



Out Stealing Horses: A Novel

By Per Petterson

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Out Stealing Horses: A Novel By Per Petterson

We were going out stealing horses. That was what he said, standing at the door to the cabin where I was spending the summer with my father. I was fifteen. It was 1948 and one of the first days of July.

Trond's friend Jon often appeared at his doorstep with an adventure in mind for the two of them. But this morning was different. What began as a joy ride on "borrowed" horses ends with Jon falling into a strange trance of grief. Trond soon learns what befell Jon earlier that day—an incident that marks the beginning of a series of vital losses for both boys.

Set in the easternmost region of Norway, *Out Stealing Horses* begins with an ending. Sixty-seven-year-old Trond has settled into a rustic cabin in an isolated area to live the rest of his life with a quiet deliberation. A meeting with his only neighbor, however, forces him to reflect on that fateful summer.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Award-winning Norwegian novelist Petterson renders the meditations of Trond Sander, a man nearing 70, dwelling in self-imposed exile at the eastern edge of Norway in a primitive cabin. Trond's peaceful existence is interrupted by a meeting with his only neighbor, who seems familiar. The meeting pries loose a memory from a summer day in 1948 when Trond's friend Jon suggests they go out and steal horses. That distant summer is transformative for Trond as he reflects on the fragility of life while discovering secrets about his father's wartime activities. The past also looms in the present: Trond realizes that his neighbor, Lars, is Jon's younger brother, who "pulls aside the fifty years with a lightness that seems almost indecent." Trond becomes immersed in his memory, recalling that summer that shaped the course of his life while, in the present, Trond and Lars prepare for the winter, allowing Petterson to dabble in parallels both bold and subtle. Petterson coaxes out of Trond's reticent, deliberate narration a story as vast as the Norwegian tundra. (*June*)

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From [The New Yorker](#)

In this quiet but compelling novel, Trond Sander, a widower nearing seventy, moves to a bare house in remote eastern Norway, seeking the life of quiet contemplation that he has always longed for. A chance encounter with a neighbor—the brother, as it happens, of his childhood friend Jon—causes him to ruminate on the summer of 1948, the last he spent with his adored father, who abandoned the family soon afterward. Trond's recollections center on a single afternoon, when he and Jon set out to take some horses from a nearby farm; what began as an exhilarating adventure ended abruptly and traumatically in an act of unexpected cruelty. Petterson's spare and deliberate prose has astonishing force, and the narrative gains further power from the artful interplay of Trond's childhood and adult perspectives. Loss is conveyed with all the intensity of a boy's perception, but acquires new resonance in the brooding consciousness of the older man.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Per Petterson's tale of love, forgiveness, and the nature of evil has already swept up four prestigious literary awards: two notable prizes in Norway, the *Independent* (UK) Foreign Fiction Prize, and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. This perceptive, poignant novel blends the exhilaration of youth and the impassive recollections of old age with subtle plotting and biting observations on the question of fate versus free will. Critics differed over Petterson's prose: some found it lackluster, while others thought its simplicity and frankness cleverly captured Trond's voice. The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* also took issue with Petterson's bland female characters. However, Petterson's unforgettable portrait of a man trying to come to terms with his past will linger long after the last page.

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Erin Marshall:

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Kim Heflin:

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