

## **Q&A with Antti Tuomainen – Translated by David Hackston**

### ***What was the inspiration for The Mine?***

AT: For me, a book usually announces itself when a few seemingly separate things come together and I realise that, yes, this would be a book. This was the case with *The Mine*. First, I had a hitman looking for a good story. Second, I wanted to write about the relationship between a father and a son. Third, in Finland we had a sort of a mining boom a few years ago, which turned out to be a bubble. (A toxic bubble, to be exact.) It was an interesting phenomenon and I wanted to somehow investigate that from one angle or another. I hope I do it in a way that readers might find interesting.

### ***Some of the best crime fiction contains social messages; did you set out to draw attention to environmental issues in this book?***

AT: The main thing is always to tell a good story with good characters. That is my ambition. I attempt to keep any social aspect unobtrusive, even though I might like it to be there. So I would say that I want to draw attention to the story and smuggle some information along with it, while being as discreet as possible. It is a thin line, I know, but I try my best.

### ***At its heart, The Mine is also a story of relationships, particularly that between an estranged father and son (and a husband and wife). Relationships feature heavily in many of your novels. Can you elaborate on why?***

AT: That is what I'm interested in: human beings. The secrets we keep; the conflicts we have, both internal and external; how we are unknown even to the people closest to us. And how tragic or comical – or tragicomical – the results are when we are trying to do either the right, or what is seen to be 'the right thing'.

***Revenge, power and corruption are also major themes in your work. What is your message here?***

AT: They are strong motivators. The best characters are obsessed, driven by some ultimate need; they're people who will stop at nothing until they get what they want.

***There are several violent crimes in *The Mine*, but the descriptions tend to be less gory or bloody than in most Scandi-noir fiction. Is there a reason for this?***

AT: I believe that everything that goes into a book or a story should be there for a reason. If a lot of blood is needed to advance the story or to tell it better, then a lot of blood there should be. If not, then it is gratuitous and, by now, boring – which is even worse. What Sam Peckinpah did, very few do better.

***What was your route to publication?***

AT: A long one. When I was 18 or 19 I knew I would be a writer. But I didn't publish my first novel until I was 34. So it took 15 years. In between I wrote two novel-length manuscripts (still mercifully unpublished), short stories, film scripts, plays, poetry. All unpublished, of course. Also, I worked as an advertising copywriter for 12 years until becoming a full-time writer at 41. So it's taken a few years in every way. All in all, I have to say I'm very grateful for everything.

***Did your success take you by surprise?***

AT: Oh yes. I never dreamed about having my books published abroad, let alone in 28 countries. To go into a bookshop in London and to see my book there – I find that downright thrilling.

***What's next?***

AT: A book called *The Man Who Died* (that's the Finnish title, anyway), which will be published in Finland in September 2016. It's a good one, I've been told. I hope you will like it.