



Purge

By Sofi Oksanen



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An international sensation, Sofi Oksanen’s award-winning novel *Purge* is a breathtakingly suspenseful tale of two women dogged by their own shameful pasts and the dark, unspoken history that binds them.

When Aliide Truu, an older woman living alone in the Estonian countryside, finds a disheveled girl huddled in her front yard, she suppresses her misgivings and offers her shelter. Zara is a young sex-trafficking victim on the run from her captors, but a photo she carries with her soon makes it clear that her arrival at Aliide’s home is no coincidence. Survivors both, Aliide and Zara engage in a complex arithmetic of suspicion and revelation to distill each other’s motives; gradually, their stories emerge, the culmination of a tragic family drama of rivalry, lust, and loss that played out during the worst years of Estonia’s Soviet occupation.

Sofi Oksanen establishes herself as one the most important voices of her generation with this intricately woven tale, whose stakes are almost unbearably high from the first page to the last. *Purge* is a fiercely compelling and damning novel about the corrosive effects of shame, and of life in a time and place where to survive is to be implicated.

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Purge By Sofi Oksanen Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

In Oksanen's first novel translated into English, mystery surrounds the grimy, disheveled girl secretive Aliide finds lying in the yard of her house in the Estonian countryside that is full of homemade elixirs and dried herbs, flowers, and fruits, homegrown or from the nearby woods. The girl, Zara, speaks an archaic, provincial Estonian "yellow and moth-eaten . . . with a strange smell of death in it," which leads Aliide to suspect she's connected with thieves, possibly those plundering the woods for lumber to sell to the West. In 1992 Estonia, anything's possible, and though Aliide wants to distance herself from Zara's "repulsive, familiar smell of fear," she opens her door to the bedraggled girl, despite her better judgment. Thus, the stage is set for reopening wounds from the decades of Estonia's post-WWII Soviet occupation, when camp survivors streamed in, eyes averted, and refugees "disappeared into the mouths of the new factories." Maps help orient readers, who will dive into this taut, well-crafted tale of Europe's still living post-war pain. -- Whitney Scott

Review

"A bravura work, deeply engaged with [Estonia's] knotted history, sparing but potent in its use of irony, and containing an empathic treatment of all the miserable choices Estonians faced during their periods of oppression. . . . Oksanen has crafted a stirring and humane work of art."—Jacob Silverman, *The New Republic*

"A stunner . . . [*Purge* is] a compelling look at what we do to survive."—Karen R. Long, *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland)

"*Purge* is that very rare thing, a sheer masterpiece . . . A marvel . . . I hope that everyone in the world who knows how to read, reads *Purge*."--Nancy Huston, author of *Fault Lines*

"Oksanen's fluid, unadorned prose gives shape to unspeakable violence and illuminates the process of remembering."—*The L Magazine* (Top 10 Books of 2010)

"A captivating book about two women with dark secrets and an underlying connection. . . . Oksanen skillfully weaves histories together to form a rich, complex nove."—Shelf Awareness (Top 10 Books of 2010)

"[A] bold combination of history, politics, and suspense."—*Sunday Times* (UK)

"This is a novel of big issues—the sex industry, the Soviet annexation of Estonia after World War II, the Chernobyl disaster, the tumultuous years immediately after the breakup of the USSR. It's a lot to take on, but Oksanen manages to keep her focus tight . . . handling a complicated, tricky story with deftness and skill. *Purge* is a serious book, but not a dour one. It has a thriller's air of suspense . . . but there is a tragic core to this story that will reward closer attention."—Bookslut

"[A] taut, well-crafted tale of Europe's still living post-war pain."—*Booklist*

"Sofi Oksanen's disturbing, riveting novel *Purge* . . . is a jolt. Set in 1992, only three years removed from the joyful optimism undammed by the demolition of the Berlin Wall, *Purge* burns through the mists to show how

decades of debasement have twisted society in the former USSR into one characterized by crime and cruelty. Oksanen couches this larger theme within a tight, unconventional crime novel, one punctuated by dreadful silences, shameful revelations and repellent intimacies. By examining the toll of history on a close, personal level, Oksanen . . . makes the cost of mere survival sickeningly palpable. . . . Evoking both noir and fairy tales . . . Purge is an engrossing read.”—NPR.org

“Power and loss are the themes of Sofi Oksanen's gripping novel, *Purge*. . . . This is not a book to read last thing at night. It reminds us of things that we would rather forget, that happened while the world looked away. It is the story of millions of people forced to make impossible choices, who had their lives and happiness stolen, and then survived only to find new bullies and cheats taking the place of the old ones. . . . Bears comparison with the excellent novels of Marina Lewycka, *A Short History of Tractors in Ukrainian* and the semi-sequel *Two Caravans*.”—The Economist online (“Essential Reading”)

“A dark, harrowing, and at times difficult read that wrings every ounce of emotion from the reader.”—*The Bookseller*

“This wonderfully subtle thriller . . . captures both the tragic consequences of one of Europe’s biggest conflicts and the universal horrors that war inflicts on women. With a tone somewhere between Ian McEwan’s *Atonement* and the best of the current crop of European crime novelists, this bitter gem promises great things from the talented Oksanen.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

“*Purge* is a truly stunning novel, both heartbreaking and optimistic. Through the stories of two women, Sofi Oksanen shows us the history of a country that has been repeatedly violated by the Russians, by the West, by history itself, yet managed to stand strong.”—Lara Vapnyar, author of *There Are Jews in my House*

“A riveting tale . . . Oksanen adeptly handles dual story lines and multiple points of view as she keeps us turning pages to reach the dramatic conclusion. Highly recommended for fans of classic Russian writers like Tolstoy and Pasternak, as well as those who enjoy a contemporary tale of lust and betrayal.”—*Library Journal*

“Vivid . . . Life in Estonia under Soviet rule is dramatically portrayed in this award-winning Finnish novel. . . . Oksanen paints a vivid picture of the landscape and people of Estonia. She deftly interweaves universal themes of love, isolation, political instability and human trafficking, involving the reader from the beginning to the surprising ending. She does not shrink from depicting rape, torture or murder. But she includes tender moments as well, giving a human face to historical facts. . . . Her frank, short sentences bore to the ‘truth’ in a direct style that her characters are unable to use.”—Carol Hussa Harvey, *Winnipeg Free Press*

“*Purge* is a breathtaking novel dense with emotion that snares the reader from the very first pages. . . . Moving and horrifying, it leaves you shuddering and gasping for breath.”—*Ilkka* (Finland)

“Cruel, compelling, and nuanced, *Purge* vibrates with suspense: unspoken secrets and deeply shameful deeds . . . spread like a web over the book, forcing the reader to go on turning the pages. . . . Vivid, precise, and beautiful.”—*Hufvudstadsbladet* (Finland)

“A stinging account of a chapter of Eastern European history that we are on the verge of forgetting—or denying . . . Sofi Oksanen is an eminently skilled novelist, intricately unraveling her fascinating story bit by bit. She has a sense for the subtle inner drama of a distorted mind and love’s self-deceptive logic. Finland can be proud of its brilliant new star.”
—*Jyllands-Posten* (6 out of 6 stars) (Denmark)

“The multidimensionality of *Purge* is startling. . . . [The novel] encompasses the grand themes . . . [of] shame, betrayal, guilt, atonement . . . with the complexity and seriousness worthy of them.”—*Turun Sanomat* (Finland)

“Now and then I read books that are so good that I can’t quite understand how the author does it. . . . *Purge* is a fantastic novel, as well as a declaration of love to Estonia.”—*Dagbladet* (Norway)

“The first chapter of *Purge* displays the most condensed, metaphorically effective language I have read in a long time. . . . Oksanen’s beautiful prose breaks the silence of the shame and guilt of oppression, and does so with a determination that provides popular storytelling with a legitimacy and weight that one doesn’t often experience.”—*Aftonbladet* (Sweden)

“Oksanen is a tightrope walker. . . . Piercingly and mercilessly she reveals the human cost of brutal political regimes, and even manages to tie the abuses of the past to the heartbreaking story of young Zara and her destiny. . . . An overwhelming reading experience.”—*Dagsavisen* (Norway)

“Oksanen is unusually skilled when it comes to building suspense, and this is a brutal novel—it is brutally physical, it exposes the brutality in the greater and smaller games we play, and it is brutally suspenseful to read. . . . Extraordinary.”—*NRK* (Norway)

“Vibrant . . . Absolutely convincing . . . A compelling document of the eternally humane and the eternally inhumane.”—*Dag og Tid* (Norway)

About the Author

Sofi Oksanen was born in Finland and a former graduate of the Finnish Theatre Academy. She is the author of three novels. *Purge* is her first novel to be published in English translation. She lives in Helsinki.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Stephan Stephens:

Do you certainly one of people who can't read enjoyable if the sentence chained inside straightway, hold on guys this aren't like that. This *Purge* book is readable by means of you who hate those straight word style. You will find the details here are arrange for enjoyable looking at experience without leaving possibly decrease the knowledge that want to provide to you. The writer associated with *Purge* content conveys the idea easily to understand by a lot of people. The printed and e-book are not different in the content material but it just different by means of it. So , do you nevertheless thinking *Purge* is not loveable to be your top list reading book?

John Dearman:

Reading a reserve tends to be new life style in this era globalization. With reading through you can get a lot of information which will give you benefit in your life. With book everyone in this world could share their idea. Guides can also inspire a lot of people. A lot of author can inspire all their reader with their story as well as their experience. Not only the storyline that share in the textbooks. But also they write about the information about something that you need example of this. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your young ones, there are many kinds of book that exist now. The authors nowadays always try to improve

their ability in writing, they also doing some investigation before they write for their book. One of them is this Purge.

Pablo McNamara:

Purge can be one of your basic books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that can increase your knowledge in words, easy to understand, bit entertaining but delivering the information. The author giving his/her effort to put every word into satisfaction arrangement in writing Purge nevertheless doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest as well as based confirm resource information that maybe you can be considered one of it. This great information can easily drawn you into fresh stage of crucial pondering.

Sena Meyer:

Beside this kind of Purge in your phone, it can give you a way to get closer to the new knowledge or info. The information and the knowledge you will got here is fresh from oven so don't end up being worry if you feel like an aged people live in narrow commune. It is good thing to have Purge because this book offers for you readable information. Do you oftentimes have book but you would not get what it's facts concerning. Oh come on, that will not end up to happen if you have this with your hand. The Enjoyable agreement here cannot be questionable, just like treasuring beautiful island. So do you still want to miss this? Find this book as well as read it from at this point!

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