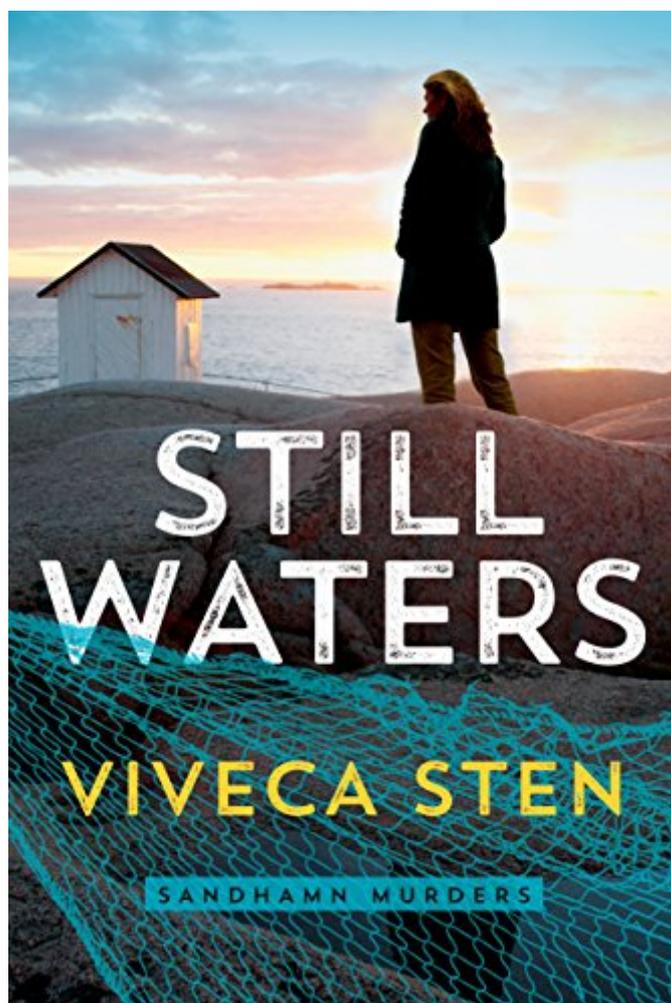


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Still Waters (Sandhamn Murders Book 1)



Synopsis

On a hot July morning on Sweden's idyllic vacation island of Sandhamn, a man takes his dog for a walk and makes a gruesome discovery: a body, tangled in fishing net, has washed ashore. Police detective Thomas Andreasson is the first to arrive on the scene. Before long, he has identified the deceased as Krister Berggren, a bachelor from the mainland who has been missing for months. All signs point to an accident until another brutalized corpse is found at the local bed-and-breakfast. But this time it is Berggren's cousin, whom Thomas interviewed in Stockholm just days before. As the island's residents reel from the news, Thomas turns to his childhood friend, local lawyer Nora Linde. Together, they attempt to unravel the riddles left behind by these two mysterious outsiders while trying to make sense of the difficult twists their own lives have taken since the shared summer days of their youth.

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Customer Reviews

Although a lifelong mystery reader, I had always shied away from Scandinavian mysteries. I tended to think in terms of "Scandinavian Noir" - grim, claustrophobic and cold. However, I've become quite fond of some over the past several months so was delighted to see a translation of

Vivica Stenâ€™s first Sandhamn mystery available as an Kindle First pick. I enjoyed â€œStill Watersâ€• a lot. Not the least bit â€œNoirâ€• (paranoid, seedy, dealing with corrupt officials, etc.), it was refreshing to read a modern true mystery novel that did not involve slavering serial killers murdering in bizarrely gruesome ways. Part traditional mystery, part police procedural, the book is well written with interesting, believable characters. I found the main detective, Thomas Andreasson, very good company with a strong â€œcast of supporting playersâ€•. Since this is a murder mystery of course there are murders :) But they are not excessively gruesome. There is little foul language and no graphic sex scenes. And although most of the book takes place on islands of the Swedish archipelago, events take place in summer months so no time was spent in snow and ice :) (For those geographically challenged as I am, the archipelago are the islands are off the east coast near Stockholm in the Baltic Sea.) On the downside, there were a few things that I found a bit tedious. First of all I thought the â€œwho-done-itâ€• was apparent fairly early on which made the â€œwhy-done-itâ€• not too difficult to figure out. This made much of the investigation uninteresting. And I became irritated with the best friendâ€™s marriage to a jerk which took up a lot of the story but since this is the first in a series, I suppose some foundation is necessary.

This entertaining, not-very-demanding book was the perfect companion for a day in bed drinking tea-with-honey and recovering from bronchitis. It's the perfect "beach read" since that's where much of the action takes place. The island of Sandhamn is a popular resort near Stockholm, Sweden. Like all neighborhoods with vacation homes, there's long-standing conflict between the "summer people" and the year-rounders. Now there's also conflict between families who've owned summer homes on the Island for generations and the wealthier new-comers who are snapping up old family homes from inheritors who can no longer afford to maintain them. Although this is a mystery, it won't have you on the edge of your seat. It's a leisurely, detailed (sometimes too detailed) look at life in modern Sweden with a couple of murders on the side. The charm lies in the characters, who are for the most part believable and likable. Thomas Andreasson is a cop with strong ties to the Island. As seems to be the norm for fictional detectives today, he has faced tragedy - in his case the death of a child from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and the subsequent break-up of his marriage. His childhood friend Nora is a lawyer married to a doctor with two young sons. While Thomas' life is a wreck, Nora's seem almost too good to be true and that proves to be the case. Sweden is frequently held up as a model country - a worker's paradise where there is no racism, sexism, or poverty and the government provides generously for all citizens. In gentle, but inexorable fashion, this author makes it clear that Sweden is no different from any other place. The workers may be entitled to

lengthy Family Leave and four weeks of vacation, but their supervisors still have an eye on the bottom line.

Still Waters (Sandhamn Murders Book 1). Although I read the whole book and found the story somewhat interesting, and the ending had a bit of suspense, I was unsatisfied when I finished. Somehow, characters in Swedish mysteries seem mostly to be a moody, depressed group. Here, the main investigator, Thomas, is a stereotypical depressed, beleaguered Stockholm detective. He spends a lot of emotional energy on his baby daughter, who died of SIDS, and his failed marriage, which fell apart when the grief and guilt of the couples' loss overwhelmed them. Thomas has a few other nagging problems: overwork, loneliness, and frustration over his delayed vacation. Two of the victims are late-middle-aged alcoholics, disappointed with their bleak and narrow lives. Thomas's long-time friend, Nora, juggles motherhood of two young boys, legal work, and a selfish, tyrannical husband. Partly as a result of all this angst, the plot is slow moving. In this case, the police are stumbling in the dark for the entire book. The personal problems likewise drag onward with little advancement during the book. I'm left with the impression that this long book is one episode in a (potentially) endless series of long books. On the plus side (for my tastes), there are no sexual scenes and the profanity is not too frequent. Although people get murdered, those events are treated from a distance and there is little on-stage violence.*** Spoiler warning ***The police never do solve the crime: even as the murderer confesses in her suicide note, the police are still without suspect(s) and motive.

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