

The Fourth Man by K.O.Dahl. Faber and Faber 2007  
A Gentle Axe by R.N.Morris. Faber and Faber 2007

Two very different but equally compelling detective novels from Faber, the former set in 21<sup>st</sup> century Oslo the latter in 19<sup>th</sup> century St Petersburg.

K.O. Dahl's hero is another rumpled detective, often at odds with authority but widely respected by his colleagues; Frank Frohlich gets involved in a passionate but short-lived affair with a woman whom he encounters in a store during an attempted robbery. The relationship becomes complicated when he discovers that she is the sister of a notorious criminal, and even more so when she disappears. Frohlich's attempts to find her lead him on a shocking journey of professional and personal discovery, before an intensely satisfying conclusion. This is the first Frohlich novel to appear in English but hopefully not the last.

A Gentle Axe picks up with Porfiry Petrovich a year after he captured the double murderer Raskolnikov, as told by Dostoevsky in Crime and Punishment. A large man and a dwarf are found dead in a St Petersburg park, the former having apparently murdered the latter. Petrovich begins an investigation which takes him into the seamier side of St Petersburg society as he attempts to make sense of an apparently open and shut case. This is a deeply atmospheric tale with richly described characters, perfectly reflecting the hierarchical nature of Tsarist Russia along the way. The telling of new tales about supporting characters in classic novels is not original, but Petrovich is a sufficiently complex individual to be worthy of such attention: perhaps he will find some new cases to solve in the future?

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