

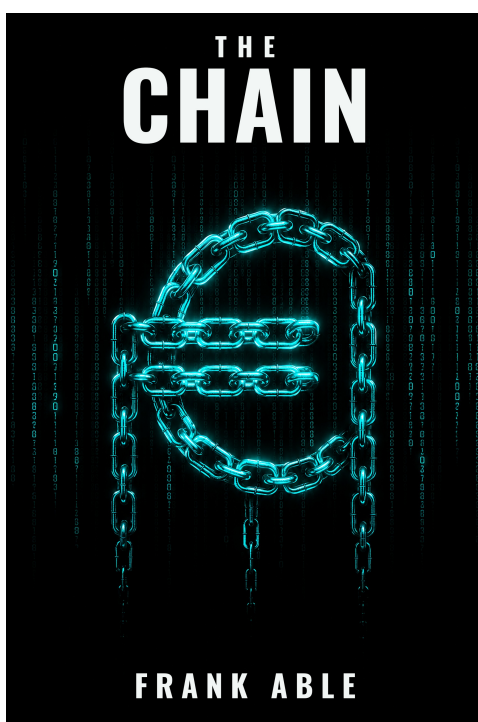
The Chain

Press kit

September 2026

The Chain, a Mats Frost thriller by Frank Able. Published by Vexilla on 9 September 2026 as ebook, paperback and hardcover.

Every commit has consequences.



Fast facts

- Title: *The Chain*
- Series: A Mats Frost Thriller, book one. Each book stands alone.
- Author: Frank Able, the pen name of Erik Stenman
- Genre: Nordic Tech Noir. A tech thriller about code, money and coercion.
- Length: about 90,000 words
- Language: English
- Publisher: Vexilla, Stockholm (vexilla.se)
- Release: 9 September 2026
- Paperback, 5.25 x 8 in: ISBN 978-91-991893-0-7
- Hardcover, 6 x 9 in: ISBN 978-91-991893-1-4
- Ebook: ISBN 978-91-991893-2-1
- Settings: Berlin, Malta, Tangier, the Mediterranean
- Kindle: amazon.com/dp/B0H98N48RD
- Goodreads: goodreads.com/book/show/255555689-the-chain
- First chapter, free, and the book's soundtrack: readthechain.com

In one line

A tech thriller where code becomes evidence, and every fix creates a new hostage.

The book

Mats Frost built *The Chain* to give people money no bank could freeze and no government could stop. He verified every line of it. He never verified the man who paid for it. Now the foundation behind his currency runs criminal cash through code he wrote, and it owns his release schedule, his team, and the one secret keeping him breathing: a switch buried in the protocol that can halt the whole network. From a locked compound in Malta to Berlin coworking floors and a Tangier safe house, Frost and a scattered team try to turn the system's own keys and greed against the men who own it, before the cryptographer they cannot work without runs out of time. *The Chain* was built so no one would have to be trusted. He trusted the wrong man once.

Nordic Tech Noir

Frank Able calls the genre Nordic Tech Noir: crime fiction about technology, money and power, in which the protagonists are the engineers who built the machine rather than detectives who arrive to explain it. The technology works exactly as designed. The danger is in who holds the keys, who approves the deployment, and who cannot refuse an order.

The technology is correct

The novel's appendix publishes the instruction set of the fictional chain's virtual machine, so a reader can verify the arithmetic. The author has spent thirty years on payment systems and virtual machines. He holds a PhD for his work on the Erlang virtual machine and designed FATE, the virtual machine that runs smart contracts on the æternity blockchain.

About the author

Frank Able writes tech thrillers about code, coercion, money, and the systems that remember what people try to erase. *The Chain* is his first novel. The second Mats Frost thriller, *The Reality*, is in progress.

Behind the pen name is Erik Stenman, Klarna's first CTO and author of *The BEAM Book*, the handbook on the Erlang virtual machine. He grew up in Haparanda on the Swedish-Finnish border, holds a PhD in computer science, and built Klarna's engineering organisation from one person to about eighty during its fastest growth. He has spent more than three decades building distributed systems, payment platforms and blockchain technology.

The pen name keeps the fiction separate from the professional work. It is not a secret: the technical claims the books make are his to answer for.

In the author's words

Free to quote, in either language.

"I have built payment systems for thirty years, systems that have to survive real attackers. After a while you know exactly what you are afraid of."

"Programming in books and films is almost always described completely wrong. It is fast, it happens on a screen, and it rains green text. Reality is slower, duller and far more human. Real intrusions begin at the weakest point: the human. I wanted to write a book where the developers are the investigators and the machine never does anything it was not built to do."

På svenska:

"Jag har byggt betalsystem i trettio år, system som måste tåla riktiga angripare. Efter ett tag vet man vad man är rädd för."

“Programmering i böcker och filmer beskrivs oftast helt fel. Det går snabbt, det syns på en skärm och det regnar grön text. Verkligheten är långsammare, tråkigare och mycket mer mänsklig. Riktiga intrång börjar med den svagaste punkten, människan. Jag ville skriva en bok där utvecklingarna är utredarna och där maskinen aldrig gör något den inte byggdes för.”

Interview angles

- What a payments engineer knows about how this technology gets abused.
- Why the most frightening systems are the ones working exactly as designed.
- Privacy and surveillance as the same system seen from different ends.
- The kill switch: how one developer can hold a network hostage, and why that is more plausible than it sounds.
- Money laundering as an engineering problem.
- Writing technical fiction that engineers cannot poke holes in, and that still reads fast for everyone else.
- From Haparanda to Klarna to fiction: a border town, two languages, a place where everyone knows what everyone does, and a novel about traceability.

The author gives interviews in Swedish or English, by phone, by video, or in person in Stockholm.

Questions the author gets asked

- How much of this is real? The mechanisms are real. The specific crimes are invented. The book is built to be true in the ways that matter.
- Why a pen name? To keep the fiction separate from professional work in finance and technology.
- Why a series? The first war is criminal. The next ones are corporate and governmental. The conflict over who controls cryptography is just starting.
- Was AI used? AI tools were used during drafting for brainstorming, clarity, and spelling and grammar checks, since English is not the author's first language. The plot, characters, structure, scenes and revisions are the author's own.

Media assets

Free to use in coverage of the book. Credit the cover to Vexilla and the author photo as supplied.

- Cover, web: vexilla.se/press/assets/the_chain_cover.jpg
- Cover, print, 300 dpi: vexilla.se/press/assets/the_chain_cover_print_300dpi.jpg
- Frank Able, author photo: vexilla.se/press/assets/frank_able.png
- This press kit as PDF: vexilla.se/press/assets/the_chain_press_kit.pdf
- Press release, 9 September 2026, Swedish and English: vexilla.se/press/2026-09-09-the-chain/

Review copies, as EPUB or paperback, on request.

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