



Snow

Ellen Mattson

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'The sky was now a block of darkness, punctured only by driving snow. The stars had gone out, the king was dead. And the wound on his arm refused to heal.' So begins *Snow*, the first novel by Ellen Mattson to be published in Britain - a brilliant exploration of an individual's codes of ethics and honour in the face of political and social collapse.

The man is Jakob Torn, a small-town apothecary, stumbling drunkenly through the streets, a refugee from his own home, carrying a deep stab-wound inflicted by his wife. He does not understand what brought on this sudden violence, any more than he can come to terms with the death, in battle, of his king. When the town begins to fill with the starving, frostbitten remnants of the defeated army, and Jakob is conscripted into helping to embalm the king's body, all his certainties are called into question.

Though set in 1718 in the west coast of Sweden, *Snow* is a profoundly modern and universal novel, interested less in the real-life historical drama that forms the backdrop than in the emotional and moral dilemma of Jakob Torn - a simple, loyal, honourable man who finds himself the damaged centre of a collapsing world.

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