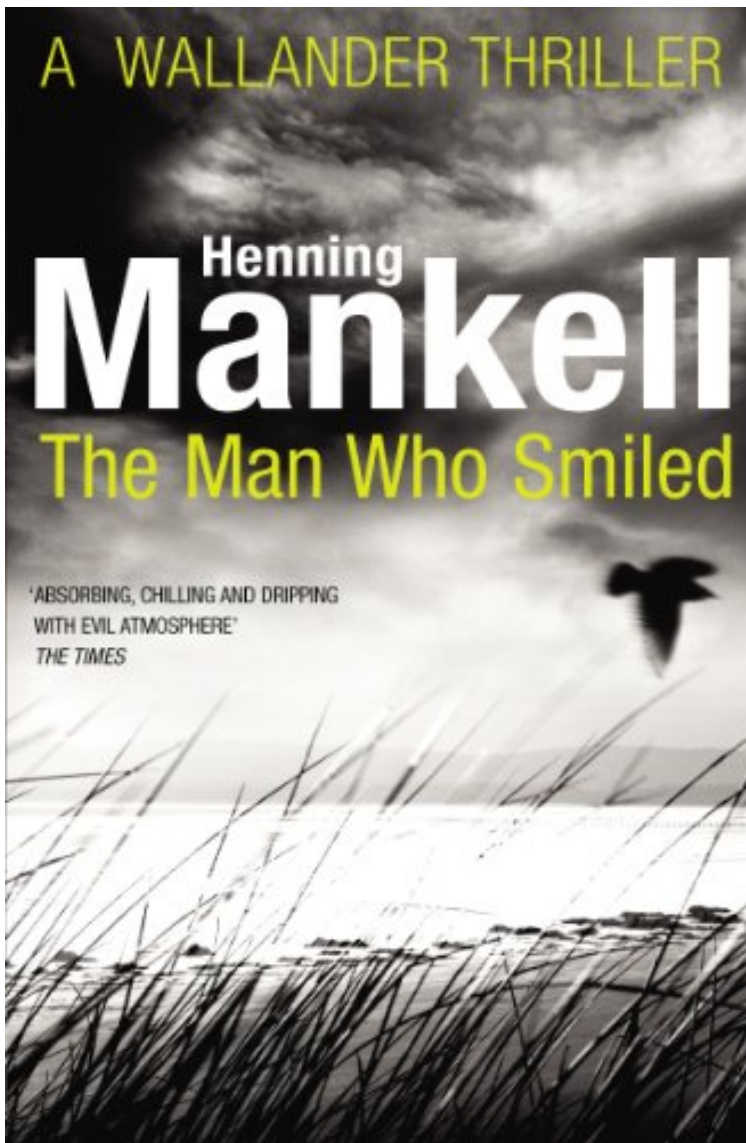


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# The Man Who Smiled: Kurt Wallander



*Par Henning Mankell*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurSpiralling into an alcohol-fuelled depression after killing a man in the line of duty, Inspector Kurt Wallander has made up his mind to quit the police force for good. When an old acquaintance seeks Wallander's help to investigate the suspicious circumstances in which his father has died, Kurt doesn't want to know. But when his former friend turns up dead, shot three times, Wallander realises that he was wrong not to listen. Against his better judgment, he returns to work to head what may now have become a double murder case. An enigmatic big-business tycoon seems to be the common denominator in the two deaths. But while Wallander is on the trail of the killer, somebody is on the trail of Wallander, and closing in fast...Over 35 million copies of the Kurt Wallander series sold worldwide.ExtraitFog.A silent, stealthy beast of prey. Even though I have lived all my life in Skne, where fog is forever closing in and shutting out the

world, Ill never get used to it.9 p.m., October 11, 1993.Fog came rolling in from the sea. He was driving home to Ystad and had just passed Br?sarp Hills when he found himself in the thick of the white mass.Fear overcame him right away.Im frightened of fog, he thought. I should be scared of the man I have just been to see at Farnholm Castle instead. The friendly man whose menacing staff always lurk in the background, their faces in the shadows. I should be thinking about him and what I now know is hidden behind that friendly smile. His impeccable standing in the community, above the very least suspicion. He is the one I should be frightened of, not the fog drifting in from Han? Bay. Not now that I have discovered that he would not hesitate to kill anyone who gets in his way.He turned on the wipers to try to clear the windshield. He did not like driving in the dark. He particularly disliked it when rabbits scurried this way and that in the headlights.Once, more than thirty years ago, he had run over a hare. It was on the Tomelilla road, one evening in early spring. He could still remember stamping his foot down on the brake pedal, but then a dull thud against the bodywork. He had stopped and got out. The hare was lying on the road, its back legs kicking. The upper part of its body was paralyzed, but its eyes stared at him. He had had to force himself to find a heavy stone from the verge, and had shut his eyes as he threw it down onto the hares head. He had hurried back to the car without looking again at the animal.He had never forgotten those eyes and those wildly kicking legs. The memory kept coming back, again and again, usually at the most unexpected times.He tried now to put the unpleasantness behind him. A hare that died all of thirty years ago can haunt a man, but it cant harm him, he thought. I have more than enough worries about people still in the land of the living.He noticed that he was checking his rearview mirror more often than usual.Im frightened, he thought again, and I have only just realized that I am running away. I am running from what I know is hidden behind the walls of Farnholm Castle. And they know that I know. But how much? Enough for them to be afraid that Ill break the oath of silence I once took as a newly qualified lawyer? A long time ago that was, when an oath was just that: a sacred commitment to professional secrecy. Are they nervous about their old lawyers conscience?Nothing in the rearview mirror. He was alone in the fog, but in under an hour he would be back in Ystad.The thought cheered him, if only for a moment. So they werent following him after all. He had made up his mind what he was going to do tomorrow. He would talk to his son, who was also his colleague and a partner in the legal practice. There was always a solution, that was something life had taught him. There had to be one this time too.He groped on the unlit dashboard for the radio. The car filled with a mans voice talking about the latest research in genetics. Words passed through his brain without his taking them in. He checked his watch: nearly 9:30. Still no one behind him, but the fog seemed to be getting even thicker. Nevertheless, he pressed down on the accelerator a little harder. The further he was from Farnholm Castle, the calmer he felt. Perhaps, after all, he had nothing to fear.He forced himself to think clearly.It had begun with a perfectly ordinary telephone call, a message on his desk asking him to contact a man about a contract that urgently needed verifying. He did not recognize the name, but had taken the initiative and made the call: a small law practice in an insignificant Swedish town could not afford to reject a potential client. He could recall even now the voice on the phone: polite, with a northern accent, but at the same time giving the impression of a man who measured out his life in terms of what each minute cost. He had explained the task, a complicated transaction involving a shipping line registered in Corsica and a number of cement cargoes to Saudi Arabia, where one of his companies was acting as an agent for Skanska. There had been some vague, passing reference to an enormous mosque that was to be built in Khamis Mushayt. Or maybe it was a university building in Jeddah.They had met a few days later at the Continental Hotel in Ystad. He had arrived there early, and the restaurant was not yet open for lunch; he had sat at a table in the corner and watched the man arrive. The only other person there was a Yugoslav waiter staring gloomily out of the window. It was the middle of January, a gale was blowing in from the Baltic, and it would soon be snowing. But the man approaching him was suntanned. He wore a dark blue suit and was definitely no more than fifty. Somehow, he did not belong either in Ystad or in the January weather. He was a stranger, with a smile that did not belong to that suntanned face.That was the first time he had set eyes on the man from Farnholm Castle. A man without baggage, in a discrete world of his own, in a blue, tailor-made suit, everything centering on a smile, and an alarming pair of shadowy satellites buzzing attentively but in the background.Oh yes, the shadows had been there even then. He could not recall either of them being introduced. They sat at a table on the other side of the room, and rose without a word when their masters meeting was over. Golden days, he thought, bitterly, and I was stupid enough to believe in it. A lawyers vision of the world should not be influenced by the illusion of a paradise to come, not here on earth at least. Within six months the suntanned man had come to be responsible for half of the practices turnover, and in a

year the firm's income had doubled. Bills were paid promptly, it was never necessary to send a reminder. They had been able to afford to redecorate their offices. The man at Farnholm Castle seemed to be managing his business in every corner of the world, and from places that seemed to be chosen more or less at random. Faxes and telephone calls, even the occasional radio transmission, came from the strangest-sounding towns, some he could only with difficulty find on the globe next to the leather sofa in the reception area. But everything had been aboveboard, albeit complex. The new age has dawned, he remembered thinking. So this is what it's like. As a lawyer, I have to be grateful that the man at Farnholm picked my name from the telephone book. His train of recollections was cut short. For a moment he thought he was imagining it, but then he clearly made out the headlights in the rearview mirror. They had crept up on him. Fear struck him immediately. They had followed him after all. They were afraid he would betray his oath of silence. His first reaction was to accelerate away through the fog. Sweat broke out on his forehead. The headlights were on his tail. Shadows that kill, he thought. I'll never get away, just as none of the others did. The car passed him. He caught a glimpse of the driver's face, an old man. Then the red taillights vanished into the fog. He took out a handkerchief and wiped his face and neck. I'll soon be home, he thought. Nothing is going to happen. Mrs Dunbar has recorded in my diary that I was to be at Farnholm today. Nobody, not even he, would send his henchmen to kill off his own elderly lawyer on the way home from a meeting. It would be far too risky. It was nearly two years before he first realized that something untoward was going on. It was an insignificant assignment, checking contracts that involved the Swedish Trade Council as guarantors for a considerable sum of money. Spare parts for turbines in Poland, combine harvesters for Czechoslovakia. It was a minor detail, some figures that didn't add up. He thought it was probably a misprint, maybe somewhere two digits had been muddled. He had gone through it all again and realized that it was no accident, it was all intentional. Nothing was missing, everything was correct, but the upshot was horrifying. His first instinct had been not to believe it. He had leaned back in his chair it was late in the evening, he recalled taking in that there was no doubt that he had uncovered a crime. It was dawn before he had set out to walk the streets of Ystad, and by the time he reached Stortorget he had reluctantly accepted that there was no alternative explanation: the man at Farnholm Castle was guilty of a gross breach of trust regarding the Trade Council, of tax evasion, and of a whole string of forgeries. After that he had constantly been on the lookout for the black holes in every document emanating from Farnholm. And he found them not every time, but more often than not. The extent of the criminality had slowly dawned on him. He tried not to acknowledge the evidence he could not avoid registering, but in the end he had to face up to the facts. But on the other hand he had done nothing about it. He had not even told his son. Was this because, deep down, he preferred to believe it wasn't true? Nobody else, apparently not even the tax authorities, had noticed anything. Perhaps he had uncovered a secret that was purely hypothetical? Or was it that it was all too late anyway, now that the man from Farnholm Castle was the principal source of income for the firm? The fog was more or less impenetrable now. He hoped it might lift as he got nearer to Ystad. He couldn't go on like this, that was certain. Not now that he knew that the man had blood on his hands. He would talk to his son. The rule of law still applied in Sweden, for heavens sake, even though it seemed to be undermined and diluted day by day. His own complaisance had been a part of that process. His having turned a blind eye for so long was no reason for remaining silent now. He would never bring himself to commit suicide. Suddenly he saw something in the headlights. He slammed on the brakes. At first he thought it was a hare. Then he realized there was something in the road. He turned on his brights. It was a chair, in the middle of the road. A simple kitchen chair. Sitting on it was a human-sized effigy. Its face was white. Or could it be a real person made up like a tailor's dummy? He felt his heart starting to pound. Fog swirled in the light of his headlamps. There was no way he could shut out the chair and the effigy. Nor could he ignore his mounting fear. He checked his rearview mirror. Nothing. He drove slowly forward until the chair and the effigy were no more than ten meters from the car. Then he stopped again. The dummy looked impressively like a human being. Not just some kind of hastily put-together scarecrow. It's for me, he thought. He switched off the radio, his hand trembling, and pricked up his ears. Fog, and silence. He didn't know what to do next. What made him hesitate was not the chair out there in the fog, nor the ghostly effigy. There was something else, something in the background, something he couldn't make out. Something that probably existed only inside himself. I'm very frightened, he said to himself, and fear is undermining my ability to think straight. Finally, he undid his seat belt and opened the door. He was surprised by how cool it felt outside. He got out, his eyes fixed on the chair and the dummy lit up by the car's headlights. His last thought was that it reminded him of a stage set with an actor about to make his entrance. He heard a noise behind him, but he didn't turn. The blow caught

him on the back of his head. He was dead before his body hit the damp asphalt. It was 9:53 p.m. The fog was now very dense. From Publishers Weekly Starred . First published in Sweden in 1994, Mankell's terrific fourth Kurt Wallender mystery opens with the kind of startling image typical of this internationally bestselling series (Firewall, etc.): a lawyer, driving home through the fog, stops after he sees "a human-sized effigy" propped on a chair in the middle of a deserted highway. Gustaf Torstensson gets out of the car to investigate, is hit from behind and was "dead before his body hit the damp asphalt." The police accept the assailant's claim that it was an accident, but when Torstensson's son, Sten, is shot dead just two weeks later, the brooding Wallender, who's on sick leave and vowing to retire from the Ystad police force, decides to pursue the killer and resume his career. The chief suspect a powerful, globe-trotting Swedish businessman who's the smiling man of the title leads Wallender on an exquisitely plotted search for motive and evidence. Dark and moody, this is crime fiction of the highest order. (Sept.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.