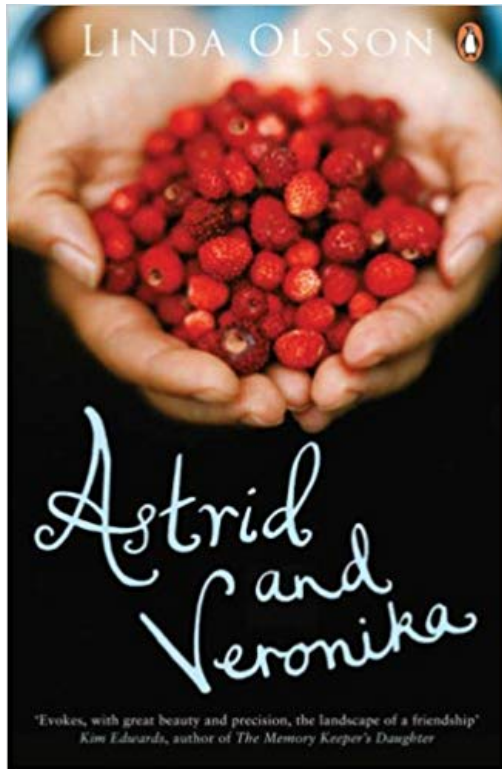


## Astrid and Veronika *by* Linda Olsson



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## Reviews of the *Astrid and Veronika* *by* Linda Olsson

Bev

This novel, about friendship, love and loss, takes place in Sweden. Veronika is a young writer who has come to Sweden from New Zealand in order to escape a personal tragedy and to work on her novel. Living next door to her is Astrid, an elderly woman who appears reclusive and does not venture out of her house very often. As both of these women go about their days, they inevitably run into each other and very gradually develop a budding friendship.

Astrid has spent her whole life in this small Swedish town and little is known about her. As she opens up to Veronika, the reader learns of the suffering she's endured and the tragedy of her life. Veronika starts sharing bits and pieces of her life with Astrid and tells her how the death of her fiance has paralyzed her emotions, virtually stopping her in her tracks and leaving her without hope.

The two women establish lovely rituals together as they pick mushrooms in the woods, drink wine on cold winter evenings and sing songs in the evenings. They learn how their own kindness, patience and sincerity with each other has opened up doors that they thought were locked forever.

This is a tender book about friendship and love between two unlikely women whose hearts join together. As they explore each other's pain and suffering, something else is born - fresh hope for the future and belief in their ability to heal.

Dalallador

This book is desperately trying to be literary and poetic, but it is really a melodramatic romance all gussied up pretty. Plus, the author never deals with motivations. Why, after being a recluse her entire life, would an old woman suddenly wholeheartedly embrace a total stranger? No clue. Then we're told this same woman committed a horrible deed when she was younger because she hated her husband. Why did she hate him? Well, he didn't marry her for love. Well, she didn't marry him for love, either. So why the burning hatred? No clue. Apparently the author thinks it is "literary" to let her readers just guess what drives her characters. I submit it's not literary, it's lazy. She also needed a more vigilant editor. I started underlining all the "as ifs." If somebody shrugs because he is embarrassed, he is embarrassed, not "as if" he is embarrassed. If you want to read romantic literature, read Charlotte Bronte, but skip this one.

Arthunter

Perhaps the author, Linda Olsson hopes that the book dependence and friendship between the two title characters will cause the reader to forgive Astrid's actions just as Veronica does. No, proicide is never justified--at least not for this reader. Among the weaknesses in this book is how poorly drawn the 3 male characters are. Even the prepared book discussion questions do not add depth to the plot or characters. Save your krona; choose a different book.

Fonceiah

The author writes lyrically. I read a lot of fiction, but this one was a surprise - quickly bought as a 3 for 1 right before a long flight. It isn't long, not much goes on, but if you like character studies, a little glimpse into another country, and...studies on life, it's a winner to savor. I've read the author's other books (after this one), they were fine, but this one is special. I've been reading it annually for several years. Plus the cover picture is pretty, though would have preferred the berries being held by Astrid's hands...!

Malak

This book had some lovely aspects. The tender, healing friendship between the two women was moving, as was the powerful relationship between Veronika and her fiance, and I enjoyed the depiction of life in a Swedish village, which is very far from my own experience. That said, there is much about this book that was unsatisfying. It is not credible that Veronika's only reaction to Astrid's confession of a shocking crime was to hug Astrid; and Astrid's reasons were not sufficiently explained. Veronika states that her father no longer needed her, but when she recounts her last visit with him, there is no sense of that; the two of them spent a month together with only a few banal sentences of conversation recounted. The book had lots of promise, but it was not sufficiently developed; there was not enough emotional depth, and the language was bland.

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