



by Heinrich Steinfest

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Fiction

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Black Maria *Mariaschwarz*

review

Old Job Grong runs a down-at-heel hotel on the edge of the creepily named 'Black Maria' lake in the resort of Hiltroff, Austria. Vinzent Oleander has been a regular patron, especially of the bar, for the past three years. But when he falls into the lake and is saved from drowning by Grong, he reveals a sinister secret: the real reason for his stay, according to himself, is that he is searching for his kidnapped child, who he claims was snatched from him during a traffic accident in Milan.

But this is only the opening of an complex plot, which continues with a Loch Ness Monster type creature emerging from the lake in full view of the local schoolchildren and the remains of a young woman being fished out of the water's depths. It takes the caustic Criminal Inspector Lukastic to sort all this out, and to discover along the way that the traffic accident was not an accident at all, but the assassination of a taxi driver by a murderous Italian gang. Stir well, throw in a spot of cultic worship and Lukastik's tortured love-life, and you have a mixture which, however improbable it may sound, works like – well, magic.

A chance to discover the particular brand of black humour that has garnered Steinfest such a solid following among crime fans.

press quotes

'Brilliant! Divine! Simply Steinfest!' – Tobias Gohlis, *Die Zeit*

'A master of ingenious verbal imagery and philosophical excursions.' – *Der Spiegel*

about the author

Heinrich Steinfest was born in 1961 in Albury, Australia. Vienna, and Stuttgart, where he now lives with his son, have been the other main staging posts in the life of this cult author whose books have sold more than 200,000 copies in Germany. He has just received the 2009 German Crime Prize for this, his latest novel.

Previous works include:

Die feine Nase der Lilli Steinbeck, 2007 – rights sold to Poland and South Korea, and winner of the 2008 German Crime Prize; *Nervöse Fische*, 2004 – rights sold to France; *Cheng* (first in the 'Cheng' series), 1999; *Ein sturer Hund* – rights sold to France, and winner of the 2004 German Crime Fiction Prize; *Ein dickes Fell*, 2006 – longlisted for the German Book Prize.

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