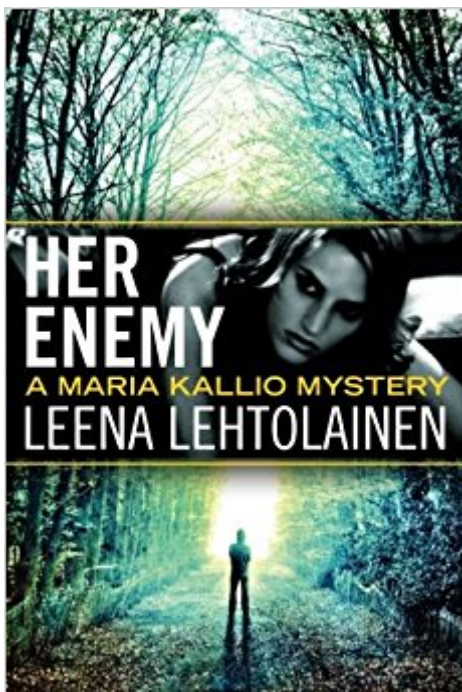


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Her Enemy (The Maria Kallio Series)



Synopsis

Leaving the Helsinki police force to put her new law degree to use, Maria Kallio is ready for a fresh start. But when she discovers a strangled body, old habits die hard for the redheaded sleuth—especially since the accused is related to her new boyfriend. The police rush to close the case against the victim's fiancé, but Maria is convinced they've got the wrong man and soon finds herself unofficially investigating the murder, now labeled a sex crime. To crack the case, Kallio will have to pull back the curtain on the secret dealings of Finnish high society and uncover a secret someone is willing to kill to keep hidden. Her Enemy, the second book in Lehtolainen's international bestselling Nordic crime series, sends intrepid Detective Kallio to the dark side of human passion.

Book Information

Series: The Maria Kallio Series (Book 2)

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Crossing (May 14, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1611099641

ISBN-13: 978-1611099645

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.7 x 7.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (117 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #577,419 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #40 in Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > European > Scandinavian #5904 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Crime > Murder #6612 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Mystery > Police Procedurals

Customer Reviews

This is the second in the Maria Kallio mysteries, set in Finland, and, in my opinion not quite as good as the first one but still worth the read. I'd give it 3 1/2 stars if I could. The mystery is simple and pretty much straightforward and not very hard to solve or guess. That said, the journey is part of the enjoyment. I know very little about Finland (yet I particularly enjoy mysteries from Iceland and Sweden) so I enjoyed learning more about the culture via this book. Also, as with the first one, keep in mind that this was written in 1995 so things are a bit dated but, if you can get used to Finnish culture then the 'time travel' shouldn't bother you. (Hey-Gue Grafton does it all the time with Kinsey,

right?) My main complaint about the first book was that the names were hard to keep straight and this is solved in this one with a list of characters-very helpful! In the end, this is an interesting series and, while this one isn't the strongest mystery, it's unique and held my attention. Maria is an interesting character and narrator. I'll continue to read the series (as they get translated-as of March 2013 there are only 2 of them available and it's a much longer series) because I enjoy the glimpse of Finnish culture as much as I enjoy the mysteries.

It is never good when an author feels the need to provide a two page cast of characters. And it is even worse when you actually need it. Essentially this book was a pedestrian mystery buried under a boring soap opera. Maria, a former cop turned "legal counsel", moves in with her boyfriend to a small gossip town. It seems that the men are, for the most part, balding misogynists and the women stupid, fragile creatures who need to be sedated lest they commit suicide. She becomes acquainted with his family and friends when a murder occurs providing a break from the boredom. She of course interjects herself into the investigation, first by representing the accused, the finance of the victim, and then by conducting her own investigation. Her investigation is as much motivated by a need to know the truth about the murders as it is to avoid truly committing to the boyfriend. Although it picks up at the end, it generally is a slow go. This is not the worst of the genre but it leaves a lot to be desired. There are too many unnecessary characters and they are all rather bleak and unsympathetic. I never really warmed to Maria, although she is the liveliest of a dull bunch. The mystery was not especially intriguing and her arrogance was grating. I was expecting dark and edgy, what I got was murky and bland. Pass.

This is the second installment in the Maria Kallio series. While this is a very good detective series in its own right, the lead character really sets it apart. Maria is a sometimes police officer who despite a law degree cannot resist detective work. She is the most fully drawn female character in recent detective fiction surpassing Carol O'Connell's Mallory and Stieg Larsson's Salander. She is every bit the ace detective but also has a sex life, fashion foibles, and an incisive sense of humor. The sharp humor and writing in this series has more affinity to Raymond Chandler than to the other Scandinavian mystery writers. The story is set in Finland which has several consequences. The first is that many of the characters are connected to one another in complex ways reflecting the small size of a Finnish village. The second is that the names are complex and hard to keep track of for non-Fins. None of this matters though, as the story is well told and compelling from beginning to end. The ending makes sense and you believe that you really were given enough information to

have solved the mystery. In other words, there are no silly tricks and much of the mystery depends on understanding the characters as opposed to some magical solution via forensic science. I read a lot of mysteries but this series really stands out as one of the best. I look forward to the next installment of Maria Kallio's story.

4 1/2 stars This well-written mystery novel begins with intriguing plot developments which pull the reader into the story. One suspects everybody as the author weaves a story around almost every character as a potential suspect. It's very interesting to have as the detective seeking the killer a young lawyer, Maria, a former police officer, who has an overwhelming police instinct for what to do next when at a complete loss. The author has a lot of compassion, and that are unusual sexual practices and lots of charming Finnish culture and nature, a surprisingly great combination. I had no difficulty from not having read the first book in this series. Despite the large cast and hard Finnish names I had no trouble keeping the characters straight because of the "cast of characters" at the back of the book. The book is brilliantly translated by Owen Witesman, who clearly relates the beauty of the natural setting, creating American cultural references and phrases to communicate Finnish culture more clearly. I had to read to the very last page to really know the story. It's an exciting read; I read it in less than two days. This book is like a wholesome, satisfying snack that hits all the right spots. It's not a masterpiece, but it's a great mystery and I recommend it highly.

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