



One Step Behind

By Henning Mankell



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From the dean of Scandinavian noir, the sixth riveting installment in the internationally bestselling and universally acclaimed Kurt Wallander series, the basis for the PBS series starring Kenneth Branagh.

On Midsummer's Eve, three role-playing teens dressed in eighteenth-century garb are shot in a secluded Swedish meadow. When one of Inspector Kurt Wallander's most trusted colleagues—someone whose help he hoped to rely on to solve the crime—also turns up dead, Wallander knows the murders are related. But with his only clue a picture of a woman no one in Sweden seems to know, he can't begin to imagine how. Reeling from his own father's death and facing his own deteriorating health, Wallander tracks the lethal progress of the killer. Locked in a desperate effort to catch him before he strikes again, Wallander always seems to be just one step behind.

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One Step Behind By Henning Mankell Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #175648 in Books
- Published on: 2003-01-14
- Released on: 2003-01-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.99" h x .98" w x 5.20" l, .75 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 440 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In his fifth U.S. appearance in this taut, intricately plotted series (*The Fifth Woman*, etc.), Swedish detective Kurt Wallander pursues a long, complex case sure to please those who like weighty police procedurals. Six weeks after three college students are murdered during a Midsummer's Eve party, their bodies hidden to prevent discovery, Wallander's secretive colleague Svedberg is found at home with half his head blown off. Wallander's persistent, occasionally brilliant, investigation points to a connection between Svedberg and the disappearance of the three young people. Soon after their bodies surface, a fourth friend, who was too sick to attend the party, is killed. More murders follow, with the exhausted, understaffed detectives just too late each time to prevent the next crime. Eventually the reader meets the killer, whose bizarre motive and methods the author gradually reveals. The dyspeptic Wallander, whose frazzled personal life is further impaired by the diabetes he ignores, works himself to exhaustion, sidestepping official procedure and making intuitive leaps to find the cold-blooded killer. The glum tone of the book, despite the setting during a warm and luxuriant late summer, reflects a crumbling Swedish society: government corruption is widespread; honest cops are disillusioned by abuses in high officialdom; rifts among social classes and between Swedes and recent immigrants abound. Mankell's writing is deadpan and stark, the plotting meticulous and exacting. (Feb. 28) Forecast: Though a bestseller in Europe with both film and TV adaptations to his credit, Mankell has so far failed to take off here. Alas, Scandinavian dreariness just doesn't seem to have broad appeal to American readers.

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From Library Journal

Devotees of Inspector Kurt Wallander can only bemoan the fact that this is just the fifth (out of nine books) in this Swedish mystery series to be published in the United States. Here, Wallander confronts perhaps his most horrific case, when the murder of a trusted colleague, Svedberg, and the disappearance of three young people begin to merge. Battling his own fatigue and illness, Wallander assiduously strips away layer after layer, dredging up fragments of conversations and crime-scene clues that lead him closer and closer to the killer, who plays him cleverly and remains one step ahead until the brutal end. Mankell focuses less on Wallander's personal relationships and on what he sees as the deterioration of Swedish quality of life than in the previous books, but nevertheless the subtext is there. Essential for public libraries, though newcomers may want to start earlier in the series (with *The White Lioness* or *Sidetracked*). Francine Fialkoff, "Library Journal"

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Kurt Wallander, Mankell's melancholy Swedish copper, is still exhausted, both by his personal demons and by the unfathomably chaotic world around him. This time, though, matters have been kicked up several notches, first by the newly diagnosed diabetes that threatens his life ("icebergs of sugar floating around in his blood") and then by a killer whose incomprehensible brutality and seeming lack of motive leave the detective on the edge of despair: "He wondered if he was simply starting to crumble under the weight of all the responsibility and was now following a downward trajectory to a point where only fear remained." The trajectory in this remarkable series is definitely downward, for the hero and for life in the contemporary world, but more than fear remains, at least for the moment. As Wallander and his colleagues in the Ystad police department grieve the murder of one of their own and try to make sense of the apparently

random killings of a group of young people participating in a midsummer celebration, the appalling truth dawns slowly: they are dealing with a psychotic misanthrope who kills people because they are happy. Facing an adversary who becomes the personification of Wallander's worst fears, the detective finds himself ironically reenergized in a kind of back-against-the-wall fight for the possibilities of life. Translator Segerberg's rendering of this fifth Wallander novel to appear in English seems a bit flatter than Steven Murray's richly nuanced, flowing English versions of the first four, but the power of the novel emerges undisturbed. Mankell remains central to the flowering of a new, distinctly darker strain of the European hard-boiled crime novel. *Bill Ott*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lenore Cortez:

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