

A scenic autumn landscape featuring a calm lake in the background, a dense field of tall reeds in the middle ground, and a small wooden boat partially visible behind the reeds. The foreground is framed by dark, leafy branches with some yellowing leaves, suggesting an autumn setting. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

A WALLANDER THRILLER

Henning

Mankell

An Event in Autumn

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Mankell on Wallander

How it Started, How it Finished and What Happened in
Between

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ABOUT THE BOOK

SOME CASES AREN'T AS COLD AS YOU'D THINK

Kurt Wallander's life looks like it has taken a turn for the better when his offer on a new house is accepted, only for him to uncover something unexpected in the garden – the skeleton of a middle-aged woman.

As police officers comb the property, Wallander attempts to get his new life back on course by finding the woman's killer with the aid of his daughter, Linda. But when another dark discovery is made in the garden, Wallander is forced to delve further back into the area's past.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Henning Mankell has become a worldwide phenomenon with his crime writing, gripping thrillers and atmospheric novels set in Africa. His prize-winning and critically acclaimed Inspector Wallander Mysteries have dominated bestseller lists all over the globe. His books have been translated into forty-five languages and made into numerous international film and television adaptations: most recently the BAFTA-award-winning BBC television series *Wallander*, starring Kenneth Branagh. Mankell devotes much of his free time to working with Aids charities in Africa, where he is also director of the Teatro Avenida in Maputo. In 2008, the University of St Andrews conferred Henning Mankell with an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters in recognition of his major contribution to literature and to the practical exercise of conscience.

www.henningmankell.co.uk

Also by Henning Mankell

Kurt Wallander Series

FACELESS KILLERS
THE DOGS OF RIGA
THE WHITE LIONESS
THE MAN WHO SMILED
SIDETRACKED
THE FIFTH WOMAN
ONE STEP BEHIND
FIREWALL
BEFORE THE FROST
THE PYRAMID
THE TROUBLED MAN

Fiction

THE RETURN OF THE DANCING MASTER
CHRONICLER OF THE WINDS
DEPTHS
KENNEDY'S BRAIN
THE EYE OF THE LEOPARD
ITALIAN SHOES
THE MAN FROM BEIJING
DANIEL
THE SHADOW GIRLS
A TREACHEROUS PARADISE

Non-fiction

I DIE, BUT THE MEMORY LIVES ON

Young Adult Fiction

A BRIDGE TO THE STARS
SHADOWS IN THE TWILIGHT
WHEN THE SNOW FELL
THE JOURNEY TO THE END OF THE WORLD

Children's Fiction

THE CAT WHO LIKED RAIN

An Event in Autumn

Translated from the Swedish by Laurie
Thompson

Henning Mankell



Harvill Secker
LONDON

CHAPTER 1

ON SATURDAY 26 October 2002, Kurt Wallander woke up feeling very tired. It had been a trying week, as a severe cold had infected practically everybody in the Ystad police station. Wallander was usually the first to catch such viruses, but for some strange reason on this occasion he had been one of the few who did not fall ill. Since there had been a serious rape case in Svarte and several cases of GBH in Ystad during the week, Wallander had been forced to work long and strenuous hours.

He had remained at his desk until the early hours. He had been too exhausted to work, but at the same time he had no desire to go home to his flat in Mariagatan. A squally wind was blowing hard outside the police station. Occasionally someone would walk along the corridor past his office, but Wallander hoped nobody would knock on his door. He wanted to be left in peace.

In peace from what? he asked himself. Perhaps what I want most of all is not to have to think about myself. About the increasing feeling of repugnance I'm carrying around inside myself and which I don't discuss with anybody else at all.

Autumn leaves swirled against the window of his office. He wondered if he ought to take some of the holiday owed to him and try to find a cheap package trip to Mallorca or some similar place. But he stopped short of making any such decision – even if the sun was shining down on a Spanish island, he would be unable to be at peace with himself.

He looked at his desk calendar. It was 2002. October. He had been a police officer for over thirty years, and had progressed from a probationer patrolling the streets of Malmö to become an experienced and respected detective who had successfully solved numerous difficult cases of serious crime. Even if he could not be pleased with his life as a human being, he could be pleased with his performance as a police officer. He had done his job well, and perhaps helped people to feel more secure.

A car in the street outside roared past at full speed, tyres screaming. A young man at the wheel, Wallander thought. He is no doubt well aware that he is driving past the police station. His intention is to irritate us, of course. But he can't do that to me. Not any more.

Wallander went out into the corridor. It was empty. He could hear faint sounds of laughter from behind a closed door. He went to fetch a cup of tea, then returned to his office.

The tea tasted odd. When he looked at the bag he realised that he had taken one tasting of sweet jasmine. He didn't like it, threw the bag into the waste-paper basket and poured the drink into a plant pot containing an orchid given to him by his daughter Linda.

It suddenly struck him how everything had changed during his many years as a police officer. When he had first started to patrol the streets there was a big difference between what happened in a city like Malmö and in small towns like Ystad. But nowadays there was hardly any difference at all. This was especially true for all the crimes connected with drugs. During his early days in Ystad a lot of drug addicts went to Copenhagen in order to obtain certain types of narcotic. Now you could buy everything in Ystad. He knew that there had also been an explosion in drug trafficking over the Internet.

Wallander often talked to his colleagues about how it had become so much more difficult to be a police officer in

recent years. But now, as he sat in his office and watched the autumn leaves sticking on to the windowpane, he suddenly wondered if that were really true. Was that just an excuse? To avoid thinking about how society had changed, and hence also criminality?

Nobody has ever accused me of being lazy, Wallander thought. But perhaps that's what I am, despite everything. Or am becoming so.

He stood up, put on the jacket that had been draped over his visitor chair, and left the office. His thoughts remained inside the room, the questions unanswered.

He drove home through the dark streets. Rainwater was glistening on the asphalt. His head was suddenly empty.

He had the next day off. Half asleep, he heard the distant ring of the telephone in the kitchen. His daughter Linda, who had started work as a police officer in Ystad the previous autumn, after finishing her training at the police college in Stockholm, was still living in his flat. She should really have moved out by now, but had not yet received a contract for the flat she had been promised. He heard her answer, and was relieved that he wouldn't need to bother about it. Martinson had recovered and been on duty since the previous day, and he had promised not to disturb Wallander.

Nobody else ever phoned him, especially not early on a Sunday morning. On the other hand, Linda spent ages every day on her mobile. He had sometimes wondered about that. His own relationship with telephones was quite complicated. He felt put out whenever a phone rang. He guessed it was a sign of the simple truth that they belonged to different generations.

The bedroom door opened. He gave a start and became angry.

'Shouldn't you knock?'

'It's only me.'

'What would you say if I flung open the door of your room without knocking?'

'I keep my door locked. You're wanted on the phone.'

'Nobody ever rings me.'

'But someone has.'

'Who?'

'Martinson.'

Wallander sat up in bed. Linda looked disapprovingly at his bare stomach, but said nothing. It was Sunday. They had made an agreement to the effect that for as long as she lived in his flat, Sundays would be an exclusion zone in which neither of them was allowed to criticise the other. Sunday was proclaimed a day reserved for friendliness.

'What did he want?'

'He didn't say.'

'Today is my day off.'

'I don't know what he wants.'

'Can't you tell him I'm out?'

'For God's sake!'

She left him and returned to her own room. Wallander shuffled out into the kitchen and picked up the telephone receiver. He could see through the window that it was raining, but the clouds were scattered and he could detect traces of blue sky.

'I thought today was supposed to be my day off!'

'So it is,' said Martinson.

'What's happened?'

'Nothing.'

Wallander noticed that he was becoming irritated again. Was Martinson ringing without any specific reason? That wasn't like him.

'Why are you ringing? I was asleep.'

'Why do you sound so angry?'

'Because I *am* angry.'

'I think I might have a house for you. Out in the countryside. Not so far from Löderup.'

For many years Wallander had been thinking that it was high time he moved from his flat in central Ystad. He wanted to get out into the countryside, he wanted to acquire a dog. Since his father had died several years ago and Linda had flown the nest, he had felt an increasing need to change the circumstances of his own life. On several occasions he had been to view houses that estate agents had on offer, but he had never found one to fulfil his requirements. Sometimes he had felt that the house was more or less right, but the price was out of his reach. His salary and his savings were inadequate. Being a police officer meant that a fat bank account was just not possible.

‘Are you still there?’

‘Yes, I’m still here. Tell me more.’

‘I can’t just now. It seems there’s been a break-in at the Åhléns supermarket last night. But if you drop by the station I can tell you about it. And I can let you have some keys.’

Martinson hung up. Linda came into the kitchen and poured a cup of coffee. She looked enquiringly at her dad, then poured one for him as well. They sat down at the kitchen table.

‘Do you have to work?’

‘No.’

‘What did he want, then?’

‘He wanted to show me a house.’

‘But he lives in a terraced house. You want to live out in the countryside, don’t you?’

‘You’re not listening to what I say. He wants to show me a house. Not *his* house.’

‘What kind of a house?’

‘I’ve no idea. Do you want to come with me?’

She shook her head. ‘No, I have other plans.’

He didn’t ask her what those plans were. He knew that she was the same as he was. She explained no more than was necessary. A question that wasn’t asked was a question that didn’t need an answer.

CHAPTER 2

SHORTLY AFTER NOON Wallander left for the police station. When he came out into the street he paused for a moment, wondering if he should take the car. But his conscience immediately began to nag him: he didn't get enough exercise. Besides, Linda was no doubt standing at the window, watching him. If he took the car, he'd never hear the last of it.

He started walking.

We're like an old married couple, he thought. Or a middle-aged policeman with much too young a wife. At first I was married to her mother. Now it's as if the two of us are living in some sort of strange marriage, my daughter and I. All very respectable. But a cause of mutual and constantly increasing irritation.

Martinson was sitting in his office when Wallander arrived at the deserted police station. While his colleague concluded a telephone call about a missing tractor, Wallander glanced through a new edict from the National Police Board that was lying on the desk. It was about the use of pepper spray. An experimental operation had taken place in southern Sweden recently, and an assessment had concluded that the weapon had proved to be an excellent device for calming down violent individuals.

Wallander suddenly felt old. He was a terrible shot and was always frightened of getting into a situation when he would be forced to fire his service pistol. It had happened, and a few years ago he had shot and killed a man in self-defence. But the very thought of expanding his limited