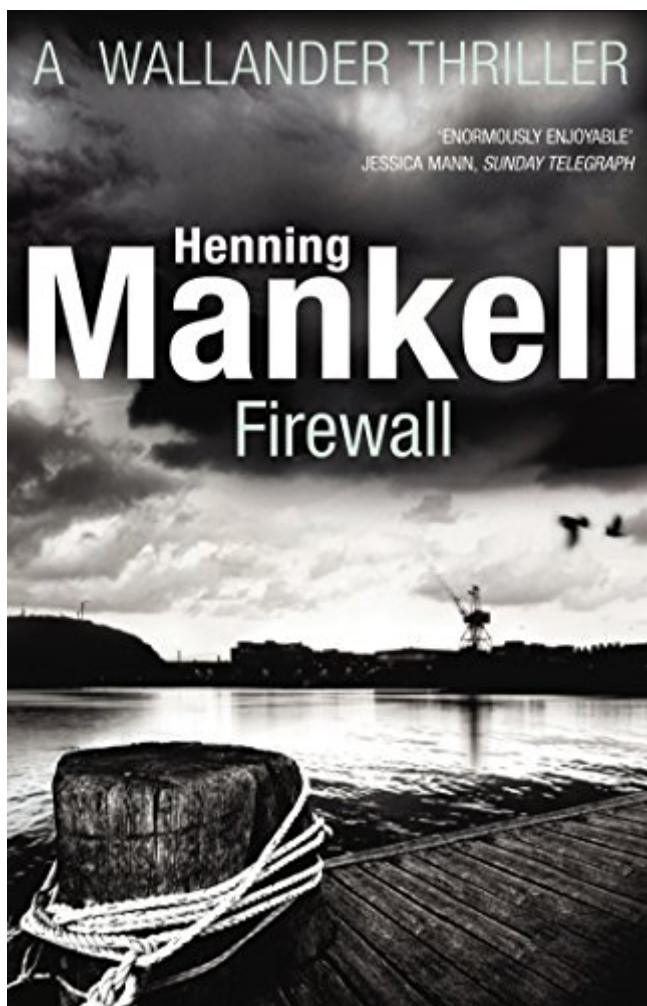


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Firewall: Kurt Wallander



Synopsis

Stopping to use a cash machine one evening, a man falls to the ground: dead. A taxi driver is brutally murdered by two teenage girls who demonstrate a complete lack of remorse. One girl escapes police custody and disappears without trace. Soon afterwards, a blackout covers half the country. When an engineer arrives at the malfunctioning power station, he makes a grisly discovery... Inspector Kurt Wallander is sure that these events must be linked - somehow. Hampered by the discovery of betrayals in his own team, lonely and frustrated, Wallander begins to lose conviction in his role as a detective. And somehow these criminals seem always to know the police's next move.

Book Information

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Crime Fiction

Customer Reviews

Maybe it's not a coincidence that the best police procedural series since the Martin Beck series also comes from a Swedish author. These deliberate, dark novels are not to everyone's taste, but if you liked Martin Beck, you'll probably like Kurt Wallander. Firewall starts with two seemingly random events-- a reclusive computer expert drops dead in front of an ATM machine, and two teenage girls bludgeon and stab an elderly taxi driver to death. At first it seems that there couldn't possibly be any

connection between the two, but the police investigation into the murder of the taxi driver is like kicking over an anthill. It seems as if a dozen incomprehensible things happen in rapid succession, including the killing of the prime suspect in the murder case. Inspector Kurt Wallander leads a dogged team of detectives in a search for the key to the baffling series of events, even though he has been accused of brutality toward a juvenile suspect and seems to be harboring a traitor among the cops on his team. These cops work long hours, drink endless cups of coffee, and stop for numberless hamburgers and pizzas. But they also have home lives, do their laundry, take care of their sick kids, and struggle with car repairs and getting their errands done. Wallander, a divorced man in his mid-50's with diabetes and an advanced case of loneliness, balances action with thought, not all of it pleasant or useful. His resemblance to Martin Beck is strong, but this cop and his colleagues operate without the black humor that made Sjoewall and Wahloo's novels so fascinating. If society looked hopeless in the 1970's, it looks much worse in the late 1990's, and Wallander and his fellow cops see enough brutality and senseless violence to make anyone a pessimist.

Unfortunately, I obtained a "set" of these novels and feel obligated to struggle through them. The plot progresses at the speed of smoke in an endless skein of simple declarative sentence (the latter may be a translation issue). A protagonist should be compelling. Wallander is a bland, bungling idiot. It is staggering to ponder that the fate of Swedes is in the hands of people like him and his associates. A man dies under suspicious circumstances. The investigation reveals that he may be part of a plot that will bring the global economy to its knees. The method that emerges lacks credibility but that's another story. Wallander decides not to wait overnight to search the man's residence and breaks in, discovering key evidence. Because he's unauthorized, he leaves it there to be discovered by the valid search the following day. That search discovers the place ransacked and the evidence gone. From that and a subsequent attempt on Wallander's life there, our hero finally deduces that he's being tailed by those intent upon thwarting the investigation. Does he set a trap to catch the tail? No. This continues. When he discovers that the victim had a second apartment that contains even more vital clues, does he immediately set up a guard to ensure that isn't also destroyed? No. Wallander recruits a young man with a checkered background to help hack into the antagonist's operation, knowing he can get in trouble if this comes to light. He discovers that one of his subordinates has been going to the brass smearing him, in hopes of getting his position. So, does he go to his boss and come clean about recruiting the hacker or allow his rival to use it for more ammunition against him? By now, you can guess.

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