



Stig Granfors

# IF NOT YOU

Stig Granfors

If not you  
(Will Diamond 1)

Adventure novel

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Books by Stig Granfors

In Swedish

Non-fiction

Civilisationens gåtor (2005), Skapelsens gåtor (2006), Livets gåtor (2008), En skön ny värld (2010), Historiska gåtor (2019), Biologiska gåtor (2019)

Fiction

Liv (2011), Glimt av hopp (2012), Skärseld (2013), Strid (2014, Botnia (2015), Varningen (2017), Hotet (2019). Om inte du - Will Diamond 1 (2024).

In English

Stonehenge threat (2021), If not you - Will Diamond 1 (2024).

Books by Stig Granfors and Marcus Granfors

In Swedish

Neodym - Pyrrus och Kerk 1 (2020), Västvärlden - Pyrrus och Kerk 2 (2020), Östvärlden - Pyrrus och Kerk 3 (2020), Sydvärlden - Pyrrus och Kerk 4 (2021), Nordvärlden - Pyrrus och Kerk 5 (2021), Ökenplaneten - Pyrrus och Kerk 6 (2021), Vildarnas uppror - Pyrrus och Kerk 7 (2022), Skräcködlorna - Pyrrus och Kerk 8 (2022), Intelligent liv - Pyrrus och Kerk 9 (2022), Evakuering Jorden - Pyrrus och Kerk 10 (2023).

In English

Neodymium - Pyrrus and Kerk 1 (2020), Westworld - Pyrrus and Kerk 2 (2021), Eastworld - Pyrrus and Kerk 3 (2021), Southworld - Pyrrus and Kerk 4 (2021), Northworld - Pyrrus and Kerk 5 (2021), Desert Planet - Pyrrus and Kerk 6 (2021), Savage uprising - Pyrrus and Kerk 7 (2022), Horror lizards - Pyrrus and Kerk 8 (2022), Intelligent life - Pyrrus and Kerk 9 (2022), Evacuation Earth - Pyrrus and Kerk 10 (2023).

## **Into the unknown**

*It will get better.*

Pyrrus and Kerk

He was a tall, well-built man with deep-set eyes the same dark brown as his hair. His face was narrow, with high cheekbones, and a slightly pointed chin. He was quite handsome. But something about him was wrong, totally wrong. That was the expression everybody, who met him, got.

Maybe it was his silence. He never talked, seldom whistled, hummed or sang, not even when he was alone. He was that stern kind of a guy. Maybe it was his eyes. They were far from friendly. The glitter had something malicious in them. The evening was the same, broodingly dark toward the horizon, as hard and cold as in the desert far away. That was surprising, because this time of the year the ocean usually kept this part of the colony warm throughout the night.

The wicked man brought the cold with him. He had been kind once, his smile had even charmed women, though not in recent years. He had changed totally and not smiled in a very long time. He didn't smile this night, either. Those days were far gone.

He had been one of the last to be evacuated from Earth. He didn't understand how he had got that lucky. So many had been left behind, people that would have so much better deserved a seat in the spaceship. But he got the seat. That must mean something, he had thought. It fulfilled some purpose in his life. He had to make the most of it. His twisted mind told him that the abduction of the children was that purpose. This new task was his destiny.

Back south they paid top dollar for the kids, especially for the girls. The younger the better.

He should have smiled at the thought, but he didn't. He was the same stone face as always. People avoided him because of that stern look, which of course made him avoid others. He didn't need people. But he needed the kids.

They were easy to take. They seldom put up a fight, not after he injected them with the drug.

The Chicano Lord in the south had provided him with the powerful drug. It put the victims to sleep in a few seconds.

He set the backpack right on his shoulders and walked briskly. By now he knew every slope, foothill, ridge, and arroyo outside the village. Later he would cross the small forest of high pine trees and approach the first houses. The girl he had as target lived in the house on the left side.

Her father was away on business and the girl's mother wouldn't put up a fight. She wouldn't even notice him if everything went according to plan. He didn't want to kill her, but if he had to, he wouldn't hesitate.

But the less commotion, the better. He was always careful.

He crossed a small arroyo. He loved these untamed canyons. When the first refugees arrived on the planet there had been a lot of mountain lions roaming the woods and the desert. They were gone now, hunted to the last animal. Nobody had given the hunting a second thought. The refugees only wanted to eliminate the threat. They didn't think of the consequences, the rodents who suddenly increased in numbers and destroyed the crops. It wasn't as easy to get rid of the rodents. The lions had been easier to exterminate.

Now and then he passed abandoned cabins or a cluster of them. These canyon dwellers had been half-hearted survivalists, who believed the end of human race was

approaching. They had been wrong. Man evolved and adapted to new conditions. The survivalists hadn't been strong enough and that's why they didn't survive on their own, cut off from the village.

The man looked at the cabin ruins. He would never dwell in poor conditions like these. He was a survivalist too, but not one of the weak ones who had lived in these primitive shacks. He wanted more out of life, a meaning, a purpose. Finally, he had found one. The abductions made him feel whole, a contributor to society. He cleansed the world, removed the weak. One of the Chicanos with more Chinese than Mexican genes had told him he had a twisted mind. The Chicano hadn't lived long. He had not been a survivalist.

Though these arroyos seemed remote, they would soon be overwhelmed by new settlements. Refugees from the overpopulated areas on Eastworld were attracted by the green and lush planet and the fact that there was plenty of free space everywhere.

Maybe the name Emerald Planet also attracted people. The man didn't care. He hadn't been interested in anything except what he was doing nowadays. The things he was really good at, the abductions.

A bright moonlight fell on the untamed land, all was clean and wild. On the treeless spine of a ridge, where the low grass that had grown during the short rainy season had already turned dry and brown. The man sat down on a flat rock and contemplated a while. Something stirred close to him. It was a rattler. The snake raised its mean wedge-shaped head and studied the man. The man stared back, didn't flinch a bit. The rattler got uneasy, rose farther off the ground and stared intensely. The man got up and took

a step forward. The rattler lowered its head as in defeat and crawled away.

The man looked contemptuously at the reptile. Even the otherwise deadly snakes avoided him. He had finally achieved what he had longed for.

Immortality.

Nothing could stop him now.

The man shivered, but it wasn't the cold, he was just wound tight as a crossbow spring. He needed to release the tension in him. He knew that much. The feeling was familiar. Only violent action helped when he got this anxious and tense. It had helped before, and it would help now.

He stared at the fleeing rattler. He could easily kill the snake with his bare hands. It seemed the perfect prescription for his distress. However, as he stared at the prey, he realized that its existence was pointless. It filled an ecological niche and in its own way cleansed the environment. Maybe the snake took more pleasure in normal life than he had got in a long time?

The sudden thought made him shiver even more. Was the snake more important than he was? No, that couldn't be right. He was a higher being. He cleansed the world in a more meaningful way. He had a purpose in life and would live forever. Relieved by the thought he sat down on the flat rock again.

He opened his backpack and took out a small loaf of bread and a water bottle. The Chicano Lord had provided him with this packed evening meal too. He looked up at the dark sky. He had found his place in the universe, at last. He was one with the moon and the stars. He was fulfilled, had finally evolved into the human being he was supposed to be.

He wanted to howl at the moon but stopped at the last moment. Don't overdo it, he thought. You can howl later, when you have achieved the task of the night. He chewed on the somewhat dry bread and drank the water. He was very content with himself, with his life and his existence. Immortal.

Perfect.

When he finished his simple meal, he continued his lonely hike to the village. He didn't mind the loneliness. It came with his existence. He had a purpose. Company would only delay him, make him not to focus on the main objective.

He went down the southern slope of the ridge into the shadows of the trees at the head of the arroyo. The air was fresh and sweet. It was not far now. He felt a tingling sensation in his body, as if he glowed in the dark. He came out of the forest and saw the house in front of him. The girl slept in a room at the back.

He walked silently to the house, stepping carefully not to break any twigs. The ignorant people in the village always slept with their windows open.

Fools.

They deserved to be punished.

The man grinned. He had been in this village before, many months ago. He had visited another house then, on the other side of the village. How soon the villagers forgot the danger. You needed to be on your guard, always. After all, he protected himself. Why didn't the villagers do the same? He lifted the curtain and looked at the small sleeping girl. He had yellow hair. The Chicano Lord paid more for the golden ones.

The man sneaked in without a sound. He picked up the syringe. The girl didn't even wake up when he gave her the



injection. She continued sleeping and didn't notice she was picked up into the arms of the stranger.

The man didn't linger about, didn't hesitate. He didn't pick up the girl's clothes. He went straight out of the room the same way he had entered. Soon he was in the forest on his way to the desert landscape. By the time the girl's mother would notice the abduction, he would be far gone.

As he was about to step out of the forest and continue, a small mountain lion, one of the pets in the village, burst from the dry bush and ran straight to him, panting and jumping. The lion wanted to play. Its thick furry coat was damp, dirty, tangled, and full of broken bits of weeds and leaves. It stopped in front of the man, cocked its head, and looked up at him with an undeniably friendly expression.

The lion didn't notice the malicious look the man gave the pet. But the lion got to know the vicious kick the man gave him. The lion squirmed in agony and started to roar. It was a loud noise that changed into a long, extended howl. The man panicked, dropped the girl, and silenced the pet with a sharp rock he found on the ground.

The man listened intently.

Had anybody heard the noise?

He calmed down when the deep silence continued.

The howl still lingered in his ears as he picked up the girl and continued his journey. The girl was still sleeping. The man looked at her. She was beautiful. The Chicano Lord would be more than pleased.

But the man didn't care about beauty. He had left that world behind him a long time ago. His duty was to punish the people on this planet, the more, the better.

Behind him, black birds swooped through the cloudy sky, as if engaged in reconnaissance for some easy prey. The dark wall of trees loomed like the ramparts of a sinister castle.

But there was no castle there, only a house with an empty room. The man wondered what the girl's mother would think when she woke up. What would she do first? What would she say, when the truth finally dawned on her? The man wished he could have been there when that happened. It would be a sight for sore eyes. Now this was left to his imagination. But he enjoyed it, anyway.

He started running into the desolate terrain with the girl in his arms. She was almost weightless, didn't delay him a bit. But he had to be careful not to step into the crevices and holes along the way.

He ran the whole night and stopped when the sun rose. The thorny bushes around him suddenly bathed in an early light of white and yellow. He got down on his knees with the girl still firm in his arms.

She looked wonderful.

He felt wonderful, too.

So strong, so alive.

The magnificent feelings swept through him all at once. He gasped for air. It was almost too much. He was surprised that he had again abruptly filled such a bright day with an overpowering striking sense of evil.

A few drops of sweat fell from his forehead on the girl's face. She didn't wake up. She would be sleeping for quite a while yet. Maybe she would wake up tomorrow when he turned her over to the Chicanos. In either way, he didn't care. She wasn't his anymore, had never been. A new life was waiting for her. She would be finally fulfilled, as he was.

It was good to be alive.

He looked up at the rising sun.

He had taken the name of the yellow disc, Xalion.

Yes, he felt wonderfully alive.

A real survivor.

The year was 3041. The colonies still followed the Earth timeline, although Earth hadn't been habitable for years now, due to the dangerous radiation from space. There was a proposal on the table, though. Most colonies had accepted the new way of counting the years in this far away Andromeda galaxy, but some still hadn't. The colony on Emerald Planet was one of the hesitators.

Natinka thought it had something to do with the colony being quite new. Some of the inhabitants also had fond memories of the years on Earth. They were not ready to cut those ties, yet. Natinka on the other hand had started to count the real length of a year on Emerald Planet. The real year had thirteen months, two days, and sixteen hours. That meant she had lived on the planet for about twelve years now and not for fourteen years as the official number said. The new way of counting was quite a complicated thing, and she hadn't gone around accepting all of it. Anyway, it didn't mean anything in the long run. She got up with the sun and went to bed when the sun set. Life was easy, if you made it easy.

But this wouldn't be an easy job. She felt it in her whole body. She was out here all alone, had no support and didn't know where to begin.

Natinka studied the map. She was close to Chicano Town now. She longed for a hot bath. The boring long ride through the wilderness had tormented her more than she had anticipated.

The city was new, only ten years old, and was a well-known gathering place for those who operated on the wrong side of the law. But like all cities, it also had many law-abiding citizens. It was just that these preferred to stay away, when

the lawless went about their business. Natinka and her security force had not yet been able to provide the law-abiding citizens the help they needed. Chicano Town had to adjust to the current situation and develop at its own pace. Sometimes the townspeople administered their own justice. The security forces couldn't do anything about that, for the time being.

This southern part of the first and so far only colonized continent on the planet had two cities of which Chicano Town was the largest. Emerald planet had four continents and only one of them was inhabited.

They had not yet built ships to cross the Great Ocean to the other three uninhabited continents, but these had, of course, been explored and mapped many years ago by spaceships and drones.

Natinka looked longingly at the blue parts of the map, which showed the ocean. She saw it too seldom, longing again for the magnificent view. She had grown up in a desert environment on Earth, in the Zulu region of South-Africa. Pyrrus and Kerk had saved her from the mercenaries and evacuated her to the Andromeda galaxy, when life on Earth could no longer survive. She was sixteen when she first got to see a large body of water. It had blown her mind. It had been a breath-taking moment. She wondered what Pyrrus and Kerk did right now. She hadn't seen them for years. Pyrrus had retired from the security force he had co-founded with Kerk many years ago and was now mainly engaged in spreading his teachings of peace and prosperity. He called the new religion Neo. The two space adventurers' home, Death Planet, had also finally got another name. It was named Pyrrus. Natinka had participated in the ceremony a few years back. She had

noticed that Pyrrus had been slightly embarrassed by the whole thing, but he had accepted the honour gracefully. Pyrrus and Kerk had appointed Natinka as chief security adviser in the new colony on Emerald Planet. The colony consisted of refugees from Earth, but also people from Eastworld and Westworld had moved to the green planet, when the other habitable planets had been overcrowded. Natinka had a few officers to back her up, but on this reconnaissance task she was alone. She wasn't going to take action. She was only seeking information.

She studied the map again. The continents of Emerald Planet had a grass green colour. All four major continents had this strong emerald colour. However, the continents were separated by a large ocean, which was clear bluish. However, a part of the ocean, the wide Algae Sea, was an exception that confirmed the rule. The sea stretched more than hundreds of miles between the uninhabited continents and was of course painted green on the map.

The Algae Sea consisted of a large and calm body of water, which had arisen because of the ocean currents around it.

The inflow and outflow of surface water in the Algae Sea was considerably smaller than in the ocean in general.

The Algae Sea was like a large backwater in the shadow of the nearby strong streams. The sea had of course got its name from the fact that the area constantly had thick carpets of a special kind of green algae over a very large area. The sea was known for its deep blue-green colour and exceptional clarity. Visibility underwater extended from 150 to 210 feet.

Natinka had learned that there was an equivalent sea of algae on Earth. That sea had a bad reputation associated with the many ships that had disappeared in the area. This reputation had been reinforced by the often total silence

which, together with the seaweed snares, forced many ships to drift helplessly around what was sometimes called the “Ship Cemetery”.

The floating sea of algae on Earth had once offered both protection and food for hundreds of animal species. Small invertebrates had lived in the seaweed and attracted large predators whose excrements in turn nourished the algae. Natinka supposed this was the case with the Algae Sea on Emerald Planet too. The Algae Sea was already a free zone for many species of sea turtles. Especially, the smallest turtles swam, as soon as they hatched, to the algae where they safely fed on jellyfish, snails, crabs, and shrimp during their first dangerous years of growth. This had been reported by a drone hovering for many days above the Algae Sea.

There was still no settlement on the three continents beyond the ocean. The main continent was, for the time being, enough to support the small colony of about ten thousand individuals. Coniferous forests with tall pines were found in the north while the southern side had a more desert-like climate, with vast sandy deserts and many cactus plants, most of them constantly blooming in strong colors of yellow and red.

Natinka picked one cactus rose and placed it in her hair. She was tired and sweaty, but that didn’t mean she didn’t want to look pretty.

It got colder. The thin desert air had not retained much of the day’s heat and when the black clouds blocked out the sunrays, the evening cold had set in long before sunset. Natinka suddenly shivered and tried to get her horse to move faster. But the thoroughbred was tired and old. She glanced at her watch. More than an hour ride left.

When her fingers went numb, she realized that she needed to put on more clothes. She stopped and searched her saddlebags. She hadn't packed much, since she thought she was going to a warmer climate. She had forgotten how cold the desert could be after sunset.

There was no shelter in this part of the wilderness, not the smallest valley or canyon as protection from the wind. The cold evening breeze moaned and whistled unhindered through the sparse, low vegetation of desert bushes that nature provided with nasty sharp thorns instead of soft leaves.

Wolves started to howl somewhere, but it was a distant sound. Natinka wasn't that worried. She would reach town long before the wolves got scent of her.

The Chicanos, the mix of Chinese and Mexicans, had hunted and got the wolf population to significantly drop in recent years in this southern part of the continent. The wolves no longer posed a big a threat to the cattle anymore. And the beasts had learned to stay away from settlements. The scarce mountain lions were a bigger threat. So far, Natinka hadn't seen any lions during her long journey south. And they seldom attacked people anyway, she comforted herself.

A thunderstorm was approaching, and a sudden lightning split the sky into three parts. The horse gained new strength and began to trot, first slowly but then faster and faster. A heavy rain started to fall and got Natinka to freeze even more. She was very grateful, when she reached the outskirts of the city half an hour later. She patted the horse and started to look for a stable.

She found one close to a hotel. She left the horse in good care and checked in to the hotel. It was a bit shabby, but

she wasn't going to stay long. She ordered sandwiches and ate them while sitting in the bathtub in steaming hot water. When she felt okay again, she decided to take a late look at the town. It had stopped raining.

The town was a bit shabby like the hotel. Most business seemed to be just and just profitable. Shop signs dangled in the wind, some sideways, nobody had bothered to adjust them. Maybe it was part of the owners marketing strategy, a guarantee of cheap goods.

She decided to join the loud crowd in a popular bar. Her lean and short body made it possible to squeeze through the crowd to the bar counter. She was about to order a beer but hesitated when she thought of the rules Pyrrus had set. She hadn't followed Pyrrus' advice to lay off booze altogether. Especially on a night like this everybody needed some warmth in their body.

Natinka had found Kerk's advice more reasonable. One or two drinks, sometimes maybe three, didn't hurt anyone. But Pyrrus had been very strict. Nobody in the security services were allowed to drink alcohol, not on or off duty. That's why the security officers kept their mouth shut about their occasional breach of contract. What wasn't said didn't exist.

Natinka looked at the surroundings instead. The cantina bar had about it an air of defeat, of dirt and spilled drinks, of sad nostalgia for the half-forgotten glories of days long gone by, of days that would never come again. Refugees from South America on Earth had mainly settled in this neighbourhood some twenty years ago and had at first tried to create a civilized society but failed miserably. Greed and violence were too familiar concepts of the two Chicano Towns in the south. This bigger town had the worst reputation.



Security services with Natinka in charge had done their best to clean up the neighbourhood, but without the cooperation of the town's authorities the security forces couldn't change much for the better. Mainly it was about keeping order and trying to prevent crimes from spreading to other parts on the planet.

Natinka hadn't taken fellow officers with her on this trip. This was only a short investigation trip. She wasn't going to make herself known, not to interfere in anything, only to evaluate and bring back a report about the current situation. She had promised herself that she wouldn't rescue any children – if she found the missing kids. The rescue would be a joint mission by the whole security force later.

Well... force was an overstatement, she thought. There were only twelve of them, including Natinka. Their only advantage was that they had slightly better weapons than the criminals. In any case, they were grossly outnumbered. Natinka studied the bartender. He was overweight and short. He had flu and kept on wiping the leaking snot with the back of his hand. He wore a chest-high apron and had a towel in his hand. The apron and the towel had both been white at some point, but now it was mostly black with dirt. He was gloomily attempting the impossible task of polishing a sadly cracked and chipped glass. He didn't put his heart into the task. It was merely a show for anyone who checked what he was doing. Not that anybody seemed to take any notice.

The light from the soot blackened oil lamps didn't offer much visibility in the cantina. Even the full-length mirror behind the bar was filled with flies and coated with a thick layer of soot and dust.

Natinka from the famous Zulu tribe on Earth, and combat trained by the space adventurers Pyrrus and Kerk, oversees security on Emerald Planet. The planet has a new colony of mixed refugees from Earth and other colonies in the Andromeda Galaxy and endless day to day conflicts must be solved. Everything changes when young children suddenly go missing. Natinka sets out to investigate and immediately gets into trouble. Unexpected help appears from her friend Tonya and a disillusioned and mentally hurt drifter, who has his own agenda. His name is Billy, and he has a shady past as bodyguard and assassin. He has a bad temper and a bad conscious for previous ill-fated deeds. These unlikely allies must finally use all their skills and strength to save the children. Billy neither seeks nor questions violence until it is necessary to act. In the final fight with the leader of the criminal gang, Billy realizes that he must continue the hunt for every accomplice in the crumbling criminal empire.

The first novel about the former sniper and assassin Will 'Billy' Diamond. A sequel to the Pyrrus and Kerk series. A tale about ordinary people in somewhat familiar surroundings in a galaxy far, far away.

BoD

