

Faceless Killers Study Guide

Faceless Killers by Henning Mankell

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Plot Summary

Faceless Killers is the story of divorced police detective Kurt Wallander's quest to bring to justice the murderers of an elderly farming couple. Wallander must deal with depression following his divorce, his daughter's emotional and physical distance, and his own problems with food and drinking. Meanwhile, he must cope with a leak to the media that the killers were foreign causing a string of anti-refugee violence, including another senseless murder. Wallander ultimately brings the killers to justice through painstaking police work.

As the novel begins, Maria and Johannes Lövgren are found at their rural farm. Johannes has been gruesomely killed, and Maria has been strangled with a noose and is barely alive. Detective Kurt Wallander is called in to investigate. Wallander's wife has recently left him, and he's lost touch with his daughter since she tried to commit suicide four years ago.

Maria Lövgren dies at the hospital, and her last word is "foreign," something Wallander tries to keep from the police. However, the information is leaked to the press, and soon white supremacist groups are becoming violent. Meanwhile, Wallander learns that Lövgren secretly had a fortune stashed away and made large payments to his former mistress, the mother of his illegitimate child.

Wallander is trying to track down Lövgren's mistress and son when a Somali refugee is shot and killed. Wallander's investigation is sidetracked as he interviews witnesses to find the killers. He discovers that a Citroën was involved with the crime, and an ex-policeman reports his Citroën stolen. Wallander, suspicious, follows the ex-policeman and uncovers the murderer, who dies in a high-speed chase.

Meanwhile, Wallander fails to reconcile with his wife and becomes attracted to the new public prosecutor, a married woman from Stockholm. They slowly edge into a relationship over the course of the novel. Wallander learns that his daughter is dating a Kenyan medical student and considering college, and Wallander and his daughter, too, begin to re-forge a relationship. Wallander's father begins becoming senile, and Wallander has to put him in the hospital for several days and then get a daily helper to come take care of him. His closest friend on the police force is diagnosed with cancer as well.

When Wallander returns to the Lövgren murders after solving the murder of the Somali refugee, he tracks down the illegitimate son, who looks like a promising suspect. The son mysteriously paid of a large gambling debt; however, he is cleared. The money came from the sale of a car, and the son has an alibi for the night of the murder. The investigation stalls until Wallander makes a connection to two foreigners who were at the bank when Johannes Lövgren was withdrawing money. He finally tracks the men down and solves the murder after seven months of painstaking investigation.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Faceless Killers is the story of divorced police detective Kurt Wallander's quest to bring to justice the murderers of an elderly farming couple. Wallander must deal with depression following his divorce, his daughter's emotional and physical distance, and his own problems with food and drinking. Meanwhile, he must cope with a leak to the media that the killers were foreign causing a string of anti-refugee violence, including another senseless murder. Wallander ultimately brings the killers to justice through painstaking police work.

As the novel begins, an elderly man wakes up in the middle of the night, unsure why he's awoken. He checks to see that his wife is okay. Then he realizes the neighbors' horse has not whinnied in the night. The date is January 7, 1990, and the old man is a 70-year-old farmer in the village of Lunnarp, in Skåne, Sweden. He looks out the window, across to his neighbors' farm. His wife wakes, but he tells her nothing is wrong and to go back to sleep. As the man stares out the window, he hopes that the horse will neigh, so he'll know nothing is wrong. Then he sees that his neighbors' kitchen window is broken.

The farmer still thinks he's imagining things, until he hears a cry for help. His wife Hanna wakes up again, and the farmer tells her that something's wrong. He goes to check on his neighbors, Maria and Johannes Lövgren. He sees through the broken window that Johannes is dead, and Maria is tied to a chair, moaning for help.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The first chapter is written in the present tense, from the point of view of the Lövgrens' neighbor. This sets it aside from the rest of the novel, which follows Kurt Wallander as he investigates the Lövgrens' death. The first chapter is the instigating event, which starts the whole novel in motion. It shows the discovery of the crime, emphasizing its frightening nature to the farming community, which the neighbor represents. The simple, stolid life is upset and given over to turmoil. The town of Lunnarp is so peaceful and sedate that the neighbor hesitates to believe anything is wrong. He has an instinct that something's not right, though, and is forced forward to investigate.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

An officer takes the phone call about the murders and calls Detective Kurt Wallander, waking him from a sexual dream. Wallander orders two police officers to meet him near the scene to investigate. He quickly showers and dresses, wondering if there will be snow this winter and thinking of his wife, who left him three months previously. Wallander drives out and meets the police officers, and they all arrive at the farm in Lunnarp.

The man who discovered the bodies, Nyström, meets the police when they arrive and leads them into his neighbor's house. The bodies are in the bedroom, and the scene is gruesome. Johannes Lövgren is mutilated and dead. His wife Maria has been strangled with a noose and is barely alive. Wallander calls for an ambulance, and the medics arrive and take away Maria.

Wallander orders a full team of crime scene investigators, and he asks one of the officers, named Norén, to feed the horse, which is now whinnying in fear. However, the officer reports that the horse already has water and hay. Wallander orders a police guard to go with Maria to the hospital, to learn anything she has to say as soon as she gains consciousness.

Wallander questions the Nyströms. They say their neighbors had little money and did not keep cash in the house, and that the Lövgrens had no enemies. Wallander asks them to call the police if they hear anything and tries to reassure them that the killers were probably robbers who won't return. The Nyströms offer to care for the horse, and Wallander sees that Rydberg, a very thorough investigator nearing retirement, has arrived with the crime scene team. Wallander and Rydberg agree that the crime is particularly brutal and that the criminals must be caught.

Wallander drives to the intensive care unit at the hospital, where he finds an inexperienced police cadet sitting outside Maria Lövgren's door, instead of a qualified man by her bedside. However, Maria is unconscious and in dire condition, and the doctors don't want anyone in the room. Wallander drives back to the police station, where he unexpectedly receives a call from his daughter, Linda. Surprisingly, she's in Sweden, but she is just calling to say that, though she planned to visit him, she's changed her plans. Linda ends the call abruptly. Until Linda was 15, Wallander feels they had a good, close relationship. Then Linda tried to kill herself and broke off contact with her father and would disappear for long stretches after that.

Minutes after Wallander's daughter hangs up, his father calls. Wallander promises to visit his lonely father that evening at seven. Then, one of the officers reminds Wallander of a scheduled interview with a robbery suspect. Wallander puts off the robbery case to focus on the murder. He holds a meeting, briefing the officers on the case.



Chapter 2 Analysis

Throughout the novel, Wallander has several dreams. His dreams are either sexual, like the one he's awoken from when he's first introduced in the novel, or they are about the violent case he's investigating. Wallander's sexual dreams center on an imaginary black woman. He wonders who she is. The woman seems to embody Wallander's desire for something new and different in his dreary life, where his wife has left him and he's found nothing but meaninglessness in her absence. Interestingly, the novel centers around racial prejudice, and Wallander's dream of something new, unique, and attractive also centers around race. Racial difference embodies change in Sweden, with all the fear and hope that change brings.

If the woman from Wallander's dream embodies the hope that comes with change, the bodies of Johannes and Maria Lövgren embody its fear. Wallander is struck by the violence of the scene. He finds it meaningless and inexplicable. He also sees no way to begin the investigation, with no clue about the reason for the crime. Wallander feels Maria is the only possible lead, which is why he is anxious to have someone at her bedside.

Wallander's relationships with his daughter Linda and his wife Mona show that Wallander doesn't face problems in his personal life. He believes that he was close to his daughter before her attempted suicide and has no clue to the reasons for the attempt. When his wife left him, Wallander was shocked, as well, even though he admits to himself that their marriage had problems. Still, before Mona left, he didn't want to address those problems.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Wallander organizes the hunt for the killers, realizing that unconsciously he's been thinking that there must be more than one for such violence. Then he begins to write the press release for the news conference, which he dreads. He's appealed to Rydberg to help by making the announcement to the TV cameras. Meanwhile, the police are questioning inhabitants of Lunnarp and waiting for Maria Lövgren to regain consciousness. Wallander listens to an opera as he composes the short press release and then reviews a questionnaire to be distributed in Lunnarp.

The preliminary forensic report is delivered to the wrong office, and Wallander goes to retrieve it. Hansson, the detective it was wrongly delivered to, is a chronic gambler, with betting slips and race forms strewn on his desk. As Wallander collects the forensic report, he randomly makes up a race tip to give to Hansson. Wallander quickly reviews the report before the press conference, noting the horrific nature of the crime. Johannes was stabbed eight times, and his arm, leg, and wrist were broken. He was also burned and beaten. On the way to the press conference, Wallander stops in the restroom and realizes how out of shape he's become since his wife left. He promises himself that he'll lose some weight.

Wallander hands out the press release to the media and answers questions. A woman from a radio station goes up to him afterward, mentioning that she knows his daughter. Wallander answers some questions for her but doesn't get a chance to ask about Linda. After the press conference, Wallander holds another case meeting and takes a shift to be at the hospital from midnight to 6 a.m. Rydberg mentions that the knot on the noose is unusual. Meanwhile, one of the other officers has tracked down one of Lövgren's two daughters in Canada. The other lives in Sweden but is away in Norway.

Wallander gets a hamburger on the way to his father's old farmhouse. His father is a painter and uses a shed as a studio. When Wallander arrives, his father is painting yet another version of the sunset motif in all his works. Wallander tells his father he can't stay and that he's due at the hospital. The conversation is gruff. The two men don't get along, and Wallander's father never approved of him becoming a police officer. Wallander notices that his father isn't taking good care of himself and doesn't seem washed and is surprised to learn that Linda visited and asked for one of her grandfather's paintings. Wallander's visit is interrupted by a phone call. Rydberg tells him that Maria Lövgren is dead, and Wallander heads back to the police station to find out what she said before she died.



Chapter 3 Analysis

The novel is a police procedural, which follows the routine police work of a criminal investigation. It details Wallander's interaction with the media, the assignments to multiple officers who are all working on the case, the police case meetings about the investigation, and even paperwork that must be done. Wallander, as the acting police chief while the chief is away, is in charge of the other officers and hands out assignments. The novel gives an impression of massive amounts of work going on, collecting information and interviewing witnesses. Most of it results in nothing tangible and goes on in the background. Wallander himself is always in the foreground, and the reader follows his thoughts, impressions, and actions.

After the murder, Wallander immediately finds himself thinking of multiple killers, though there is no direct evidence for this. Wallander uses instinct and intuition throughout the novel to lead his investigation. Usually, Wallander's instincts are correct, and they often seem more fruitful than the mountains of routine police work.

Wallander visits his father, and their relationship is strained. Wallander has to deal with many changes in his personal life, and his father growing older is one of them. Wallander's father is a painter, who paints the same landscape over and over. The only change is that sometimes there is a grouse in the picture and sometimes there isn't. This is another allusion to change. Wallander's father seems stuck in one place.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Rydberg meets with Wallander. Before Maria died, she regained consciousness, but she was incoherent. Rydberg only managed to clearly understand one word, which Maria repeated several times: "foreign." The killers are likely foreigners. Near to Lunnarp, there is a refugee camp that has been the target of hate crimes, and both Rydberg and Wallander are concerned about the possible consequences of the news that the police are looking for foreign suspects. While Wallander has doubts that refugees would commit murder, Rydberg thinks it makes sense with the unusual knot on the noose, which he believes is foreign. Wallander puts off making a public statement until the next day, wondering whether he should try to keep the clue about foreigners from the press.

Wallander gets in the car and drives to clear his head, listening to another opera and thinking about his wife. Her leaving him was a complete surprise, but he realizes now he was in denial about the state of their marriage. He fluctuated between rage and depression after she left, and even after receiving the divorce papers, he is not fully reconciled to their separation. Wallander finds himself near the ferry terminal and stops to talk with the immigration officer there. Hundreds of foreigners seeking refuge in Sweden, which has an open-border policy, can arrive on a ferry. They are sent to refugee camps while their pleas for asylum are processed.

After a bad night, Wallander wakes early and goes to the Nyströms' house. Nyström, nervous about the killings, greets him with a shotgun blast. Wallander tells the Nyströms about Maria's death. He questions them some more but finds out nothing new except that some Danes camped in their field a few years ago. Wallander heads to the police station to talk to Rydberg. Wallander thinks the violence of the crime may indicate hate or revenge, and Rydberg wonders if Johannes was tortured to learn where money was hidden. Rydberg is also looking into the unusual knot.

Wallander holds a police meeting, telling the officers what Maria Lövgren said and that it should be kept confidential. One of the officers is assigned to research crimes involving foreigners. Then Wallander speaks with several reporters. One of the officers, Norén, comes into Wallander's office and reminds Wallander that the horse had hay when the bodies were discovered. He thinks the hay couldn't have been there long, or the horse would have eaten it, and Nyström said he didn't feed it. Perhaps the killers fed the horse for some reason.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Wallander placed a lot of hope on Maria recovering consciousness and giving the police information about the criminals; however, Wallander's hopes are dashed. Instead of getting a good, solid lead, he's left with more problems than solutions. The word



"foreign" could indicate almost anything. On its most basic level, indicating that the criminals were foreigners, it presents new problems. The political climate of the novel is strained. The borders of Sweden are open so anyone can come to the country. Refugees arrive to apply for asylum and are put into refugee camps, exacerbating anti-foreign sentiment in the local population.

Wallander, who doesn't deal with difficult personal problems, doesn't deal with this problem, either. He doesn't address the possible involvement of foreigners in the media. He suppresses the information instead. Wallander's tendency for denial isn't only in his home life.

While Wallander has intuition, Rydberg is able to make important connections and disseminate important clues, his own brand of intuition. He is interested in the noose, and so the noose knot will turn out to be an important clue. He believes Maria's last words are important, and they also will turn out to be important clues. Both officers' impressions hold keys to solving the crime.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Wallander heads off to see an old friend of his, Sten Widén, who owns a racing horse stable and who Wallander hasn't seen in over ten years. He meets his friend's young female employee, Louise, who reminds him of Linda and points him toward Sten's office. Sten had dreams of being an opera singer, and Wallander dreamed of being an impresario. Both of their dreams died the last summer they saw each other, when Sten realized his voice wasn't good enough and took over his father's stables.

Sten begins drinking almost as soon as Wallander arrives and seems bitter. Sten says he married a woman who was good at managing his father, who drank more and more heavily as he got older. Then, his father died, and Sten got divorced. Sten drinks, dreams of selling the stables, and sleeps with Louise. Wallander wants to ask Sten about the Lövgrens' horse and have him examine it, but Sten seems uninterested, telling Wallander to call him the next day.

As Wallander drives away, he gets a call from Hansson that a witness has turned up, but the connection goes dead. He heads back to the station, hurrying so fast he runs out of gas on the way, only to find out that Hansson has gone to Union Bank. When Hansson returns, he is with the witness, Lars Herdin. Herdin is Maria's brother; he didn't trust Johannes and investigated him. Johannes and his father made a fortune selling livestock to the Germans during World War II. Johannes kept the money a secret and had a mistress in Kristianstad, who bore his son and who Johannes paid regularly. Hansson discovered that Johannes was at the bank three days before he was killed. After Herdin leaves, Wallander calls another meeting.

As Rydberg comes into Wallander's office, he tells Ebba to put off the TV people, who want an interview. Wallander tells Rydberg Herdin's story, and Rydberg reports that the knot is Argentinean. Then they go to the police meeting. Wallander's phone rings, but he's not there to answer, and the meeting lasts until six that night. The police are busy working on Herdin's lead. Afterward, Wallander turns on the TV to find the news quoting an anonymous source that the police believe the killers are foreigners.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Sten Widén is a friend of Wallander's from the past. Wallander is feeling insecure and alone without his wife and daughter. He sees Sten, not because he really needs his help in the investigation, but because he wants to reconnect with the past. Wallander is hoping to step backward to a more comfortable place, instead of dealing with the uncomfortable realities of the present. However, Wallander finds that you can't go home again. Sten seems embittered about the failure of his operatic career. Sten illustrates

what it means to live in the past. He is wrapped up in past disappointments instead of forging a new future where he can find happiness.

Wallander's phone call is interrupted, and he drives so fast that he runs out of gas, only to find that Hansson isn't at the station when he arrives. This sequence exemplifies a motif that appears throughout the novel. Wallander's life is full of constant problems and miscommunication, like the autopsy report being delivered to the wrong office. Life itself seems a bombardment of problems and disappointments that must be struggled through, punctuated by catastrophes like the unauthorized leak of the information that the police have a lead indicating foreigners.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

The announcement on the news about "foreign" suspects spurs a bombardment of phone calls from anti-foreign groups. Wallander sits at home as a storm rages, drinking and angrily wondering who the informant among the police ranks is. That night, he receives a phone call, threatening violence against refugees if the police don't find the killers in three days. The next day, Wallander talks to the press, denying that the police are looking for foreigners. He calls Widen but gets no answer. Then, he calls the public prosecutor's office and realizes he's forgotten that the prosecutor is away on leave of absence. There is a new deputy prosecutor, Anette Brodin, and Wallander makes an appointment to meet with her.

Wallander tells Rydberg about the threatening phone call and plans for a press conference that afternoon. At the morning meeting, Rydberg offends the officers by making an accusation that one of them is the TV news informant, and the meeting goes poorly. After the meeting, Wallander arrives late to meet Anette and finds that she's young, beautiful, and married. He reports on the case and gets authorization to get information from Johannes Lövgren's banks. Both Sten and Herdin are unavailable, and Wallander heads to the bank to check on Johannes' finances. He finds only mundane papers in a safe deposit box, but Johannes had a separate, large bank account and had made a large withdrawal of 27,000 kroner three days before his death.

Wallander interviews Britta-Lena Bodén, the observant teller who paid out the withdrawal to Johannes. She says Johannes put the money in a brown briefcase with a cracked handle. Wallander then goes to another bank where Johannes had a safe deposit box, but the box is empty. Johannes visited that bank three days before his death also. Wallander buys himself some socks and gets a parking ticket. One of the officers has tracked down Herdin, and Wallander orders a thorough interview. Then Wallander gives his press conference, denying that they're searching for foreigners and releasing the new leads regarding possible robbery. Afterward, he misses another opportunity to ask the radio reporter about his daughter. Rydberg reports that a refugee has been assaulted with a bag of turnips, and Wallander hopes his press conference calms anti-foreign sentiments. As Wallander drives around that night to calm his nerves, he goes by the refugee camp and witnesses an explosion.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Wallander must live with the negative outcomes of his own inability to face problems. By suppressing the information about possible foreign suspects, Wallander is unable to control how that information is released or discussed. The reader may note that Wallander is constantly missing phone calls because he is so busy up until the news story comes on TV. The news has been trying to contact him, and in the news story,



Wallander's hectic life is translated into an unwillingness to comment, which makes it sound like he's trying to cover something up. Public (and media) perception seems simplistic, while the reality is complex.

The storm that hits at this point of the story is a reflection of the rising unrest over foreigners. The weather reflects the mood of the times. The threatening phone call Wallander receives ups the stakes for him and makes the problem personal. Wallander's response to the public outcry is predictably denial. Although he does now have another lead to follow, his refusal to address the foreign issue is a persistent problem. The other lead is a welcome excuse to stop concentrating on foreign connections.

Anette Brolin is another complicating factor in Wallander's life. She, too, represents change. He has a new prosecutor to deal with, and of course, change creates problems. However, Wallander is also very attracted to Anette, complicating his personal life, particularly since she is married.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Wallander calls in the fire and runs to the burning huts. He bangs on the doors and windows, trying to rouse anyone who might be sleeping inside. He thinks he sees a figure in one of the beds and breaks in through a window, only to find it's just a rolled up mattress. Wallander's jacket catches on fire, and he runs from the burning building. The fire trucks and police have arrived. As the firemen deal with the blaze, Wallander discovers that the Immigration Service has poor records and no way to make sure everyone's accounted for.

Wallander goes to the hospital and gets treatment for his injuries. In the morning, his ex-wife Mona calls. She's seen his picture in the papers and wants to know if he's okay. At first, he lashes out at her, but he arranges to meet her for dinner. At the office, Wallander lectures the director of the refugee camp and learns that the fire was started by a detonator, rags, and fuel. Björk, the captain, is away, and Wallander authorizes overtime. Rydberg reports that Johannes' brown suitcase full of money is definitely missing, and Wallander asks him to make a plan to protect the refugee camps.

Wallander fields a call from the head of the Immigration Service, who refuses to acknowledge any problems in her department and blames the police for not protecting the refugee camps. Wallander heads to Kristianstad with an officer, and on the way he wonders about Johannes' will and orders a search for any other safe deposit boxes. He also wants to know how Johannes got to the bank and more background on Lars Herdin.

In Kristianstad, Wallander meets with Göran Borman, a friend of Wallander's on the Kristianstad force. Wallander asks for help finding Johannes' mistress, and Borman agrees to look through birth records for the son. Back at the police station, Wallander learns that a car sighted near the murders has been tracked down, a rental to an unknown woman. Rydberg presents a plan for patrolling the refugee stations, and then Wallander goes home. He takes a nap and calls his father, rescheduling his visit for the next day. Lonely, depressed, and unwell, Wallander flips on the TV and sees the director of the Immigration Service accusing the police department of racism. As he's angrily processing the accusation, Wallander receives another phone threat of more violence against refugees.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Wallander faces another catastrophe, and in an emergency situation, he reacts heroically. This shows the best side of Wallander; however, he doesn't accept that he acted heroically and downplays his own actions. He doesn't want the positive attention the media wants to shower on him. If there were a person trapped in the burning



building, Wallander would have saved his or her life. In fact, Wallander may have saved lives by making sure the fire department arrived quickly. However, since the burning hut that Wallander breaks into is unoccupied, he doesn't feel like he's behaved heroically. He doesn't credit his own actions.

Mankell uses the trope of the hero who, in the course of the story, suffers injury upon injury and becomes beat up. The reader has seen Wallander bombarded by annoyances. Now those annoyances become physical injuries. The more Wallander must overcome and endure by the end of the story, the more laudable his character is for enduring.

When Mona calls, the reader is introduced to Wallander's ex-wife, who has only previously been present in Wallander's thoughts. Mona seems to still be concerned for Wallander, but he is unbalanced in his reaction to her. He doesn't know whether to be angry and lash out at her or to try to get her back.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Wallander stops at a stone circle to rest and find a moment of peace before proceeding to his father's house. His father is irritable and filthy, and Wallander thinks he should call his sister Kristina. He tries to talk to his father about moving to a retirement home, but his father gets angry and offended. His father also shows signs of being delusional, talking about an art show in Italy that doesn't exist.

At the station, Wallander conducts another case meeting, then Boman calls from Kristianstad. He's located several women who might be Johannes' mistress. Wallander arranges to meet Boman the next day to interview some of the women. Then, Wallander goes to lunch with Anette Brolin. He learns that her husband is still in Stockholm, where her children are finishing the school year. They talk about the increase in crime and drug use. Wallander feels attracted to her and asks to show her around town sometime. He also makes an appointment to brief her on the case on Monday.

Wallander receives the final autopsy report and interviews with Johannes' daughters. One of the officers comes to see him, saying that Brolin has turned down a robbery prosecution, citing sloppy police work. Wallander promises to talk to her. Then, he leaves for his dinner with Mona, stopping to have a few drinks on the way. As he walks to the dinner, Wallander suddenly sees his daughter at a train station with a black man. He watches them get on a train, and finds himself late for his dinner.

At the restaurant, the doorman thinks Wallander is drunk and then, recognizing him from television, congratulates Wallander on his heroism. When he gets into the restaurant, Wallander's dinner with Mona starts off rocky, with Wallander unreasonably jealous. Then, Wallander tells Mona about seeing Linda at the station. The man is Herman Mboya, a Kenyan medical student, who Mona says is good for Linda. Linda is thinking of going to college in Stockholm. Over dinner, Wallander confesses that he just wanted to see Mona and misses her. However, their marriage is over, and there's no going back. Although Wallander tells Mona he's taking a bus home, he tries to drive his car and gets pulled over for drunk driving.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The situation with Wallander's father is another one that he ignores, preferring denial to dealing with the present problems. Wallander sees that his father is not taking care of himself. He thinks about calling his sister Kristina. However, he never actually deals with the issue. It will take a crisis for Wallander to react. In a crisis, Wallander can handle himself. Preventing a crisis by dealing with current problems is not something at which he's good.



Mona leaving him forces Wallander to deal with change. This is the crisis brought on by Wallander not addressing the problems in his marriage. Even in the crisis, Wallander does not want to deal with the issues. He is unable to handle seeing his former wife and talking to her. He is unable to call out to his daughter when he sees her at a railway station. He turns to alcohol instead of managing his problems. Sten seems to drift away into alcohol, as his father did before him. Now, Wallander is teetering on the brink of the same tragedy.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

The two police officers who pull Wallander over, Peters and Norén, don't arrest him, but just drive him home, to Wallander's surprise. The next morning, Wallander is still slightly drunk as he drives to meet Boman. While he waits for Boman, he craves a beer and wonders about his own worth as a police officer. He calls in to the police station and then orders breakfast. When Boman arrives, they go to visit Anita Hessler, one of the women who was possibly Johannes' mistress.

Anita Hessler is beautiful and well-off. When Wallander and Boman begin to question her, both get the impression that she truly does not know anything about Johannes Lövgren. She tells them that her son's father, listed as unknown on the birth certificate, was a married man named Rune Stierna, who has since died. The policemen believe her. Next, they visit Margareta Velander, whose son Nils has a record for assault and battery. At Margareta's hair salon, they question her. She seems nervous, though she denies knowing Johannes. She says Nils' father could be one of several men.

After the interview, the policemen decide to talk to Nils Velander. He's not at home in his rundown house, but the door is unlocked. Inside, amid clutter and dirt, they find the products from Nils' novelty underwear business. They also find a still to make homemade alcohol. They locate a basement, where they find empty birdcages and a plastic bag full of money. Wallander and Boman check Nils out with the local police and find that he's known to be involved with smuggling illegal birds from Thailand and making moonshine.

Before Wallander and Boman head to the next name on the list, Wallander receives a message to call the office. He learns that someone has shot and killed a Somali refugee. A man called a newspaper to say that the shooting was in revenge for Johannes Lövgren's death and that the next killing would be a woman, in revenge for Maria. Wallander goes to the crime scene, where he finds the body was shot at close range. There were two shots, and there are tire tracks nearby. Refugees are being interviewed with the help of interpreters, and the shooting has attracted the national police chief's attention.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The irony of Wallander being let off by Peters and Norén is that Wallander would never do this for someone else. Wallander later in the book shows little sympathy for social workers who want to give people second chances. He believes that a robber must be guilty because he's got a history of robbery. He doesn't believe an ex-policeman should be immune from suspicion because of his history on the force. Wallander is even surprised at the officers. He doesn't know why they are helping him. Wallander seems



blind to the unspoken code between police officers to help each other out. He's been miraculously saved from disaster, but does he deserve to be?

Wallander and Boman seem to make some progress towards finding Johannes' mistress and illegitimate son. Nils Velander is a suspicious person, who has a large, unaccounted for pile of money at his home. He is known to be involved in criminal activities. However, Wallander is ripped from the investigation just as he is beginning to make progress.

Note that Mankell ends most chapters with a crisis or catastrophe. The bodies are discovered at the end of Chapter 1. Chapter 3 ends with Wallander learning Maria has died. At the end of Chapter 5, Wallander discovers the leak to the press about foreigners possibly being involved. At the end of Chapter 6, Wallander witnesses the explosion. Chapter 7 ends with a phone threat and a media accusation of racism. Chapter 8 ends with Wallander being pulled over for drunk driving. Something new and potentially disastrous is occurring at each chapter's end, which is designed to make the reader continue to turn the page to see what happens next.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Ambulance attendants take away the murder victim's body. His hysterical wife and nine children are in the care of a doctor. Three possible witnesses have been found. The first witness, a Malawian man, does not speak the same dialect of Swahili as the interpreter, but they find he knows Luvale, another African language, and find a 90-year-old missionary who can interpret. The missionary discovers that the young man saw nothing but thought it would be exciting to be a witness. The second witness, an Iranian interpreter, heard a car after he heard the shots. He used to practice recognizing cars by their engines as a boy in Tehran, and recognized the car as a Citroën turtle. Wallander tests his ability, and the Iranian correctly identifies a Peugeot by its engine noise.

The third witness is a Romanian woman. She saw a man in blue overalls in a field near where the shots were fired just before the murder. Wallander gets a description of a balding, blond, tallish, middle-aged man eating an apple. Rydberg finds footprints of the man in the field, along with an apple core. He also finds cigarette butts by car tracks. The police put together a scenario of the murderer waiting in the field, coming up to the road when he sees the victim, shooting him, and walking to the car, where a driver is waiting. The recording of the phone call to the newspaper office is the same person who made threatening phone calls to Wallander.

Wallander gives a press conference and then calls Bomen. Nils Velander has been located, but Bomen doesn't think he's the killer. He's interviewed the third woman, Ellen Magnusson. She denied that Johannes was her son Erik's father, but Bomen thinks she's lying. Alone in his office, Wallander reviews the case. It's after midnight when he sits down to write his report to the chief, who will be returning soon. Wallander is interrupted by one of the officers, who delivers the news that Wallander's father has been seen wandering through a farm field in his pajamas, carrying a suitcase. Wallander rushes out to pick up his father, who seems delusional and mistrusting of Wallander. He checks his father into a hospital and returns to the station. After writing his memo to the chief, Wallander learns that a report has come in of a stolen Citroën. The owner is a former policeman.

Chapter 10 Analysis

The murder of the Somali is the second major crime with which Wallander is faced. He has another body, and this murder seems as meaningless, or more so, than the previous one. However, Wallander knows the motive of the killer, and he has witnesses who can provide information. After a frustrating interview with a man who just wants to be involved with something exciting, another example of the constant string of trials and tribulations that Wallander faces each day, he gets some real information.



The world is peopled with those who waste the police's time unnecessarily, but it is also peopled with miraculous witnesses who can identify cars by their engines. Wallander sees both highs and lows in his profession. In the Lövgren case, he starts out with no inkling of a motive or suspect. In the murder of the Somali, he begins with a clear motive and two very good witnesses. One murder will be solved slowly and the other quickly. Eventually, though, they will both be solved, because Wallander is dogged and diligent in his pursuit of solutions.

In a novel where underlying racial problems are a major issue, Wallander reacts negatively whenever anyone calls the Somali a Negro or assigns the wrong nationality to an immigrant. However, the Somali victim remains nameless throughout the book. He never quite becomes a person or a character. He is known by his race and nationality, not by his individuality. Johannes is more than just an elderly white farmer, but the Somali remains a Somali.

At the end of this chapter, Wallander is pushed into yet another crisis. This one is personal. He's failed to deal with the problems he's noticed with his father, and now his father has had a senile episode. Wallander is forced to deliver his father to a hospital emergency room.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Wallander takes a two-hour nap in a holding cell and wakes up with a headache. He calls his sister and tells her what happened to their father. He realizes he hasn't even told her that Mona left him. Wallander talks to a social worker about his father, and she recommends getting him home care, if he recovers from his delusional episode. Wallander's father is physically fine but won't talk to him.

Wallander interviews Rune Bergman, the former policeman who reported his car stolen and gets a bad feeling about Bergman. He goes to Bergman's house to see the scene and notes the car was parked under working streetlamps. Wallander asks if Bergman has a gun license, and from Bergman's reaction, is suddenly sure Bergman is one of the criminals. Bergman owns a shotgun, and Wallander orders his weapons checked, his house searched, and a background check.

Wallander calls his sister again and arranges to pick her up at the airport the next morning. Then he holds another case meeting. Police are searching for the Citroën. They decide to drag local lakes and test the Iranian witness again. Wallander arranges to watch Bergman. He takes the night shifts, and Rydberg takes days. Wallander takes care of some mundane business and then heads out to relieve Rydberg at midnight.

Rydberg reports that nothing much has happened, but Bergman seems to be watchful. Wallander takes up a position at an empty house next door to Bergman's. It's around three in the morning when Wallander hears the stealthy sound of Bergman sneaking out of the house. Wallander follows him to a building covered in scaffolding and climbs up the scaffolding to see inside. Bergman meets with another man, one who looks like the man in blue overalls the Romanian witness described. Bergman switches shotguns with the other man.

Wallander is retreating down the scaffolding when he loses his footing and winds up hanging upside down with his foot stuck. He sees Bergman below him, leaving the building. When Bergman is gone, Wallander manages to right himself, free his foot, and fall to the ground. He makes his way to his car, drives home, and finally sleeps in the early hours of the morning.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Wallander's lack of communication with his sister is symptomatic of his inability to deal with problems in his life. He has avoided telling his sister about his wife leaving him because he doesn't want to deal with it himself. His denial pushes him away from those who care about him because he becomes uncommunicative and distant.



In Wallander's investigations, he is now faced with a new person of interest, and Wallander's instinct kicks in. As he talks to the ex-police officer, Wallander becomes suddenly convinced that Rune Bergman is an accomplice in the murder of the Somali. He is certain of it. Other police officers don't want to face this unpleasant idea, but for once, Wallander isn't concerned. His intuition and sense of justice lead him on. Though the novel focuses on the routine and mundane aspect of police work, intuition and instinct is an even larger part of Wallander's success.

Wallander is again physically beat up in the process of his police work. His brilliant stroke of insight leads him to the criminals, but he has to experience extreme discomfort. First he must stay up all night and follow the suspect to verify that his instinct is correct. Then, after an uncomfortable and sleepless night, he must dangle precariously from scaffolding and fall on his back. Wallander is being sorely tested, physically as well as emotionally.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Wallander only sleeps briefly before Rydberg calls him. Wallander asks Rydberg to come meet him and then tells him the whole story. Björk, the police chief, is back, and Wallander briefs both he and Anette Brolin on the breakthrough. They will bring the suspects in for questioning and see if the Romanian woman can identify the balding man.

Wallander goes with four policemen to bring in the balding man, Valfrid Ström. At his apartment, faced with the police, Ström attacks Wallander and flees. Wallander chases him, confiscating a horse truck when Ström hijacks a car. The chase ends when Ström loses control of his vehicle and hits a concrete pillar. Wallander brakes too hard, and the horse truck overturns. The horses run away. Ström is dead.

Back at the police station, Bergman is denying any part in the murder, and Björk rebukes Wallander for the car chase. Wallander has also missed picking up his sister at the airport. However, the Romanian woman does identify the dead man as the murderer, and he's tied with Swedish nationalist organizations. Wallander confronts Bergman, but he can't get the ex-policeman to talk. Bergman finally is charged with murder and assigned a lawyer. The police uncover a warehouse where Ström was likely trying to flee to, and they find the Citroën there, with shotgun shells in the glove compartment.

That evening, Wallander finally is able to see his sister, and they drive to the hospital to visit their father. Wallander, who is badly bruised, stays in the car. They go back to their father's house and clean up some of the mess. They talk about Wallander's problems with his wife and daughter and about what to do with their father.

Anette Brolin phones, and Wallander makes a date to have a drink with her. After she gets him a drink, Wallander asks about the robbery case that Brolin said was sloppy. Brolin stands by her position that she needs better evidence. They begin talking about the country, and Wallander says that the lack of good policy on refugees is a problem. He blames the government, in part, for the crimes. Wallander is somewhat drunk, and he makes a pass at Anette. She slaps him. Coming back to himself, he heads home.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Wallander has made the breakthrough in the case, locating the killer of the Somali. However, the resolution cannot be as simple as bringing the man down to the police station. Wallander is forced into a chase that ends in tragedy when the suspect is killed. The high of finding out the killer's identity is muted by the low of his death and the fallout from the dangerous car chase. The complexity of closing the case is multiplied by



Bergman, who pleases no one as a suspect because he is a police officer. Bergman also refuses to talk, drawing out the conclusion of the case.

Wallander tries to make a connection with Anette Brolin, but he can't do it. Wallander seems overcome by the country's problems, as well as his own personal ones. Again, he gets drunk, instead of taking the time to have a real conversation. The evening ends poorly, with Wallander acting boorishly. Wallander's drunkenness always brings his personal situation to a bad end.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

On Monday, Wallander buys flowers to thank Ebba for having helped with his dry cleaning, and a second bouquet to apologize to Anette. Björk wants to put Wallander on the Bergman case, but Wallander wants to continue investigating the Lunnarp murders, and Björk agrees. Wallander types a report on Ström's death. When he meets with his sister, she tells him that their father is better. They plan on trying home care.

Wallander goes back to the Lunnarp murder case, reviewing all the information along with a team of three other officers. Then, in the afternoon, he goes to the hospital with his sister to visit their father. Wallander's father has been discharged, and they drive him home. Wallander then goes to see Erik Magnusson, potentially Johannes Lövgren's illegitimate child. He works for the city council at a supply warehouse. The blonde man Wallander locates looks distinctly non-foreign and doesn't seem to react suspiciously to the police visit about the murder. Erik says he doesn't know who his real father is.

The police are making no headway finding out how Johannes Lövgren got into town to go to the bank three days before his death. He did not take the bus or a taxi, and the neighbors don't recall him leaving. Lövgren also doesn't have any other safety deposit boxes in town. They haven't gathered any further information from Herdin, and Rydberg is still unsatisfied, wondering about Maria's last words and the foreign knot. Wallander finishes some paperwork and arrives late at his father's. His sister makes dinner and tells him that the woman who will be helping their father seems excellent. Kristina is heading home the next day.

Wallander interviews Erik Magnusson again after dropping his sister off at the airport. His fiancée gives him an alibi for the night of the murder. Rydberg goes to the funeral but gets no useful information. Finally, the police get some new information. Lövgren got a ride into town and back with a chimney sweep on the day he went to the bank, in exchange for a bottle of vodka.

Hansson brings another piece of information. Through his horserace betting, he knows that Erik Magnusson is a gambler. Hansson lets Wallander know who Erik would be in debt to, a loan shark named Larson, nicknamed the Junkman. Wallander interviews the loan shark and finds out that Erik repaid a huge debt right after the murder, almost the same amount that Johannes withdrew from the bank.

Chapter 13 Analysis

At this point in the story, Wallander begins to rebound. He realizes how low he's sunk, after his encounter with Anette. His father is beginning to recuperate, and so is Wallander. The flowers he buys to thank Ebba and to apologize to Anette show that



Wallander is beginning to rebound from his self-centered behavior, which was focused on his drinking.

While Wallander's personal life seems to be beginning to mend, the Lunnarp murder case stalls. Then, he believes a break has been made in the case. Erik is likely Johannes Lövgren's illegitimate son, and he may know about the payments made to his mother. When Wallander discovers that Erik paid off a gambling debt almost the exact amount of the robbery, he is certain that he's made his breakthrough. Another high has been reached.

However, the two elements that have continued to trouble Rydberg, Maria's deathbed reference to "foreign" and the unusual, non-Swedish knot on the noose, are not explained. Wallander forgets to ask Erik about his alibi the first time he interviews Erik. This is an indication that Wallander doesn't really believe Erik is guilty. Despite the outward appearances, Wallander's intuition is telling him that Erik is not the criminal for which he's looking.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

The police force kicks into full gear investigating Erik, though Rydberg is still doubtful. Their investigations unearth nothing new, until Wallander and Rydberg go out to interview Erik's mother. Wallander is shocked to see that she has one of his father's paintings on her wall. As Wallander begins to talk to Ellen Magnusson, he becomes convinced that she was Johannes Lövgren's mistress. He lies to her, telling her that they know Lövgren is Erik's father.

Ellen Magnusson confesses to her affair with Lövgren. When she found out she was pregnant, she discovered he was married. She received payments from Johannes, but she put all the money in a savings account. Ellen doesn't seem to know that her son is engaged. The police bring Erik in for questioning. They know he's had huge debts and possibly been involved in bank robbery and drug smuggling. However, the certainty that he's the killer is soon crushed. His fiancée's mother was visiting and confirms his alibi. Erik had sold a car to get the money to pay his debt.

The investigation grinds to a halt, and a snowstorm rolls in. Linda contacts her father. She's enrolling in college in Stockholm. Wallander begins visiting his father three times a week and takes Anette Brolin out to see the area. Only Rydberg and Wallander are left on the investigation. Bergman is tried as an accessory to murder and sentenced to prison. Rydberg goes into the hospital, and Wallander learns that Rydberg has cancer. Meanwhile, Wallander forges a relationship with Anette and loses a few pounds. His daughter Linda visits him.

Rydberg begins chemotherapy and leaves his job, leaving Wallander alone with the investigation. Time drags on. One day in July, Wallander goes to the bank to exchange some foreign currency. Wallander notes that he can see the driver's license of the man in front of him, who is withdrawing cash. Wallander has an inspiration. He tracks down Britta-Lena Bodén on vacation. When questioned, she reveals that two foreigners came in after Lövgren to change some foreign money. They picked up something off the floor, possibly Lövgren's receipt for the large withdrawal with his name and address on it. The teller says she might recognize the two men again if she saw them. Unfortunately, the receipt at the bank for the foreigners' exchange is illegible. Wallander reports his findings to Rydberg, who agrees that Wallander has probably found the solution.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Wallander's instinct plays into his interrogation of Ellen Magnusson as well. He instinctively knows she is Johannes Lövgren's former lover and that her son is Johannes's illegitimate child. Wallander is able to effectively trick her into telling her



story because his intuition guides him. If Wallander had been unsure and had not lied to Ellen, he might not have been able to find out the truth.

Wallander's success, however, leads to failure. After a high comes another low. Wallander rides this rollercoaster throughout the novel, but this time, he is left in the doldrums. After the case against Erik falls apart, the snows arrive, another physical manifestation of the emotions in the story. Wallander has been dreading the icy snow season, and it has arrived. The investigation falters, and Wallander is left with nothing on the professional front.

However, with the extreme highs and lows behind him, Wallander makes progress on the personal front. He needs to adjust to the changing world in which he's found himself. He makes contact with his daughter and progresses in his relationship with his father. He even begins to forge a relationship with Anette Brolin. While the investigation is no longer complicating his life, he is able to adjust to his new personal situation.

Wallander is ready to give up on the case when he finally makes another breakthrough, a leap in perception. When Wallander is at the bank earlier in the story, he hears a customer changing currency. He might have thought of possible foreign robbers spying Johannes at the bank then. However, at that time, his mind was taken up with Johannes' secret stash of money, his mistress, and his illegitimate son. Now, with all those things swept away and nothing else occupying his thoughts, Wallander makes the connection.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Wallander has the teller reenact the scene at the bank to get as much detail as possible. He also asks her to look through books of mug shots, but she finds no one she recognizes. After a week, the investigation is stalled again. Britta-Lena Bodén tours refugee camps but doesn't recognize anyone, and a police sketch artist fails to make a drawing that satisfies her. Wallander is nearly ready to give up the case, then, he gets a call from the teller. The foreigners have returned to the bank.

Wallander rushes out to the bank, but he's too late. The men are gone, but Wallander has their pictures on a security camera. The men are likely Eastern Europeans, and the police scour the city for them but turn up nothing. At the end of July, Wallander comes into the office and sees that Ebba has a music box that she bought it at a flea market. It gives Wallander an idea, and he decides to go to the flea market the next day to see if the men are there.

Wallander gets a message from the director of one of the refugee camps and finds out that the two men lived at the camp from December through February, during the time of the murders. They are Czechs named Lothar Kraftczyk and Andreas Haas. The director suspects that on some days, they may have borrowed a car from the camp. Wallander goes to the camp the men were transferred to and finds they've run away.

Wallander goes to see Rydberg, who now believes he'll die before Christmas, and they discuss the case again. The next day, a press conference is scheduled to ask for help locating the men. Meanwhile, Wallander and another officer go to the flea market. Unexpectedly, they locate the suspects in one of the last tents. One of the men pulls a gun and shoots at Wallander. The officer returns fire, disabling one of the men. Wallander chases the other through the market and out onto the beach. The chase ends when both men are too tired to continue. The suspect pulls a knife, and Wallander picks up an oar and hits him. Both men confess, each blaming the other. The money was hidden in the hayloft, and they must have accidentally knocked down hay to the horse. Still, the horrible violence remains unexplained.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Wallander has yet another hurdle to leap in the final chapter of the novel. He has solved the crime, but that is not the same thing as bringing the criminals to justice. Wallander is only able to track them down by a stroke of luck. Even when Britta-Lena Bodén is lucky and quick-thinking enough to get pictures of the two men on the security cameras, there is more to do. The last leg of Wallander's journey involves another chase. In this final physical confrontation, he exhausts himself, but he is able to capture the murderers.



Wallander's story is a story of change and of coping with that change. Wallander sees his father becoming senile, and he has to cope with this change of circumstances. He sees his friend Rydberg dying of cancer, and he has to cope with this as well. His wife has left him, and his daughter has gone off to forge a life without him. He has to cope with all these changes and come to a new peace with the new circumstances of his life. Changes are happening in society as well. Wallander is confronted with rising violence and meaningless cruelty. At the end of the book, Wallander has brought the criminals to justice but still cannot accept the meaninglessness of the crime's violence.



Characters

Kurt Wallander

Kurt Wallander is a police detective in a rural area of Sweden. He struggles with his personal problems while he investigates murders and hate crimes occurring in his area. Kurt doesn't face up to the problems in his life, which eventually leads him into crisis situations. Four years ago, his daughter Linda tried to commit suicide, and Wallander narrowly saved her life by finding her in time. Kurt thought he had a good relationship with his fifteen-year-old daughter and had no clue that there was serious trouble beneath the surface.

Also, Wallander's wife Mona left him recently. He recognizes now that there were problems in their marriage, but at the time, Wallander didn't want to face them. Through not facing his problems, Wallander waited until it was too late. His wife has left him, and he can't get her back. Wallander has similar troubles with his father because he refuses to deal with his father's growing senility when he first notices it. The senility erupts into a dangerous episode that seems sudden to Wallander, and he is forced to take his father to the hospital. Wallander has difficulties adjusting to the changes in his life and sinks into drinking. At his lowest point, he is nearly arrested for drunk driving and makes a rude pass at the new public prosecutor.

However, Wallander is a dogged and professional police officer and works hard to catch the robbers who murdered an elderly farmer and his wife in Lunnarp and to catch the white supremacists who shot a Somali refugee to death. Wallander often has leaps of intuition that allow him to solve the crimes he investigates.

Johannes Lövgren

Johannes Lövgren is an elderly farmer in the village of Lunnarp in Sweden. Johannes seems like an ordinary, harmless man. However, he has a hidden past, which leads Wallander down a blind alley in the search for Johannes' murderer. Johannes and his father sold livestock to the Nazis during World War II, and Johannes has amassed a fortune that he's hidden from his wife. He has a secret bank account that he never touches, except to make regular payments to his former mistress. The mistress is another hidden aspect of Johannes' past. Johannes had a son by his mistress and then left her to raise him alone. Johannes has paid his mistress regularly for many years.

However, Johannes' murder is not the direct result of his checkered past, but an indirect one. Johannes is murdered because he goes to the bank to withdraw a payment for his mistress and accidentally drops the receipt for his withdrawal with the amount of money and his name and address on it. Two criminals behind him in line at the bank find the slip on the floor. They go to Johannes' house and torture him to find out where the



money is hidden and kill Johannes and strangle his wife with a noose. The main plot of the novel is the investigation of Johannes' death.

Maria Lövgren

Maria is Johannes' wife, who is strangled with a noose by the murderers. Maria is nearly dead when she is found and rushed to the hospital. She remains unconscious in the hospital; when she briefly awakens before dying, she is incoherent. However, she repeats the word "foreign" several times, giving a clue to her murderer but also leading to the anti-refugee violence that follows.

Hanna Nyström

Hanna is the woman who lives next door to the murdered couple, Johannes and Maria Lövgren. She is the wife of the farmer who discovers Johannes' body.

Nyström

Nyström is a farmer who lives next door to the murdered couple, Johannes and Maria Lövgren. Nyström is the person who discovers the bodies. He wakes in the middle of the night because he doesn't hear his neighbor's horse whinnying as usual. He thinks he sees that his neighbors' window is open, which is unusual, and he hears someone calling for help. Going over to investigate, he finds that the window has been broken and that Johannes has been killed. Maria has been strangled and is barely alive. Nyström knows of no possible reason for the brutal crime.

Rydberg

Rydberg is a thorough investigator and one of the men on the force that Wallander both likes and trusts the most. Rydberg has rheumatism in his leg that bothers him and is supposed to retire in a couple years. He learns that he has cancer during the course of the book, and Wallander realizes that he is losing one of his friends, not just a colleague. Like Wallander, Rydberg is depressed at the changes he sees in society and the tendency for increased violence in crime.

Linda Wallander

Linda is Kurt Wallander's 19-year-old daughter. Kurt thought that everything was fine with his daughter and felt that they were close until she was 15. Then, one day, she tried to commit suicide. He hasn't talked to his daughter in years. She travels around the world; however, Linda does keep in touch with her mother. She is dating a Kenyan medical student, Herman Mboya, who her mother says is good for her. During the course of the novel, she decides to enroll in college. Linda cautiously makes contact



with her father over the course of the novel, indicating that perhaps their relationship will begin to mend.

Hansson

Hansson is a police detective who is a chronic gambler. He has race forms and betting slips strewn about his office. Hansson is able to tell Wallander to whom a gambler would likely be indebted.

Ebba

Ebba is the reliable and friendly operator at the police department switchboard.

Wallander's Father

Wallander's father is a painter who makes a living painting autumn landscapes of a sunset over a lake. He lives in a farmhouse in the country and is beginning to go senile. Wallander must stop his father from walking off across country with a suitcase full of paintbrushes and put him in the hospital for several days. After this episode, Wallander and his sister get a woman to come to the house daily to help care for Wallander's father.

Mona Wallander

Mona is Wallander's wife. The two are recently divorced. Mona is clear that there is no chance of rebuilding their relationship.

Sten Widén

Sten is an old friend of Wallander who once had dreams of being an opera singer but now runs a racing horse stable. Sten seems embittered and uninterested in seeing his old friend.

Lars Herdin

Herdin is Maria Lövgren's brother. He tells the police about Johannes' background, his mistress, and his secret stash of money.



Anette Brolin

Anette is the new deputy prosecutor who is in charge while the prosecutor is away on a leave of absence. Wallander finds himself attracted to Anette, and although she is married, he begins to forge a relationship with her by the end of the novel.

Britta-Lena Bodén

Britta-Lena Bodén is the observant bank teller who paid out a large withdrawal to Johannes Lövgren three days before his death.

Göran Borman

Borman is an officer on the Kristianstad police force and a friend of Wallander who helps with the investigation into Johannes Lövgren.

Kristina

Kristina is Wallander's sister who comes to town to help when their father is unwell.

Margareta Velander

Margareta Velander is one of the women the police investigate as Johannes' possible mistress. She owns a beauty salon and seems nervous during the police interview.

Nils Velander

Nils Velander is Margareta Velander's son, suspected by the police of being Johannes' illegitimate child. Nils has some suspicious businesses, but he does not turn out to be related to Johannes.

Ellen Magnusson

Ellen Magnusson is Johannes' former mistress, even though she denies it when the police first interview her. She works at a chemist's shop and has not spent any of the money Johannes gave her. Her son Erik does not know Johannes is his father or that Ellen has been receiving money from him.



Erik Magnusson

Erik Magnusson is Johannes' illegitimate son, although he doesn't know who his father is. The police suspect Erik of the killing when they discover he has paid off a large gambling debt, but Erik is able to explain the sudden influx of cash.

Rune Bergman

Bergman is a former police officer and a white supremacist. After realizing that the make of his car has been identified as being at the murder scene, Bergman reports his Citroën stolen. Wallander doesn't trust Bergman after interviewing him, and Bergman leads Wallander to the killer.

Valfrid Ström

Ström is the white supremacist who shoots a Somali man. When Wallander tries to bring him in for questioning, Ström flees and is killed in the following chase.

Lothar Kraftczyk and Andreas Haas

Lothar Kraftczyk and Andreas Haas are two Czech refugees who murder Johannes Lövgren and his wife for money they know Johannes took out of the bank.



Objects/Places

The Noose

The noose tied around Maria Lövgren's neck is foreign, perhaps Argentinean, one of the clues that the murderers are not native Swedes.

The Lövgrens' Horse

The horse belonging to the murder victims does not whinny in the night, which wakes the neighbor, alerting him to the crime. Wallander focuses on the horse because it seems odd that the murderer gave hay to the animal.

The Briefcase

When Johannes goes to the bank to withdraw money to pay to his mistress, he brings a brown briefcase with a cracked handle to carry the cash. The briefcase of money is missing from the crime scene.

The Withdrawal Receipt

Johannes receives a receipt for his withdrawal, with his name and address, and the amount of his withdrawal, at the bank. Then, he drops it on the floor. The withdrawal receipt is found by the murderers, who know to target Johannes after his large cash withdrawal.

Lunnarp

Lunnarp is the small, quiet Swedish farming village where the Lövgrens are murdered.

Kristianstad

Kristianstad is the town where Johannes Lövgren's mistress lives.

Union Bank

Union Bank is the bank where Johannes Lövgren takes out a large sum of money three days before he is killed.



The Citroën

An Iranian witness identifies the sound of a Citroën engine leaving the scene of the murder of a Somali refugee. After the news is released, an ex-policeman reports his Citroën stolen. The report leads Wallander to the murderers.

The Music Box

Ebba buys a music box at a flea market, which gives Wallander the idea to search there for his suspects.

The Paintings of a Sunset over a Lake

Wallander's father paints the same scene over and over, a sunset over a lake in autumn. The only thing that changes is that sometimes there is a grouse in the picture and sometimes there isn't.



Themes

Change

Change is coming to Sweden, in the form of an influx of refugees, who are held in refugee camps. White supremacist and nationalist feelings are rising. The world is changing in other ways, though. Drug crimes and violence are increasing in rural areas. Wallander feels he can't keep up with the changes. He is depressed by the increasing violence and feels he doesn't understand the new breed of criminals. Wallander's depression over societal change is mirrored and exacerbated by his depression over the changes in his own life.

Wallander's daughter ran away from him after her suicide attempt, and he can't seem to reconnect with her. His father is becoming more and more senile, making their relationship even more difficult. His wife has left him. Wallander is stranded in a world that seems to have changed around him and in which he has lost everything. When Wallander goes back to visit his old friend Sten, Wallander is trying to recapture a lost former world, one he remembers fondly. He finds that Sten is stuck in the past and mired in drink and bitterness. It's a path that Wallander is in danger of finding himself on, if he can't cope with the changes in his life.

Wallander eventually comes to terms with change. He cannot live in the past and must forge a new future for himself. The sexual dreams he has of a black woman are the first inklings of a new future and that change can bring good things as well as bad. Only when Wallander adjusts himself to the new reality can he experience positive changes, such as a burgeoning relationship with the new public prosecutor.

Denial

Wallander doesn't cope well with problems in his life. He tends to ignore them because he doesn't know how to deal with them, and so he finds himself in denial. Wallander realizes he's been in denial about the problems in his marriage. He lets them build up until suddenly, one day, his wife leaves him. Wallander's denial ends in a crisis. Wallander does the same thing with his father. He sees the signs of his father's growing senility. He means to call his sister about it; however, he doesn't and puts it off—he's in denial. When the situation comes to a crisis and his father is wandering a farmer's fields in the middle of the night, it seems sudden to Wallander. However, he has ignored the warning signs and put off coping with the issue.

Wallander describes his relationship with his daughter Linda as a good one and her suicide attempt as inexplicable and sudden. However, based on Wallander's treatment of problems with his wife and his father, it's likely that Wallander's daughter had problems that Wallander swept under the rug and ignored, choosing to think that everything was fine until the situation boiled up into a crisis.



Wallander exhibits a similar type of denial in his work. When he learns that Maria Lövgren's last word was "foreign," he decides not to deal with the media frenzy and public outcry that this will cause. He sweeps it under the rug, and so when it reaches the media, Wallander cannot control it. Wallander's denial again leads to a crisis.

Prejudice and Bias

Underlying the violent crimes that Wallander investigates is a difficult issue of prejudice in Sweden. The first indication of this is Maria Lövgren's deathbed mention of the word "foreign." Instead of being pleased to get a new clue to work with, however vague, Wallander is troubled. He knows that the mention of possible foreigners involved in the crime will cause a public uproar. He wants to suppress the information in order to quell possible anti-foreigner sentiments. Racist crimes are part of the new world that Wallander dislikes, including burning crosses in front of refugee camps.

Wallander gives a high priority to the fire bomb at the refugee camp and even to the refugee who is assaulted with a bag of turnips. When someone murders a Somali refugee, a pure hate crime, Wallander gives it the police force's whole attention. The prejudice that led to the crime is something he feels needs to be stopped.

Although Wallander at one point wishes the criminals in the Lunnarp case were foreign refugees because he disagrees with Sweden's open-border policy, Rydberg says that both of them ignored, at least in part, the foreign clues, hoping for a different resolution to the case. The fact of foreign refugees' involvement leads to complicated issues of bias, which Rydberg believes Wallander is consciously or unconsciously avoiding by focusing on Johannes' mistress and illegitimate son.



Style

Point of View

The novel is told in the third person by a semi-omniscient narrator, from the point of view of Kurt Wallander. The first chapter of the novel is an exception. This first chapter, which relates the discovery of the murder victims, is told in the present tense and from the point of view of the victims' neighbor, who finds the crime scene. The different perspective and time frame of the first chapter sets it aside from the rest of the novel. This builds interest in the crime that Wallander will investigate.

The third person semi-omniscient narrator puts the reader inside Wallander's mind as he conducts the investigation of the case. As the clues are revealed, the reader learns of them alongside Wallander. The reader also goes along with Wallander on a journey through his private life, in which Wallander must begin to accept changes in his life that he views as strictly negative. The reader experiences Wallander's anger and frustration at his wife leaving him and his father becoming senile. The reader experiences Wallander's disappointment in his old friend who has become embittered. Even as Wallander succumbs to the pressures of the unwelcome changes in the world, the reader travels along on the journey, sinking into drink as a coping mechanism.

The perspective of the novel also allows the reader to experience Wallander's insights. His intuitions about who is lying and who is responsible for the crimes are almost never wrong. The reader experiences the flashes of inspiration that lead to breakthroughs in both the murder of the Somali refugee and the murder of the farming family in Lunnarp.

Setting

Faceless Killers is set in rural Sweden and spans seven months, from January through July. The Swedish winter is bleak and cold, and this setting informs the tone of the novel, reflecting Wallander's depression about changes in his own life and changes in the world around him. The rural setting of the Lunnarp murders is important because the Swedish countryside is supposed to be peaceful, isolated, and protected from violence. That makes the murders more shocking. The isolation of the countryside becomes a trap, where there is no protection from the encroaching violence.

The setting is also one of political change. Refugees are coming to Sweden because of its open-border policy, and they are kept in ill-prepared and ill-administered refugee camps. Anti-foreign sentiment is on the rise, and concern about Sweden's border policies is mixed up with racist dogma. Wallander finds himself in the middle of a political hot-button topic, called racist by the Immigration Service and accused of conspiring to protect criminal refugees by the nationalist movements.

The weather reflects the tone of the novel. As the anti-foreign sentiment comes to a boil, the winds pick up and cause a violent storm across the countryside. As the investigation



grinds to a halt, the snows set in, and Sweden is entrapped in a frozen, long winter. Only when the snows are thawed does Wallander's personal world seem to calm, and he finally experiences a breakthrough in the Lunnarp case.

Language and Meaning

As a police officer, one of Wallander's main tasks is to interview people, listen to what they say, and use language both to cajole them into admissions and to gather information. Wallander uses language to get Johannes' mistress to tell him about their relationship. He watches others' body language and reacts to the impressions they leave with him.

However, the words people choose is not usually what gives Wallander his impressions. He reacts more to how people move and act and their tones of voice. The words people say usually have nothing interesting to say. The meaning lies behind the words, and Wallander looks behind mere words to find it. Most of the dialogue of the characters is not distinguished by any peculiarities of character. The spoken language is formal and even somewhat stilted in places. Wallander chooses his words carefully and seems to keep his language formal purposefully, especially when interviewing a suspect. He is a representative of the police force, and his words are official words.

Wallander takes note of language that others use that he considers racist. When someone calls a Romanian woman by the wrong nationality, he corrects it, and it irks him when the police chief calls the Somali man who is killed a Negro. At the same time, the Somali is never known by a name. Most of the refugees remain identified only by their nationalities. They are foreigners, and the most important thing about them seems to be their foreignness. None of them take on full characters or even names.

Structure

The novel is divided into 15 chapters. The first chapter stands out as shorter than the others and told from a different perspective. It provides the instigating event that leads into the action which follows, the discovery of the violent crime against Maria and Johannes Lövgren, two rural Swedish farmers. The following chapters detail the police investigations into the crime, focusing on the main character, Kurt Wallander. Although the novel focuses on the police investigation, it also relays Wallander's personal life, which is intertwined with the criminal investigation in which he is so deeply involved.

The novel is chronological and lasts from early January, when the murders are committed, until the last days of July, when the murderers are caught. However, most of the chapters are devoted to the weeks immediately following the murder. The investigation stalls during the final chapters, which cover months of time when nothing happens in the investigation.

The author keeps the reader interested in the story by having significant events occur at the end of chapters, which keeps the reader turning pages to find out what will happen.

At first, this seems to occur in every other chapter, as the investigation is just getting started, and then every chapter seems to bring a new crisis. However, when the investigation stalls near the end of the book, the pace slows down with the investigation, until the final revelations that result in the murder's solution.



Quotes

"Suddenly he knows that Johannes is dead. He shines his torch inside and blinks hard before he forces himself to look." —Chapter 1, page 5

"Wallander thought of his own wife, who had left him and wondered where to begin. A bestial murder, he thought." —Chapter 2, page 12

"When he went back to his office he could feel a gnawing in his stomach. But was it hunger or anxiety?" —Chapter 3, page 30

"Crosses had been burned at night in the courtyard, rocks had been thrown through windows, buildings had been spray-painted with slogans." —Chapter 4, page 42

"Ten years ago Sten Widén had been happy and high-spirited, the first to invite you to a party. Now his love of life seemed gone." —Chapter 5, page 63

"There was one thing he was quite sure of. The threat had to be taken seriously." —Chapter 6, page 82

"Then he realized that what he had taken for a person was only a rolled-up mattress. At the same moment his jacket caught fire and he heaved himself headfirst out of the window." —Chapter 7, page 102

"He had never been particularly inclined to philosophical meditation, never felt a need to delve into himself." —Chapter 8, page 123

"A rotten policeman, that's what I am, he thought. A dubious cop." —Chapter 9, page 146

"'What did I tell you?' the old man screamed. 'You want to kill me!'" —Chapter 10, page 175

"He needed to talk through the situation with somebody in peace and quiet. And Ryberg was, as usual, the one whose opinion he respected most." —Chapter 11, page 187

"Maybe he could have done more. At least recognized his father's decline earlier." —Chapter 12, page 210

"Wallander disliked Björk referring to the Somali as the Negro. A person lying under that tarpaulin was what there had been." —Chapter 13, page 218

"They had run aground. All that was left was a wreck. There was nothing to do but start over again." —Chapter 14, page 250



"The double murder had now been solved and the criminals would soon be sentenced, Wallander still wasn't happy. Why the noose around Maria Lövgren's neck? Why such violence?" —Chapter 15, page 278



Topics for Discussion

Is Kurt Wallander biased in his investigations by his personal opinions?

Why does Wallander not deal with his father's growing senility sooner?

Compare Wallander's relationship with his father to Wallander's relationships with his wife and daughter.

Why is the double murder so violent?

How do Wallander's personal and professional lives clash?

How does Wallander change over the course of the novel?

Is the solution to the crime satisfying? Why or why not?

What role does Wallander's instinct or intuition play in the story?