

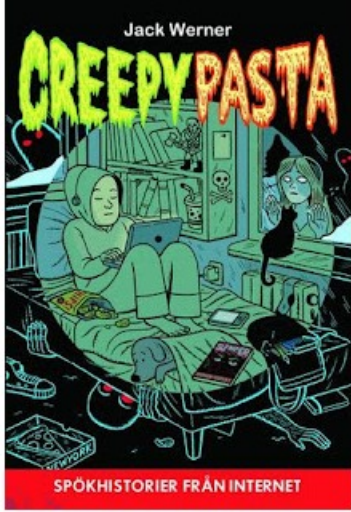
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INTERVIEW WITH JACK WERNER, AUTHOR OF CREEPYPASTA

Earlier this month, I reviewed a book of scary stories on the Internet, called *Creepypasta: Spökhistorier från Internet*. I thought it was a great book, and I didn't hesitate to contact the author, Jack Werner, and ask him a few questions about the book. So without further ado, here's Jack Werner, award-winning journalist, podcaster and author.



Tell us more about yourself.

I'm a 27-year-old uneducated but curious boardgames-and-beer lover who lives in an apartment on Reimersholme in Stockholm with my girlfriend. At the age of 22, I wrote a series of blog entries on the topic of "The greatest mysteries of the internet" (which you can read in Swedish [here](#)), and thanks to the massive response I promptly discovered that not many other people in Sweden wrote about the internet in quite the same way. Since then, I've started the fact-checking effort Viralgranskaren (the Viral Reviewer in English) that was awarded the Swedish Grand Prize for Journalism, written a book about creepypasta that came out as one of the first on the topic internationally and started [a podcast based on the book](#). Today, I'm a freelance journalist who's writing a second book on fact-checking rumors, desinformation and hoaxes online, coming in spring 2017.

What was it that drew you to the subject of creepypasta in the first place?

In the absolute beginning, it was the combined mysticism of the deep cultural abysses of the internet and the fact that I've personally always loved ghost stories. Later on, I re-read some of Bengt af Klintberg's books on urban legends and made the rather obvious connection between urban legends and creepypasta. After that, it was impossible not to read the stories as examples of folklore, and that made them even more interesting.

You covered a lot of topics in the book, like technological society, folklore and psychology, just to name a few. How long did it take you to prepare and do all the research before you could say, "Okay, I have enough material now"?

I proposed the book to the publishing house Galago in Januari of 2013 (you can read how it all started [here](#)), and handed in the final manuscript in the summer of 2014. In other words, I researched and translated stories during my free hours for more than one year, but the actual process of writing the book took place in just one month; February of 2014. But in no way could I complain about the time it took to research the stories – reading ghost stories have never been something I consider dull work.

I knew several different topics that I needed to cover in at least one chapter each, such as creepypastas about games, TV series, monsters and Slender man. They were pretty easy to put together, since I knew approximately what stories were the best and since I had thought about them a whole lot. But then there were some general areas of creepypasta that I didn't have as much insight in, or that lacked of good stories to use, and those were a bit more tricky to work with – for example the chapter about rituals. Those chapters grew as I was making my research, and some couldn't have been possible without the help of other scholars.



Image Source: Magnus Bergström [mynewsdesk](#)

How did you select the stories featured in you book? Any favourite creepypastas that didn't make the final cut?

I chose only stories that I figured both could represent their respective theme or chapter, and stand on it's own legs as an entertaining ghost story. Furthermore, I should probably emphasize just how inspired by Bengt af Klintberg I was in writing this book. The reason to why I was interested in folklore to begin with was because of the genius framework of the books that af Klintbergs wrote on the topic. He'd present you with a short and sweet urban legend, and when you wanted more, there was nothing to do but to read his analysis and all of a sudden learn a lot about folklore just because I was interested in freaky and true-ish stories. I wanted to do the same with my book – lure them in with the ghost stories and then teach them something in the analysis. Hence, the stories must all be interesting in themselves.

Actually, I had a whole chapter planned on the topic of cospypasta – viral writings that's not creepypasta. But that seems to become a whole new book instead, so it's probably good that I saved that for later!

You have featured some interesting stories by Swedish authors. What do you think is unique for Swedish creepypasta?

What's interesting about creepypasta is that for a story to become popular, it can't be culturally exclusive. A creepypasta that is understood by a Swedish audience only won't be very popular. It have to contain something that appeals to people all over western Europe and the US. For the same reason, to broaden the audience, details about where a story takes place are often washed away for the story to appeal to more readers. That means that the national cultural differences are more or less washed away for the story to work with a very broad audience. Cultural details are kept only if they're essential to the story, like in a story about the nature-beings of Swedish folklore.

What are currently working on? Any new projects you are particularly excited about?

As I mentioned above, my book about rumors and urban legends of the internet is a very exciting project that I look forward to digging in to. But leading my podcast about creepypasta is one of my favorite jobs ever, since it puts me in touch with a young and very interesting audience.

A book lover's obligatory question: do you have any favourite authors?

I've always found it almost impossible to point out favorite authors, partly because I tend to become so enthralled in every book I read. Right now, I'm reading "Ghosts of Vesuvius" by Charles Pellegrino, "Ett kort uppehåll på vägen från Auschwitz" by Göran Rosenberg and "Cosmos" by Carl Sagan. Plus troves of creepypasta, of course!

A big thanks to Jack for taking the time to answer some of my questions about his book and his writing process. And now I'm patiently waiting for his next book.

Blogger's note: **Bengt af Klintberg** is a Swedish author who is most famous for his work on modern folktales and urban legends.

You can read my review of Jack's book *Creepypasta* [right here](#).

Image source: Magnus Bergström at [mynewsdesk](#)