

A movie poster for 'The Healer' featuring Antti Tuomainen. The image shows a person in a dark, hooded raincoat standing on a path of stone steps that lead into a misty, desolate landscape. In the distance, another figure is visible on the path. The sky is filled with many birds flying. The overall tone is somber and atmospheric. The title 'ANTTI TUOMAINEN' is written in white, and 'THE HEALER' is written in large, bold red letters.

ANTTI TUOMAINEN
THE HEALER

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About the Book

It's two days before Christmas and Helsinki is battling ruthless climate catastrophe: subway tunnels are flooded; abandoned vehicles are burning in the streets; the authorities have issued warnings of malaria, tuberculosis, Ebola and the plague. People are fleeing to the far north where conditions are still tolerable. Social order is crumbling and private security firms have undermined the police force. Tapani Lehtinen, a struggling poet, is among the few still willing and able to live in the city.

When Tapani's wife Johanna, a journalist, goes missing, he embarks on a frantic hunt for her. Johanna's disappearance seems to be connected to a story she was researching about a politically motivated serial killer known as 'The Healer'. Determined to find Johanna, Tapani's search leads him to uncover secrets from her past: secrets that connect her to the very murders she was investigating ...

The Healer is set in desperate times, forcing Tapani to take desperate measures in order to find his beloved. Atmospheric and moving, *The Healer* is a story of survival, loyalty and determination. Even when the world is coming to an end, love and hope endure.

About the Author

Finnish ANTTI TUOMAINEN (b. 1971) was an award-winning copywriter in the advertising industry before he made his literary debut in 2007 as a suspense author. In 2011, Tuomainen's third novel, *The Healer*, was awarded the Clue Award for 'Best Finnish Crime Novel 2011'. The Finnish press labelled *The Healer* 'unputdownable'. With a piercing and evocative style, Tuomainen is one of the first to challenge the Scandinavian crime-genre formula. Antti Tuomainen lives in Helsinki.

LOLA ROGERS is a freelance literary translator living in Seattle. Her published translations include the novels *Purge* by Sofi Oksanen and *True* by Riikka Pulkkinen, selected poems of Eeva Liisa Manner for the *Female Voices of the North* anthology series, and a variety of other works of fiction, essays, poetry, comics, and children's literature. She is a regular contributor to *Books from Finland*, *Words Without Borders* and other publications.

For Anu

The Healer

ANTTI TUOMAINEN

Translated from the Finnish by

LOLA ROGERS

Harvill Secker

LONDON

THREE DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS

WHICH WAS WORSE – complete certainty that the worst had happened, or this fear, building up moment by moment? Sudden collapse, or slow, crumbling disintegration?

I lurched with the force of a swerve that shook me out of my wandering thoughts, and looked up.

Yellow-black flames from a wrecked truck lashed the pillar of the pedestrian bridge at the Sörnäinen shore road. The truck looked broken in two, embracing the pillar like a pleading lover. Not one of the passing cars slowed down, let alone stopped – they moved into the outside lane as they flew by, passing the burning wreck at the greatest possible distance.

So did the bus I was sitting in.

I opened my rain-drenched parka, found a packet of tissues in the inside pocket, pulled one loose with numb fingers, and dried my face and hair with it. The tissue was drenched through in a moment. I squeezed it into a ball and shoved it in my pocket. I shook drops of water from the hem of my jacket, then took my phone out of the pocket of my jeans. I tried to call Johanna again.

The number was still unavailable.

The metro tunnel was closed from Sörnäinen to Keilaniemi because of flooding. The train had taken me as far as Kalasatama, where I'd had to wait for the bus for twenty minutes under a sky filled with rain.

The burning truck was left behind as I went back to watching the news on the screen attached to the back of the driver's bulletproof glass compartment. The southern regions of Spain and Italy had officially been left to their

own devices. Bangladesh, sinking into the sea, had erupted in a plague that threatened to spread to the rest of Asia. The dispute between India and China over Himalayan water supplies was driving the two countries to war. Mexican drug cartels had responded to the closing of the US-Mexico border with missile strikes on Los Angeles and San Diego. The forest fires in the Amazon had not been extinguished even by blasting new river channels to surround the blaze.

Ongoing wars or armed conflicts in the European Union: thirteen, mostly in border areas.

Estimated number of climate refugees planet-wide: 650-800 million people.

Pandemic warnings: H3N3, malaria, tuberculosis, ebola, plague.

Light piece at the end: the recently chosen Miss Finland believed that everything would be much better in the spring.

I turned my gaze back to the rain that had been falling for months, a continuous flow of water that had started in September and paused only momentarily since. At least five waterfront neighbourhoods - Jätkäsaari, Kalasatama, Ruoholahti, Herttoniemenranta and Marjaniemi - had been continuously flooded, and many residents had finally given up and abandoned their homes.

Their apartments didn't stay empty for long. Even damp, mouldy and partially underwater, they were good enough for the hundreds of thousands of refugees arriving in the country. In the evenings, cooking fires and campfires shone from flooded neighbourhoods where the power was out.

I got off the bus at the railway station. It would have been quicker to walk through Kaisaniemi Park, but I decided to go around it, along Kaivokatu. There weren't enough police to monitor both the streets and the parks. Walking through the masses of people around the railway station was something always to be avoided. Panicked

people were leaving the city and filling jam-packed trains headed north, with all their possessions in their backpacks and suitcases.

Motionless forms lay curled up in sleeping bags under plastic shelters in front of the station. It was impossible to tell whether they were resting in transit or simply lived there. The dazzling glow of tall floodlights mixed with the shimmering layer of exhaust, the streetlights and the strident red, blue and green of glowing advertisements.

The central post office, half destroyed by fire, stood across from the station, a grey-black skeleton. As I passed it, I tried to call Johanna again.

I came to the *Sanomatalo* building, stood in line for fifteen minutes waiting to go through security, took off my coat, shoes and belt, put them back on, and walked to the reception desk.

I asked the receptionist to ring Johanna's boss, who for some reason wasn't answering my calls. I had met him a few times and my guess was that if the call came from within the building he would answer, and when he learned who it was, he'd let me tell him why I had come.

The receptionist was an icy-eyed woman in her thirties who, judging by her short hair and controlled gestures, was a former soldier, now guarding the physical integrity of the country's last newspaper, her gun still at her side.

She looked me in the eye as she spoke into the air. 'A man named Tapani Lehtinen ... I checked his ID ... Yes ... One moment.'

She nodded to me, the movement of her head like the blow of an axe. 'What is your business?'

'I'm unable to reach my wife, Johanna Lehtinen.'

HALF BY MISTAKE, I had recorded the last phone conversation I'd had with Johanna, and I knew it by heart:

'I'm going to be working late today,' she began.

'How late is late?'

'Overnight, probably.'

'Inside or outside work?'

'I'm already outside. I have a photographer with me. Don't worry. We're going to talk to some people. We'll keep to public places.'

A murmuring sound, the noise of cars, a murmur, a low rumble, and the murmur again.

'Are you still there?' she asked.

'Where would I have gone? I'm at my desk.'

A pause.

'I'm proud of you,' Johanna said. 'The way you keep going.'

'So do you,' I said.

'I guess so,' she said, suddenly quiet, almost whispering.

'I love you. Come home in one piece.'

'Sure,' she whispered, and her words came quickly now, almost a single chain. 'See you tomorrow at the latest. I love you.'

A murmur. A crackle. A soft click. Silence.

MANAGING EDITOR LASSI Uutela's roughly forty-year-old face was covered in blue-grey stubble and his eyes showed an irritation that he lacked the ability, and perhaps even the desire, to hide.

He was standing directly in front of me when the elevator doors opened on the fifth floor. He wore a black shirt and a thin grey jumper, dark jeans and trainers. His arms were crossed over his chest, a position they relinquished with elaborate reluctance as I stepped towards him.

Lassi Uutela's least appealing characteristics - his envy of more accomplished journalists, his tendency to avoid confrontation, his habit of holding grudges, his need to always be right - were all familiar to me from what Johanna had told me. Johanna and Lassi's views of the job of a reporter and the direction of the paper had been clashing more and more often. The ripples from these clashes had come ashore even at home.

We shook hands for a long time and introduced ourselves even though we knew who we were. For a fleeting moment it felt like I was performing in a bad play. As soon as he got his hand free, Lassi turned and opened the door into the hallway with a brush of his fingertips. I followed him as he kicked his feet angrily in front of him, as if dissatisfied with their progress. We came to the end of a long hallway where there was a corner office a few metres square.

Lassi sat down at his desk in a black, high-backed chair and gestured towards the room's only other seat, a sort of

white plastic cup.

'I thought Johanna was working at home today,' he said.

I shook my head. 'To tell you the truth, I was hoping to find her here.'

Now it was his turn to shake his head. The gesture was impatient and brief. 'The last time I saw Johanna was at yesterday's all-staff meeting, around six o'clock. We went through the jobs in progress as usual, then everybody went their separate ways.'

'I spoke with Johanna yesterday evening at about nine o'clock.'

'Where was she?' he asked indifferently.

'Outside somewhere,' I said, and then after a pause, more quietly, 'I didn't think to ask where.'

'So you haven't heard from her for a whole day?'

I nodded, watching him. His posture, the expression on his face and the pauses deployed between his words revealed what he was really thinking - that I was wasting his time.

'What?' I asked, as if I didn't notice or didn't understand his body language.

'I was just wondering,' he said, 'whether this has ever happened before.'

'No. Why?'

He puckered up his lower lip and lifted his eyebrows - it looked like each one weighed a ton, as if he expected a reward for raising them.

'No reason. It's just that these days... all kinds of things can happen.'

'Not to us,' I said. 'It's a long story, but these things don't happen to us.'

'Of course not,' Lassi said, in a tone somewhat lacking in conviction. He didn't even bother looking me in the eye. 'Of course not.'

'What story was she working on?'

He didn't answer right away, just weighed his pen in his hand, perhaps weighing something in his mind as well.

'What was it about?' I asked again, seeing that he wasn't going to begin on his own.

'It's probably stupid of me to share this information with you, but then it was a stupid article,' he said, leaning his elbows on the desk and looking at me obliquely, as if to gauge my reaction.

'I understand,' I said, and waited.

'It's about the Healer.'

I may have flinched. Johanna had told me about the Healer.

She'd received her first email from him right after the family in Tapiola was murdered. Someone who called himself the Healer had taken responsibility for the crime. He said he did it on behalf of ordinary people, to avenge them, said he was the last voice of truth in a world headed towards destruction, a healer for a sick planet. That's why he murdered the CEO of a manufacturing company and his family. And that's why he would continue to murder whoever he claimed had contributed to the acceleration of climate change. Johanna had notified the police. They investigated, did what they could. There were now nine executives and politicians who'd been killed, along with their families.

I sighed. Lassi shrugged and looked satisfied with my reaction.

'I told her it wouldn't lead anywhere,' he said, and I couldn't help noticing a slightly triumphant tone in his voice. 'I told her she wouldn't find out any more than the police had. And our rapidly shrinking readership doesn't want to hear about it. It's just depressing. They already know that everything's going to hell in a hand basket.'

I looked out into the darkness over Töölö Bay. I knew there were buildings out there, but I couldn't see them.

‘Had Johanna already written the article?’ I asked when we’d had sufficient time to listen to ourselves and the building breathing.

Lassi leaned back in his chair, put his head against the headrest and looked at me through half-opened eyes, as if I were not on the other side of his narrow desk but far off on the horizon.

‘Why do you ask?’ he said.

‘Johanna and I always keep in touch with each other,’ I explained. It occurred to me that when we repeat things, it isn’t always for the purpose of convincing other people. ‘I don’t mean constantly. But if nothing else we at least send each other a text message or an email every few hours. Even if we don’t really have anything to tell each other. It’s usually just a couple of words. Something funny, or sometimes something a little affectionate. It’s a habit with us.’

This last sentence was purposely emphatic. Lassi listened to me with his head thrown back, expressionless.

‘Now I haven’t heard from her for twenty-four hours,’ I continued, and realised I was directing my words to my own reflection in the window. ‘This is the longest time in all the ten years we’ve been together that we haven’t been in touch with each other.’

I waited another moment before I said something, not caring a bit how it sounded.

‘I’m sure that something has happened to her.’

‘Something has happened to her?’ he said, then paused in a way that was becoming familiar. There could be only one purpose for these pauses: to undercut me, to make what I said sound stupid and pointless.

‘Yes,’ I said dryly.

Lassi didn’t say anything for a moment. Then he leaned forward, paused, and said, ‘Let’s assume you’re right. What do you intend to do?’

I didn't have to pretend to think about it. I immediately said, 'There's no point in reporting her disappearance to the police. All they can do is enter it in their records. Disappearance number five thousand and twenty-one.'

'True,' Lassi agreed. 'And twenty-four hours isn't a terribly long time, either.'

I raised my arm as if to fend off this statement physically, as well as mentally. 'As I said, we always stay in touch. For us, twenty-four hours is a long time.'

Lassi didn't need to dig very deep to find his irritation. His voice rose, and at the same time a colder rigidity crept into it. 'We have reporters that are in the field for a week at a time. Then they come back with the story. That's the way it works.'

'Has Johanna ever been in the field for a week without contacting you?'

Lassi kept his eyes on me, drummed his fingers on the armrest of his chair, puckered his lips. 'I admit, she hasn't.'

'It's just not like her,' I said.

Lassi twisted in his chair and spoke rapidly, as if he wanted to hurry up and make sure he was right: 'Tapani, we're trying to put together a newspaper here. There's basically no advertising money, and our rule of thumb is that nobody's interested in anything. Except of course sex and porn, and scandals and revelations connected with sex and porn. We sold more papers yesterday than we have in a long time. And I assure you we didn't do it with any in-depth reports about the thousands of missing warheads or investigative articles on how much drinking water we have left. Which by the way is about half an hour's worth, from what I can tell. No, our lead story was about a certain singer's bestiality video. That's what the people want. That's what they pay for.'

He took a breath and continued in a voice that was even more tense and impatient than before, if that was possible. 'Then I've got reporters like, for instance, Johanna, who

want to tell the people the truth. And I'm always asking them, what fucking truth? And they never have a good answer. All they say is that people should know. And I ask, but do they want to know? And more importantly, do they want to pay to know?'

When I was sure he had finished, I said, 'So you tell them about a no-talent singer and her horse.'

He looked at me again, from someplace far away where clueless idiots like me aren't allowed to go. 'We're trying to stay alive,' he said laconically.

We sat silently for a moment. Then he opened his mouth again: 'Can I ask you something?' he said.

I nodded.

'Do you still write your poetry?'

I had expected this. He couldn't resist needling me. The question had the seed of the next question in it. It was meant to indicate that I was on the wrong track when it came to Johanna, just like I was when it came to everything else. So what. I decided to give him a chance to continue in the vein he'd chosen. I answered honestly.

'Yes.'

'When was the last time you were published?'

Once again, I didn't need to think about my answer. 'Four years ago,' I said.

He didn't say anything more, just looked at me with red-rimmed, satisfied eyes as if he'd just proven some theory of his to be correct. I didn't want to talk about it any more. It would have been a waste of time.

'Where does Johanna sit?' I asked.

'Why?'

'I want to see her work station.'

'Normally I wouldn't allow it,' Lassi said, looking like his last bit of interest in the whole matter had just evaporated. He glanced nonchalantly past me through the glass wall at the office full of cubicles. 'But I guess there's not much we do normally any more, and the office is empty, so go ahead.'

I got up and thanked him, but he'd already turned towards his monitor and become absorbed in his typing, like he'd been wishing he was somewhere else the whole time.

Johanna's work station was on the right side of the large, open office. A picture of me led me to it. Something lurched inside me when I saw the old snapshot and imagined Johanna looking at it. Could she see the same difference in my eyes that I saw?

In spite of the large stacks of paper, her desk was well-organised. Her laptop lay closed in the middle of the table. I sat down and looked around. There were a dozen or more work stations, which they called 'clovers', in the open office space, with four desks at each station. Johanna's desk was on the window side and had a direct view into Lassi's office. Or rather, the upper section of his office - cardboard was stacked against the lower half of the glass walls. The view from the window wasn't much to look at. The Kiasma art museum with its frequently patched copper roof was like a gigantic shipwreck in the rain - black, tattered, run aground.

The top of the desk was cool to the touch but quickly grew damp under my hand. I glanced towards Lassi Uutela's office and then looked around. The place was deserted. I slid Johanna's computer into my bag.

There were dozens of sticky-notes on the desk. Some of them simply had a phone number or a name and address; a few were complete notes written in Johanna's precise, delicate hand.

I looked through them one by one. There was one in the most recent batch that caught my attention: 'H - West-East/ North-South', then two lists of neighbourhoods - 'Tapiola, Lauttasaari, Kamppi, Kulosaari' and 'Tuomarinkylä, Pakila, Kumpula, Kluuvi, Punavuori' - with dates next to them.