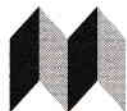


**LBRIS**

We know  
books

# MY NAME IS JENSEN

**Heidi Amsinck**



**MUSWELL  
PRESS**

**LBRIS**

We know  
books

## **Week One**

## 1

**Tuesday 07:13**

Jensen sucked the cold air deep into her lungs and let the last few meandering snowflakes melt on her upturned face. Only a few windows were lit in the apartment buildings surrounding her. People on their way to work, their bodies still warm from sleep, were treading gingerly on the pillowy pavements, looking about them as if not recognising their own city. They had forgotten the snow could fall, how it dulled the sounds of their footsteps as though the sky were a lid fitted over Copenhagen. Even the mouthy drunks had vanished from their perch by the supermarket on Christianshavn's Square, chased indoors by the worst blizzard for many years. In time, the snowploughs would clear the streets, and normality claim the day, but for now the city was holding its frozen breath.

Jensen took her usual route across Knippelsbro to Holmen, past Borgen, the parliament building with its giant verdigris crown, forging a winding track in the snow with her bicycle. She watched the rear of a yellow bus slide out sideways in a wide arc. The windows were steamed up, obscuring the passengers inside, who might be little more than ghosts. Jensen

decided she liked the city this silent and deserted, its majestic old buildings taking centre stage. Bar the bus, the scene would have been instantly recognisable to any nineteenth-century Copenhagener.

When she reached Snaregade, it became impossible to cycle any further on the slippery cobbles. She got off and pushed her bike in between the tall, leaning houses of the old town. Just like her to have picked this, of all mornings, to be heading into the newspaper early. Less than twenty minutes ago she had lifted the curtain by her bed to discover the strange bluish-white world outside. It had felt virtuous to get up and head out. Now she wondered if she ought to have stayed put.

Was it possible that she had simply forgotten how to be a journalist? Lost the curiosity and bloody-mindedness that had paid her rent for as long as she could remember?

Since returning to Copenhagen, she had felt enthusiasm seep from her like a slow puncture. To the point where she was no longer able to string a sentence together, let alone a whole article worth reading. Nothing worked, nothing mattered.

She was meant to be *Dagbladet's* special reporter, going behind the news with features skewering Danish society. But what did she know about Danish society after fifteen years away?

For weeks she had been promising a feature on cutbacks in mental healthcare, citing delays in gaining document access as an excuse for not turning in copy, but in truth she hadn't even started researching the story. She supposed it was a crisis of confidence.

Her editor, Margrethe Skov, a woman for whom confidence had never been in short supply, wouldn't understand. ('Journalism is a craft, not bloody art; we don't sit around waiting till we feel inspired.')

Margrethe was right, of course. Jensen just needed to keep working at it. With a bit of luck, she could have made a solid start on her feature by this morning's editorial meeting, and

how good would that feel, how satisfying to rub the faces of her (by now multiple) detractors in it? Plenty of unemployed journalists would kill to write for *Dagbladet*, Jensen reminded herself, as she pointed her bike forward, her boots squeaking resolutely in the snow.

She saw it when she was just a few yards into Magstræde.

Against the red building with the green door.

A waist-high mound of snow.

Lumpy.

She looked left and right down the curved street, wishing someone else would turn up, knowing what the lump was, but not wanting to know. For a moment, she considered continuing past it, but how could she?

Her heart was pummelling her rib cage, the sweat beginning to run inside her gloves. Resting her bike against a street lamp, she leaned closer to the lumpy mound, gently brushing away the snow.

She recoiled, stumbling backwards.

It was a man, his face turned towards the sky, his eye sockets filled with snow.

She recognised him. He had been sitting in exactly the same place last night, cross-legged, covered in the same red sleeping bag, though she was pretty sure he had been alive then. She remembered thinking it was an odd place to be asking for money, in the shadows between two street lights with a blizzard underway.

The man's palms were turned upwards as if he had been professing his innocence or praying when he died, neither of which appeared to have done him much good. He looked a good few years younger than her, perhaps in his early twenties. Hardly more than a boy.

'Not again,' she said out loud, only then realising the significance of the words.

Was this really happening?

She brushed away more snow, then stopped abruptly when it gave way to raspberry slush. The boy's puffer jacket was ripped; he had been stabbed in the stomach.

The other victim had been stabbed too, hadn't he?

On the ground next to the boy was a paper cup full of coffee and a pizza in a cardboard box. There was salami on the pizza; it had curled up and frozen, matching the colour of the dead boy's skin.

For a moment, Jensen was forced to lean forward with her hands on her knees, as saliva ran out of her mouth and melted a hole in the snow. She retched, her back convulsed, but nothing came.

Her hands were trembling; she shivered, all of a sudden feeling the cold deep inside her bones. How long had the boy been dead for? Hours at most, or someone else would have found him, wouldn't they? Despite the snow, or even more so because of it, Magstræde was the sort of quaint old street that tourists went mad for. Picture-postcard Copenhagen.

The sky above the tall Lego-coloured town houses was fringed with turquoise now, a fingernail moon fading into the dawn. The snow on the street was pristine except for the tracks she had made.

She looked at her phone, feeling a familiar loosening in her abdomen. She had put off calling Henrik since she had moved back home, ignoring his messages, but he would know what to do about this.

Death was his thing.

He would want to be the first to know.

Besides, calling Henrik would work in her favour. *Dagbladet* had milked the last murder for all it was worth. In London, homeless deaths might not make the front page, but on the streets of Copenhagen, capital of the happiest nation in the world, it was big news.

Why was the boy there? Who was he?

Henrik would be more likely to share information when the time came than a random patrol unit responding to a 112 call.

Henrik owed her.

He owed her so much that no matter what he did for her now, they would never be even.

She caught him in the car going to work, shouting on the hands-free over the din of the radio news. The timbre of his voice darkened when he realised it wasn't a social call. She heard the siren come on, his car accelerating.

'Stay where you are,' he said, in the rough voice he reserved for work. 'And don't touch anything.'

Too late for that.

She took a few pictures of the body, though she doubted the paper would be able to use something so graphic. The boy's open mouth made him look vulnerable, the fluffy hair on his chin not quite enough for a beard. Snowflakes had caught in his eyelashes, turning them white. He was so thin, there were shadowy hollows below his cheekbones.

With her foot, she brushed aside a little of the snow on the ground and saw that he had made a seat for himself out of a flattened cardboard box. His puffer jacket was of a good make, so too his woollen beanie. He had dressed for the weather. She had to keep moving up and down the pavement to stay warm, breathing on her hands. Her exhalations came fast, in little clouds of white steam.

A man walked past. Weirdly, he didn't give her and the boy a second glance. He had his headphones on and that unseeing gaze of busy city people on their way somewhere important.

That's how it happens, she thought. That's how a person dies in the street without anyone noticing.

Magstræde was never exactly busy, though, which made it an odd choice for someone hoping for the charity of passers-by on a night of heavy snow. Perhaps the ban on begging and homeless camps had driven him here? In the dark, half obscured

by parked bicycles, he would have been less likely to attract the attention of the police.

She crouched down to look more closely at the dead boy, trying to find the reason for the voice telling her something was wrong, something about his empty hands. Had there not been a sign when she had passed him last night, a piece of cardboard with something scribbled on it? If not, why had she assumed he was a beggar? Of course, she hadn't actually read it, averting her eyes just like this morning's commuters. What had it said? Something about being hungry? Whatever it had been, the sign was gone. There was nothing else to see, no personal belongings of any kind, just the pizza and coffee.

She checked her watch.

Her resolve to get to the office early to work on her feature now seemed as much of a lost cause as the dead beggar's attempts to make a living.

Her eyes were caught by something in the boy's lap, the corner of a piece of paper protruding from the snow. She put her gloves back on and tugged gently at one corner.

It was a handwritten note:

*Fuglereden (the Bird's Nest), Rysensteensgade*

She took a picture of the note before replacing it, then looked up the address on her phone. It was a local hostel. The boy could have had a bed there, hot food, shelter. Yet here he was in front of her, staring up into the sky at something no one else could see.

'Why didn't you go there?' she said out loud, her voice sounding flat in the icy stillness.

As the first sirens approached, she stroked the remaining snow from the boy's face with her gloved hand and closed his eyes.

## 2

**Tuesday 10:23**

‘What are you going to do now?’ Jensen asked Henrik as the paramedics emerged from behind the screen set up by forensics.

Quickly, they put the stretcher with the body into the back of the ambulance, bringing to a halt the entertainment of the people who were craning their necks behind the police tape at the end of the street. Funny that not one of them had been around to help the boy when he was still alive.

Henrik’s unmarked car smelled of his leather jacket; he had turned the engine on to warm them up, and Jensen was slowly regaining the feeling in her fingers. They were both looking at the scene in front of them, but his hand was stroking the inside of her thigh, leaving a trail of electricity in its wake.

She let him.

He had that effect on her.

‘What would you *like* me to do?’ he said hoarsely.

She knew it would be a disaster to turn and look at him. The brief glimpse she had caught when he had first arrived on the scene, taking charge with his football-player swagger, had been enough. He hadn’t changed in three years. Same black jeans,

same white shirt. It must be all there was in his wardrobe, a row of identical shirts and jeans, sleeves rolled up in the summer, down in winter.

Instead of turning her head, she forced herself to stare at a yellow toy tractor by her feet. Henrik bent over, picked up the tractor and tossed it into the back seat. His face was bright red.

‘I meant what are you going to do about the boy?’

They sat in silence for a moment as the ambulance glided away, and the crowd began to disperse.

‘I missed you,’ he said, finally, when everyone but a couple of uniformed officers had left.

He reached further up her thigh. ‘Why didn’t you respond to my messages?’

‘Henrik, you left me in a hotel room.’

‘I had to get back home for my son. Come on, Jensen, you know the score.’

‘You said you’d be five minutes. You said you were going to get a coffee. That was three years ago.’

‘I did try calling.’

‘Six months later. And you wonder why I didn’t pick up?’

She brushed away his hand. Being angry made it a lot easier to look at him.

‘For fuck’s sake, Henrik, two beggars have been murdered on the streets in as many weeks. What are you going to do about it?’

He rubbed his bald head. ‘The two may not be related. Could just be a coincidence.’

‘And if not?’

He withdrew his hand from her thigh, sighing deeply. ‘You heard what forensics said. We have to wait for the post-mortem; it’s too early to tell.’

‘So this is just another day in the office to you?’

‘No, but I have learned never to jump to conclusions, and you would do well to stick to the same advice.’

‘He didn’t look like he was homeless or a typical beggar.’

‘Oh, tell me, what does one of those look like?’

‘His clothes were too clean, too good, for someone who lives on the street.’

‘Why don’t you just come and do my job for me,’ he said, laughing, but she could hear the edge in it.

‘He wasn’t a drunk or some addict,’ she insisted. ‘He had clean clothes, good teeth, good skin. No smell on him, no bottles lying around.’

‘Doesn’t change the fact that we have to wait for the post-mortem in order to know what happened to him. Could have been some argument that went wrong.’

‘You don’t know anything about this boy. Young white male, no ID, no phone, no belongings, could be anyone.’

‘Probably Romanian, or some other Eastern European. We still get the odd one sleeping rough here, though the begging ban has made a difference.’

‘He had the address of a homeless shelter. Why didn’t he go there?’

‘Maybe he did.’

‘What?’

‘Last night would have been busy; they might not have had room. Or maybe they wouldn’t let him in for some reason or another.’

‘Why not?’

He held up his hands in mock surrender. ‘Don’t ask me.’

‘All right, so as I was saying, you have no idea who he was or what happened.’

Henrik had no reply to that, and she wasn’t going to wait around for another banal guess.

‘Call me when you know something, anything at all,’ she said and climbed out of the car, slamming the door.

He rolled the window down, imploring her to return, but she ignored him. She wanted to get out of there as fast as she could.

He had that effect on her, too.