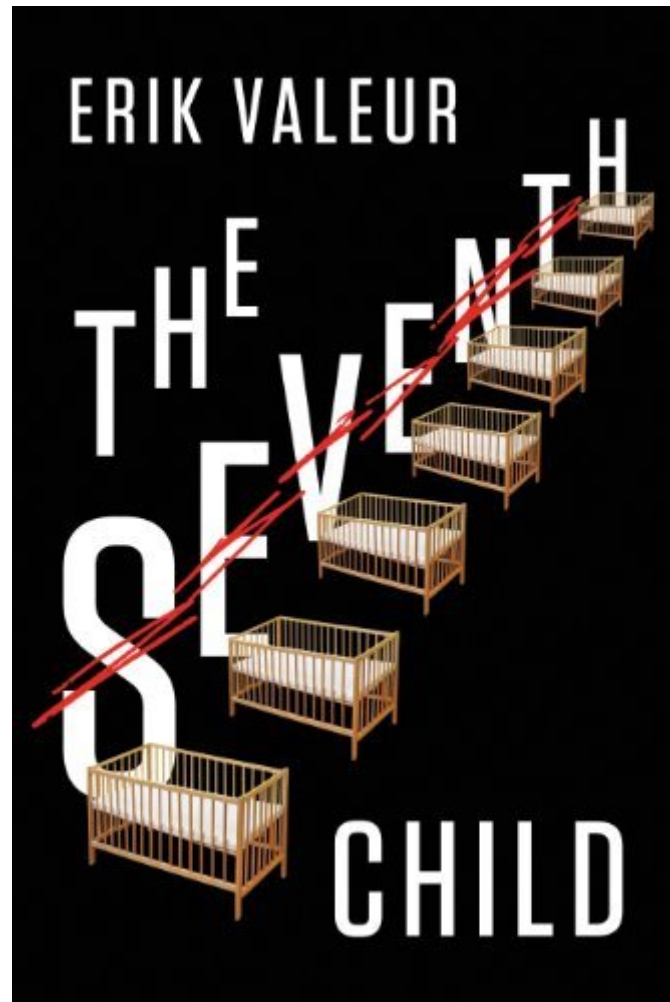


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The Seventh Child



Synopsis

Winner of the 2012 Glass Key Award given by the members of the Crime Writers of Scandinavia All the best homes are by the water, or so the matron of Kongslund Orphanage tells her small charges. But at this particular house by the sea, not all is as it appears. On September 11, 2001, on a desolate beach on the outskirts of Copenhagen, police begin investigating the strange death of an unidentified woman. Surrounding the body are what appear to be offerings to the deceased: a book, a small noose, a dead golden canary, a linden tree branch, and a photo of the Kongslund Orphanage. As the police puzzle over their bizarre findings, the Twin Towers fall in walls of flame and the case is quickly overshadowed by the terror half a world away. Years later, as the sixtieth anniversary of the matron's reign at Kongslund approaches, identical anonymous letters are sent to six of the home's former residents, hinting at a cover-up that has allowed Denmark's most influential to hide away their dirty secrets and keep their grip on power. As one tenacious reporter hunts for clues, he begins to unravel the true parentage of some of Kongslund's orphans. • Can he figure out who is sending the mysterious letters and who murdered the woman on the beach years earlier before it is too late?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Erik Valeur's "The Seventh Child" was the first book I ordered from 's "Kindle First" program . I didn't really need an addition to my already too long reading list and I don't usually enjoy Scandinavian writers, but the book description was intriguing. The body of an unidentified woman is found on a beach in the early morning hours of September 11, 2001. Hours later the twin towers fall and the investigation is swept aside by greater concerns. That concept intrigued me enough to get the book but it is not the focus . After being introduced early in the book, it isn't even mentioned again until much later. And the coincidence of September 11th is hardly necessary since the Danish police seemed surprisingly willing to consider mysterious deaths as " accidental ". "The Seventh Child" is more a story of damaged children than traditional mystery. The mystery of the woman and her death, in fact all of the mysteries of the book- the children's origins, the interest of the government- are secondary to the stories of seven adopted children. And the solutions to most of these "mysteries"- the woman on the beach, the seventh child, etc- are apparent fairly early on. I use the term "fairly early" because this is, after all, a 600 page book. Others are never resolved including some major ones thrown in on the last few pages. All of the children have been defined by their adoption, alienated, unable to form lasting attachments, always longing for something more. While their stories are interesting, it is their alienation, not longing, that dominates which makes it difficult to fully invest in the characters. This blunts the emotional impact of events in the book and the ultimate resolution.

The Seventh Child seems to be a cross between a genre mystery and literary fiction. Maybe it would suit a more sophisticated European taste than it does mine. The things I liked were the premise, the characters, the way the mystery and conspiracies have been thought out, and the writing style is superb. I especially like the intricacies of the mystery plot. But like other reviewers, I did find many repetitive sections that could have been edited out and tightened up to produce a better book without destroying the mood. Also like other reviewers, I truly began to despair of how slowly that %-read bar was moving, but I did not want to give up on the book. I was invested in the 7 children from the Elephant Room and the adults they became. But precisely because of that investment in the characters, I wanted a better feeling of resolution at the end of the book, and my worst complaint is that it felt like the author lies to the reader. If I keep in mind that he is wrestling with the psychology of people who do not easily deal with the darker aspects of their natures, then I can try to forgive that by making an excuse that the characters are lying to themselves first and the reader just gets carried along. But it was handled clumsily. If the book had been tightened up, given more

momentum, I could make that allowance, but it felt like slow motion lethargic suicide to keep reading after the scene where all 7 are reunited in one room. If I had it to do over again, I would read as long as I was interested (about 30% into the book), then skip to chapter 39 NEMESIS September 12, 2009 and read the last 7% and save myself a lot of nodding off.

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