

100 year old man who climbed out the window and disappeared



Author Background

- Birth—July 6, 1961
- Where—Vaxjo, Sweden
- Education—University of Gothenburg
- Awards—Swedish Booksellers Award; Prix Escapades; M-Pionier Preis (German)
- Currently—Gotland, Sweden

Par-Ola Jonas Jonasson is a Swedish journalist and writer, best known as the author of the international best-seller *The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared*.

The son of an ambulance driver and a nurse, Jonasson was born and raised in Vaxjo in Southern Sweden. After studying Swedish and Spanish at the University of Gothenburg, Jonasson worked as a journalist for the Vaxjo newspaper, *Smalandsposten*, and for the Swedish evening tabloid, *Expressen*, where he remained until 1994.

In 1996, he founded OTW, a successful media company, which grew to 100 employees. But by the end of 2003, with years of seven-day weeks, Jonasson was suffering from backpains and stress. After 20 years in the media industry, he decided to change his life's direction. He sold his business and, in 2005, moved to a remote part of Sormland on the south coast of Sweden, with his cat Molotov.

He married in 2007 and moved with his wife to Ticino, Switzerland, where he concentrated on the book he had long wished to complete. *The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* was published in Sweden in 2009. He is working on his second comic novel, "about a South African woman who lives in Soweto and turns the world upside down." Rights for this second book, *An Alphabet Who Knew How to Count* (the working title), have been sold for translation into over 30 languages.

Film rights for *The Hundred-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* were acquired by the Swedish production companies Nice Entertainment and FLX 2.0 for a movie to be directed by Felix Herngren and starring the Swedish comedian Robert Gustafsson.

Now divorced, Jonasson lives with his five-year-old son on the Swedish island of Gotland.

(From Wikipedia.)

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Book Summary

The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared

Jonas Jonasson, 2009 (Eng. transl. 2012)

Hyperion Books (in U.S.)

400 pp.

ISBN-13: 9781401324643

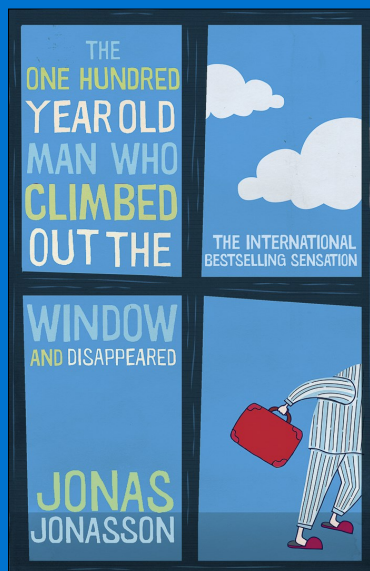
A reluctant centenarian much like Forrest Gump (if Gump were an explosives expert with a fondness for vodka) decides it's not too late to start over.

After a long and eventful life, Allan Karlsson ends up in a nursing home, believing it to be his last stop. The only problem is that he's still in good health, and in one day, he turns 100. A big celebration is in the works, but Allan really isn't interested (and he'd like a bit more control over his vodka consumption). So he decides to escape. He climbs out the window in his slippers and embarks on a hilarious and entirely unexpected journey, involving, among other surprises, a suitcase stuffed with cash, some unpleasant criminals, a friendly hot-dog stand operator, and an elephant (not to mention a death by elephant).

It would be the adventure of a lifetime for anyone else, but Allan has a larger-than-life backstory: Not only has he witnessed some of the most important events of the twentieth century, but he has actually played a key role in them. Starting out in munitions as a boy, he somehow finds himself involved in many of the key explosions of the twentieth century and travels the world, sharing meals and more with everyone from Stalin, Churchill, and Truman to Mao, Franco, and de Gaulle. Quirky and utterly unique, *The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* has charmed readers across the world.

(From the publisher.)

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Reviews

Scandi-crime's signature darkness is here dispelled by Allan Karlsson, the eponymous centenarian, who with unlikely sprightliness hops out of the window of his old people's home one afternoon.... Fast-moving and relentlessly sunny.... Like Allan, the plot is pleasingly nimble and the book's endearing charm offers a happy alternative to the more familiar Nordic noir.

Guardian (UK)

Jonasson's laugh-out-loud debut (a bestseller in Europe) reaches the U.S. three years after its Swedish publication, in Bradbury's pitch-perfect translation. The intricately plotted saga of Allan Karlsson begins when he escapes his retirement home on his 100th birthday by climbing out his bedroom window. After stealing a young punk's money-filled suitcase, he embarks on a wild adventure, and through a combination of wits, luck, and circumstance, ends up on the lam from both a smalltime criminal syndicate and the police. Jonasson moves deftly through Karlsson's life—from present to past and back again—recounting the fugitive centenarian's career as a demolitions expert and the myriad critical junctures of history, including the Spanish Civil War and the Manhattan Project, wherein Karlsson found himself an unwitting (and often influential) participant. Historical figures like Mao's third wife, Vice President Truman, and Stalin appear, to great comic effect. Other characters—most notably Albert Einstein's hapless half-brother—are cleverly spun into the raucous yarn, and all help drive this gentle lampoon of procedurals and thrillers.

Publishers Weekly

[D]eadpan humor.... Allan Karlsson, the centenarian who sneaks out of his nursing home, is an expert on explosives who has led an outsize life...[and] inadvertently played a significant role in many world events.... Chapters alternate between Allan's big adventures in the past and in the present, where he gets mixed up with a zany bunch of Swedes and a former circus elephant as they try to avoid both cops and gangsters. *Verdict:* his quirky novel is a sly, satirical look back at international relations...through the eyes of an old man who has seen it all. —Leslie Patterson, Rehoboth, MA

Library Journal

A Swedish debut novel that will keep readers chuckling. Allan Karlsson has just turned 100, and the Old Folks' Home is about to give him a birthday party that he absolutely doesn't want. So he leaves out his window and high-tails it to a bus station, with no particular destination in mind.... Coincidence and absurdity are at the core of this silly and wonderful novel. Looking back, it seems there are no hilarious, roll-on-the-floor-laughing scenes. They will just keep readers amused almost nonstop, and that's a feat few writers achieve. A great cure for the blues, especially for anyone who might feel bad about growing older.

Kirkus Reviews

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Discussion Questions

1. *Publishers Weekly* called this book, a "gentle lampoon of procedurals and thrillers." With a detective, a band of criminals and escapees on the run, it seems a valid description. Are these the terms in which you would talk about this novel? How else would you describe it?

2. What do you consider justice for Allan Karlsson?

3. Many readers have spoken about the humour and optimism of Allan Karlsson. How do these characteristics weave through the novel? What parts do you find particularly funny...and what makes them funny?

4. *The One Hundred Year Old Man* is a novel with the topic of ageing at its core. What are society's expectations of how the elderly should act? Talk about the ways—obvious and not-so-obvious—in which Allan defies the usual stereotypes. What are your own experiences, either as an older person yourself...or as someone who worries about an older friend or family member? Does society do a good job in terms of how we treat our older population? Have you read other novels that explore (and shatter) a strongly held societal belief?

5. History and politics sit lightly within the framework of this novel. When it comes to international relations, what worldview would you say the author seem to hold?

6. A definition of "satire" is "a literary composition in which vices, abuses and follies, etc are held up to scorn, derision or ridicule" (*Macquarie Dictionary*). Do you think this novel is a satire—and what is being satirized?

(*LitLovers adapted these questions from Allen & Unwin, the book's Australian publisher.*)