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Birger Emanuelson

The Odyssey



A powerful and tender father-son novel about memory, caregiving and a final promise written by award-winning literary powerhouse Birger Emanuelson.

When a father slips into dementia, his son takes him to the family cabin on the far edge of the sea – a small, weather-beaten place holding the last traces of a life long gone. This is where the father once wished to go when the diagnosis came. And this is where the son believes he might still catch a final glimpse of the man who raised him. No one around them thinks that the trip is a good idea. But a promise is a promise, and each night, they read Homer's *Odyssey* aloud, the ancient tale echoing their own muted search. As Odysseus fights to return home and Telemachus tries to understand a father he barely knows, this son searches for the man slipping away before his very eyes.

Not a story of grand revelations, but of small, devastating recognitions, *The Odyssey* is written with clarity, restraint and an understated humour. Exploring guilt, duty, masculinity and love, Emanuelson quietly questions how we care for the old, beyond the systems that we've shaped and built.

The Odyssey is a tender, unsentimental portrait of dignity at the end of life, and of a son stepping into the role of parent to his own father. A quiet, deeply resonant novel about the slow unravelling of memory, the weight of promises and the fragile bond that remains when everything else begins to fall away.

'A bottomlessly honest novel and a multifaceted declaration of love from a son to his father, the jury states. The author writes both with precision and lyricism, yet at times also with a powerful rage, as the language portrays memory's struggle against oblivion. In the absence of a shared language between the main characters, Birger Emanuelson succeeds in describing how the son's physical closeness becomes the father's memory. It restores to him his dignity and small glimpses of a path back to himself.'

- Winner of the Riksmål Prize 2025

Birger Emanuelson

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Birger Emanuelson (b. 1982) is from Tromøya. His debut *For riket er ditt* (2012) was hailed as one of the best books of the year. Since then, he has published a number of critically acclaimed novels, essays and the non-fiction book *Før de forsvinner* (2024). He has previously received the Sørlandet Literature Prize and the Youth Critics' Prize, and *The Odyssey* has won the prestigious Riksmål Society Literature Prize and is once again nominated for the Sørlandet Literature Prize.

