Sheldon's identity as a Jew and his active duty as a marine in the Korean War become very important in this story. One day, the man upstairs erupts into terrible screaming; the woman is silent. Sheldon can tell from the sound of the man's voice that things are about to go terribly wrong. Then the woman is coming down the outside steps with her son. Sheldon is angry with all of Europe for their part in the Holocaust, because...

"Almost all of them, at one time or another. They looked out their peepholes - their little fishy eyes staring out through bulging lenses, watching someone else's flight - as their neighbors clutched their children to their chests while armed thugs chased them through buildings as though humanity itself was being exterminated. Behind the glass, some were afraid, some felt pity, others felt murderous and delights."

Because this is how Sheldon feels, he very quietly lets the two into his apartment.

"No need to look out the peephole now. He is not longer one of the people he abhorred. Sitting next to his neighbors, he wants to stand in the middle of a soccer field with a bullhorn, surrounded by Europe's oldest generation, and yell, "Was that so F***ing hard?"

They go down into his basement apartment and hide. Someone kicks the door down and the woman rushes up the steps into Rhea's and Lar's apartment. Sheldon and the boy hide in the closet. The boy is so scared, he urinates, but he doesn't make a sound.

When Sheldon started talking about North Koreans, his wife Mabel thought he had dementia. Maybe he does have a few loose screws; he can be a curmudgeon at times, but Sheldon is wily as a fox. I love seeing how he faces the troubles that start popping up when he takes the boy under his wing and they go on the run.

Another main character is Sigrid Odegard, a police officer who was recently promoted to Police Chief Inspector. She is an interesting character, but she does not steal the show from Sheldon. He is the one we follow and hope and wish to come out okay, along with the boy he calls Paul because he cannot understand

his language enough to figure out his real name. However, we get to see Sigrid's strengths as the police try to figure out where Sheldon has disappeared to with the boy.

I loved this novel. Having an octogenarian as the main character was wonderful, and vicariously becoming a part of his heroic journey even more so. Sheldon lost his son Saul to the Vietnam war. He blames himself for Saul's death because he upheld the idea of fighting for America as an ideal for Saul to emulate. There is a strong father son theme in the story, and I thought that Paul was a symbol for Sheldon's lost son. The ending is perfect and very emotional. Everything is not tied up with a neat little bow, but it is perfect nonetheless.

Alex Cantone says

...no sober consideration was being given to the very real question now haunting all of Western civilisation – namely, 'How tolerant should we be of intolerance?'

Sheldon Horowitz is an elderly American Jew, recently widowed and with Alzheimer's, who has moved from New York to live in Oslo with granddaughter Rhea (who he and his wife raised) and her husband Lars. He is alone when the woman in the apartment above knocks on his door in desperation, speaking some Balkan language, pushing her young son with her. With the door locked they wait in silence at the disturbance above, followed by footsteps. As Sheldon hides with the boy in the closet the outside door is forced and they hear the woman being strangled and stabbed.

Sheldon is no cowering pensioner. He served with the Marines in Korea, lost his only son, Saul in the Vietnam War, he is wily and resourceful, setting out with the boy to evade the violent father, to get him to safety, drawing on the adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

'When was the last time you heard of an eighty-two-year-old man wearing a bright orange jacket stealing a boat moored next to the police? Never, that's when. It's inconceivable! This is how you get away with things on this planet. Do the unimaginable in plain view.'

The Police Chief Inspector working on the murder, Sigrid Ødegård, has established that the victim arrived with the wave of refugees granted asylum from Serbia / Kosovo to escape ethnic cleansing. Not all can assimilate in Norwegian society, and she has to deal with the fallout that allowed criminal elements into the country, continuing their activities in exile.

The narrative shifts between Sheldon, for whom the present and the past, the living and the dead form a continuum as his mind wanders freely, the police investigation and search for Sheldon, and the violent father, Enver, intent on seizing the boy and returning to Kosovo.

There is no history here to speak of. Some old boats and a wooden church – that's not history. This is the part of Europe without a history. No Romans. No Christians. No religious wars. Only old gods and trolls and blondes wearing fur...

As the old man and boy journey, Sheldon recovers some of his former vitality, and a growing respect for his surroundings and the Norwegian people.

This land around him – so silent before – now begins to speak as Sheldon gazes out on it. He begins to sense that silence itself is a kind of language. There is more than death and memory. More than the voices of the

lost...and so he holds this new insight as loosely as a poem found by accident. One with no title and no author...

I read *The Girl in Green* a couple of years back, and in both that novel and this (Derek B. Miller's debut novel) we find ordinary people coping or not with extraordinary circumstances. Other reviewers have found the shifts between the past and present a little distracting; but I warmed to Sheldon's wit and tenacity in the face of fear and tragedy, revealing the unlikely hero in all of us.

Marianne says

Norwegian By Night is the first novel by American-born author, Derek B. Miller. When 82-year-old American widower, Sheldon Horowitz goes to live with his granddaughter, Rhea and her Norwegian husband, Lars, in Oslo, the last thing he expects is to find himself on the run from the police with a small boy in tow. But the ex-Marine, suffering dementia, according to Rhea, has witnessed the murder of the boy's mother and feels compelled to keep the boy safe. He heads for the hills, unaware that everyone else (Rhea and Lars, the police, the killer and his gang) is headed there too.

Awarded the Crime Writer's Association John Creasy Dagger Award for a debut crime novel in 2013, it is, indeed, a brilliant debut novel, but it is much, much more than a crime novel. Miller has his characters opining on war criminals, ethnic cleansing, asylum legislation, immigration and integration, the treatment of Jews in Norway during World War Two and patriotism. The Korean War, drug trafficking, war atrocities, photography, Marine training, Vietnam, the Balkan conflict, revenge, guilt and grief all feature.

Miller's characters have depth and appeal. Sheldon may be a cranky, argumentative old man but it is impossible not to like him and his voice is clearly heard in the reader's head. His conversations with both real and imagined people are full of wit and humour, some of it quite black. Rhea observes he can "sound childish and demented but logical all at once." so that "Tea. Nazi. Milkshake. Police. Are we clear?" can make complete sense to the reader.

Miller achieves the perfect mix of serious and hilarious, relieving tense moments with laugh out-loud-dialogue. This novel has twists and turns, plenty of tension and a nail-biting finish. This book is such a pleasure to read that it presents a dilemma for readers who will find themselves racing through it to know the final outcome whilst at the same time, wishing for it not to end. One can only hope that Miller will soon endow the reading public with another work of this calibre. Funny, moving, exciting and thought-provoking.

Jenny (Reading Envy) says

This is not a Scandinavian crime novel. I feel like I need to say so because that is what I thought it was, and I think the publisher likes for you to think that way. Because WE ALL LOVE SCANDINAVIAN CRIME NOVELS, the numbers prove it.

This is an American author with an American protagonist who happens to live in Norway.

I really disliked the narrator of this novel. He is an 82-year-old veteran and he is a bit addled in the brain. It is unclear if he did some of the things he said he did in the war, or if he was just a clerk. His granddaughter

thinks he has dementia; her husband believes him. He is racist against practically all Asians, but also he is Jewish and feels like he is discriminated against in Norway (this is likely.) In the first 25 pages, I think I had to spend 2 pages with Sheldon as he struggles to urinate. I mean... I just didn't need that.

Thankfully the novel moves on somewhat. And there is a crime in there, and Sheldon's own grief from his son's death and his wife's death, and feeling somewhat responsible for both. There's also an old guy taking a crazy journey storyline (and everyone who knows me knows I hate those.)

There is a detective in this novel, a Norwegian detective, who is attempting to solve a crime. Her name is Sigrid and she is portrayed as very naive about important things you would hope detectives know about, like anti-Jewish movements and immigrants. Wow. I see that the upcoming book in this same series follows her. I can't decide if the author wants the reader to like her or not! Although this is a crime novel, she is not as developed in this story.

So, unlikeable character. Somewhat interesting background. Slightly muddled story. Just not the read for me. I supposed I'm looking forward to my book club's reaction on Monday!

ETA: After book club, I'm going to raise my rating to three stars. It is true that part of my issue with the novel has to do with how it is pitched vs. what it is (this is not your thrilling Scandinavian crime novel) and it is also true that my dislike of the old man characters who can get away with anything made it hard to be won over. I do feel like the author bit off more than fits in one novel but appreciated the insights into religion and morality, and feel like he was trying to let those play out in the novel as well. I also do like the idea of taking a country that has war in its history and has even not acknowledged the fall-out of it, and then adding in recent immigrants from ongoing war, and that creates a new and challenging atmosphere. Perhaps this would have been more successful if the entire book had been about that instead of also being about all these other things. The entire book club agreed that the ending was confusing and nobody knew how Lars got out of the cabin.

Book 4 of 2018.

Cathy Cole says

First Line: It is summer and luminous.

When you're in your eighties and a widower, the last thing you want to do is to move from your home in New York City to a new place with your granddaughter and her Norwegian husband in Oslo, Norway. But as Sheldon Horowitz knows, sometimes the last thing you want to do is the only thing you can do. He's lonely and wants to be with his granddaughter. His granddaughter has seen signs of dementia in her beloved grandfather and wants to keep him close to her.

What neither one of them could possibly predict is an act of incredible violence that leaves a little motherless boy in old Sheldon Horowitz's care. Now the old man and the little boy are on the run from everyone who's chasing them, and we can only pray that the killer isn't the one who finds this odd pair first.

This is a book that defies categorization. It's part thriller, part police procedural, part road trip, part commentary on aging/relationships/dementia-- and it has flashes of comedy throughout. When I began

reading this book, I was worried about Korean War veteran Sheldon Horowitz because I was remembering when my own grandfather lived with me. By the time I finished reading *Norwegian By Night*, I had a big smile on my face and wished that we could all be as demented as Derek B. Miller's main character.

This is a book that has so much to say-- and it manages to say everything in a rather concise manner. What this debut novelist says in 300 pages, most other writers would take at least twice the space. Miller never lets his foot off the gas-- this tale moves swiftly and surely from beginning to end. If you're the type of reader who wants a fast-paced book that starts at Point A and leads directly to Point B, you might want to give *Norwegian By Night* a miss. From time to time, the narrative wanders off onto dark alleys and narrow country lanes, as Sheldon visits the Korean and Vietnam Wars, memories of his wife and son... and as we learn a bit about the background of the silent little boy Sheldon is trying to keep safe. These diversions add a richness to the story that it cannot live without; they are the life's blood of Miller's characters. It takes an incredible amount of skill to be able to introduce these flashbacks and themes and not have them slow down the pace of the story, and Miller accomplishes it with ease.

The element of the chase keeps the story's pace flowing quickly, while those diversions add dimension to both characterization and to the themes of aging and regret that run throughout the book. And when the action gets too scary or one of the themes gets too dark, Sheldon Horowitz is there to say or do something that will make us laugh.

This book fed my mind on so many levels! It's been a long time since I've finished a book with such a huge smile on my face, wanting to invite a character home to live with me. Should we all be as crazy as Sheldon!

Chrissie says

I don't usually read thrillers, which is what this is. Will an eighty-two-year-old man be able to save a young Albanian child whose mother has been murdered? The setting is Oslo, Norway, around 2010.

The story drags at points, building to a crescendo at the end. As thrillers tend to do.

The elderly man is Sheldon Horowitz. Now what does his name tell you? That is right, he is Jewish, except he questions God. He is from New York, his wife has died and he is at a loss of what to do with himself. Lacking anything better, he agrees to go and live with his married granddaughter. She is in Oslo. The guilt he feels for the death of his son, his granddaughter's father, is central to the story.

Clearly the author tries to make the events believable, but I cannot but question the capabilities of Sheldon. I am not eighty-two yet, so what do I know?! Still, I doubt that many of his age could do what he does. The story is a bit schmaltzy. I am betting that if you love Sheldon you will love the story. In that case, credibility isn't of importance.

The story is told with humor, decidedly more in the first half than in the second half. It was the humor that I enjoyed most about the book. Unfortunately, in the second half we are supposed to be holding our breath with suspense. The humor circles around our contemporary life style, aging and cultural characteristics. Examples? Our infatuation with mobile phones, elderly men's inability to pee, Scandinavian and Jewish mannerisms. There are many extremely funny lines.

The story is told using flash backs. Never are they confusing.

The author, while being American, is married to a Norwegian and lives in Oslo. It is evident that he is well acquainted with Scandinavians. He has worked in international affairs since 1994.

The audiobook is well narrated. Fine. The Norwegian pronunciation was accurate.

If you are a fan of thrillers, you will probably be more captivated than I was.

Raven says

I must admit to having a slight crisis of confidence in writing this review, questioning whether I could do justice to just how marvellous this book is. From the first few pages, I was totally immersed in the life of Sheldon Horowitz, our curmudgeonly hero of the piece: a man haunted by the ghosts of his former life and coping with the daily frustrations of growing old. From the synopsis, it is impossible to harness all the themes and subtlety of prose that this book conveys to the reader. On one level, not only does the book contain all the quintessential elements of a Scandinavian crime novel, it also encompasses the Korean, Vietnam and Balkan conflicts, and on a more emotional level, presents a poignant and meditative examination of aging and regret, that unusually for this cynical reader, really touched me, engaging me even more with the characters and the multi-faceted plot.

As the book opens we get our first encounter with the beautifully realised character of Sheldon Horowitz, uprooted from his native America following the death of his wife, to live in Norway with his granddaughter Rhea and her husband Lars, and the dynamics of this relationship quickly become clear. Indeed, Sheldon's first response to Rhea urging him to move to Norway is to tell her to get stuffed, feeling his independence is under threat and resenting her assertion that he is in any way senile. He is stubborn and headstrong, but ingrained with a mordant sense of wit and a deep compassionate humanity, particularly evident in his utter determination to protect the life of the young boy he goes on the run with, and his seemingly testy, but ultimately loving relationship with Rhea. What we recognise at the core of his character is a wiliness and a steely determination tempered by the tragedies he has experienced in the past, in particular the loss of his comrades in Korea and the death of his son Saul (Rhea's father) in Vietnam. Throughout the book, Miller carefully incorporates touching vignettes of Sheldon's past life experiences, that convey how a man must rise above tragedy to hold onto his sanity and compassion, and how this dictates Sheldon's actions, that seem foolhardy at first, to keep those closest to him safe from harm. He is without a doubt one of the most perfectly conceived and constructed characters that I have ever read, and one that will stay with me for a long time.

The plot is completely engaging, constructed as a powerful story of flight and the will for survival. Following a brutal murder in Sheldon's apartment he, without hesitation, goes on the run with the murder victim's young son, quickly realising that the boy's life is under threat. Hampered by the barrier of language, Sheldon and his charge pick their way through the beautifully portrayed backwoods of Norway, pursued not only by the boy's sinister father and his cronies, but by the Norwegian police. Every protagonist in this scenario is utterly convincing, and with the poignant relationship developing between Sheldon and the boy, stirring up an evocation of Sheldon's own relationship with his dead son, Saul, the plot is multi-layered and compelling from start to finish. The motif of war runs strongly throughout the book, not only in Sheldon's reminiscences, but in his reliance on the skills he gained in Korea to outwit those who pursue him and the boy, leading to a dramatic and heartfelt denouement which threatens all involved.

I can only say in closing that I would urge everyone to read this exceptional debut with its powerful and emotive themes, but a book that retains all the tension of a totally authentic Scandinavian crime thriller. I cannot praise it highly enough and on this showing 'Norwegian By Night' could well be one of my top crime reads this year. An outstanding read.

?Karen says

Edit: I read this in 2014 but just now, 2016, decided to change it to 5. Didn't mean for it to go out into the update feed.

What a great book! The first chapter is one of the best I have read in years. The book is philosophical, intelligent, heartbreaking. The lead character, 82 year old Sheldon Horowitz, is all that too, plus so wise and virtuous. All while maintaining a sense of humor to balance the bad things that have happened in his long life, mainly that everyone around him dies: his wife just recently, his son in the Vietnam war, his aging friends back in NYC, the Koreans he killed in the war, his unborn great grandchild, and now the woman in the upstairs apartment. He carries a sort of survivor's guilt around with him that weighs heavily on his disposition.

The woman upstairs is actually murdered in his granddaughter's Oslo apartment while he hides in a closet with the woman's little boy. Not wanting the killer to come back for the child, Sheldon runs off with him with only his wits to get them out of Oslo and away from the killer and his gang of thugs. Sheldon leads them on a Huck and Jim type adventure down the river, while reminiscing of his Korean war days; WWII, the war that changed his life as an American Jew; and his son's death in Vietnam, for which he blames himself.

Sheldon is a multi-faceted character whom we get to know much better than anyone in his family ever knew him. I simply adored everything about him and everything about this book. 4.5 stars.
