



The Killer on the Wall

Emma Kavanagh

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The first body comes as a shock

The second brings horror

The third signals the beginning of a nightmare

When fifteen-year-old Isla Bell finds three bodies propped against Hadrian's Wall, her whole world falls apart. In such a close-knit community, everyone knows the victims, and the man who did it.

Twenty years on and Isla has dedicated her life to forensic psychology; studying the brains of serial killers, and even coming face to face with the convicted murderer who turned her world upside down. She is safe after all, with him behind bars.

Then another body appears against the Wall.

And another.

As the nightmare returns and the body count rises, everyone in town is a suspect.

Who is the Killer on the Wall?

The Killer on the Wall Details

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From Reader Review The Killer on the Wall for online ebook

Mandy says

3.5 * This was my second Kavanagh and quite different, it was a bit slow to start and I guessed early on who the killer was, I suppose that comes from reading a lot of mystery/thrillers but it was still a good story with some interesting characters and a great setting though as someone else mentioned some history on Hadrian's Wall would have been interesting.

I will be picking up more books by this author in future.

Ingstje says

I loved The Missing Hours so much that I really jumped at the chance to read Emma Kavanagh's new novel The Killer On The Wall. Maybe my expectations were too high after the previous one because in this novel I did find a few things that kept me from falling in love like the first time.

There are 2 investigating characters in The Killer On The Wall: Mina who's a detective and Isla, the woman who found the first victims of Heath McGowan at the Wall 20 years ago. Isla has dedicated her life and work into the research of psychopaths brain scans. She has tested and MRI'd plenty of convicted killers and she now even sees the Killer On The Wall eye to eye because he agreed to her request.

Then new victims are made with the same MO as before. Coincidence, I think not! But is it a copycat or did Heath instruct someone in prison to mess with the community of Briganton after all these years?

The author makes a lot of suggestions and steered me into one direction for a suspect on the outside only to change direction again in another chapter. I felt myself on a carousel after a while. Although I read this novel with lots of questions on my mind too, most of what was offered didn't really convince me as a motive and I wasn't really buying any of it. I didn't know who, why or how but I trusted my own instinct and definitely knew there was something wrong with the picture that was being proffered. When all was finally said and done, the ending was not entirely surprising for me, simply because so many were already suspected and dismissed. What I found a bit strange was there wasn't much of a motive for the actual killer either and I had high hopes actually for an explanation why these people, and these people in particular, were targeted.

I'm afraid I have to admit that on top of this, I also had a bit of difficulty to fully connect with Isla and Mina, although from both of them I liked detective Mina most. She's unrelentless in her perusal through boxes and in her investigation she doesn't want to give up even if it means taking risks and doing unfavourable things. She's looking for the truth and she will find it, even if it means she's got to put her own feelings aside.

My overall conclusion is that this was a okay read and there's no question that she's a good writer but this one just didn't tick all the boxes for me. I'm not giving up though and I still look forward to reading her next novel.

Paromjit says

This is a dark, bleak, atmospheric, and intense psychological thriller that makes for a disturbing read. In 1995, 15 year old Isla Bell is going for her early morning run when she comes across murder victims posed against Hadrian's Wall and her life and Briganton is never to be the same again. Her father, Sergeant Eric Bell, is lauded a hero and is famous as the man who arrested the killer, Heath McGowan. Twenty years later, Isla is Professor of Criminal Psychology and engaged in research which has her meeting and scanning the brains of serial killers. She is both apprehensive and curious as she meets Heath McGowan in prison, her 13th subject, and unlucky for her and the cursed village of Briganton. The killings begin again with the murder of Victoria Prew, a recent incomer, and the old fears, darkness and suspicions return. Is it a copycat? Is Heath innocent? Where will it all end?

Superintendent Eric Bell is in charge of the case and he is convinced they have a new killer. Iraqi born DC Mina Arian decides to look into the historical killings and the police investigation despite the hostility and opposition of her boss, Bell. She is looking for connections to the present day murders. Isla married the only survivor from the original killings, Ramsey, who is now a journalist and the go to person on the killings. Isla and Ramsey are thinking of having children as danger seeps back into their lives and family as Isla becomes a target. Isla is implacable in her search for the killer, she has brain scans of a number of locals and her family, and she is convinced she can find the perpetrator from her brain research. In a story full of twists, Mina and Isla begin to close in on the killer.

Emma Kavanagh's background as a psychologist serves her well in this dark and compelling story. She is particularly skilled in capturing the fear, the claustrophobia, and the repercussions on Briganton and its residents of the killings. The characters are well developed and drive and move the narrative forward. I particularly liked DC Mina Arian, a courageous character willing to pursue leads, irrespective of the obstacles placed in her path. Definitely a novel that keeps the reader engrossed and desperate to know who the multiple murderer is. Thanks to Random House Cornerstone for an ARC.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

The Killer On The Wall is a chilling story about Isla Bell, a young girl that finds three bodies propped against Hadrian's wall. This will have a great impact on her life. She will, later on, dedicate her life studying the brains of serial killers, in hope that one day she will find what makes a person a killer. Then, 20 years later a body is found propped up against the wall, and then another.

I found The Killer On The Wall to be interesting to read. There are several POV's in this book, among them are Isla, her husband who survived the first attack 20 years ago, and her father who caught the killer. But, the one person I think I liked the best was Mina, a young cop that has been transferred from London to Briganton to get away from her overbearing family. Now she faces a nightmare with a serial killer loose.

I read The Missing Hours by the same author last year and I think this book is better. This story was much more interesting and all these different characters make this story engrossing to read. The ending was perhaps not that surprising since there is just not many suspects to chose from anymore. However, I found it fitting because even though one can know a person well, can even the best of us be blind when it comes to seeing things...

I want to thank the publisher for providing me with a free copy through NetGalley for an honest review!

Liz Barnsley says

It started with the bodies....Well yes, indeed it did and the opening salvo from Emma Kavanagh in *The Killer On The Wall* made me actually shiver – the scene setting itself would have been enough but then there were BODIES. And I pretty much continued to shiver my way through the rest of the novel as well and not just because of all the death and desolation.

Basically *The Killer on the Wall* is an utterly riveting psychological thriller with Ms Kavanagh's trademark divisive yet endlessly compelling characters all living through a nightmare the likes of which is almost unimaginable. If you live in a small community and you know everyone, what do you do when there is a killer on the loose? Even more so when you thought it was all behind you and there had been many years of relative quiet and recuperation.

That is the situation the author throws her group into, all set against a haunting yet beautiful backdrop which comes to life in the telling. Descriptively this is her best yet, so as well as the really quite twisted yet extremely emotive plot developing you've got it all happening in a place of beauty, where nothing so ugly should occur.

I love the psychological aspects, I was particularly drawn to Isla who grew up to make a career out of trying to discover why some people can commit these horrific acts having seen the fallout with her own eyes, she is sympathetic and driven. The crime element – whodunnit – is fascinatingly drawn, driven very much by the characters and how they see things. You may or may not see the end coming but to be honest, that may be the pay off but the sheer addictive nature of *The Killer on the Wall* is found not in the solving of the mystery but in the events leading up to it.

Another huge HUGELY excellent book from an author who is becoming one to watch in Crime writing circles. I'm loving each one more than the last and *The Killer On The Wall* is perhaps my favourite because it has such a brilliantly atmospheric ambience and a true page turning quality – it is honestly hard to put down once you start.

Wonderful writing, clever and taut storytelling and a definite tendency to make you want to sleep with the lights on.

Highly Recommended.

Emma says

I was hoping for more from this. The premise is a good hook, I love a bit of serial murder in a small town. Yet I guessed the ending within the first few chapters, it was obvious and very clearly signposted. After that it was just watching everyone in the multiple POVs bumble their way to the same conclusion. You only really need to read the first and last 10% if you read it at all.

Joanne Robertson says

I have looked forward to reading The Killer on The Wall for a while now and I wasn't disappointed. Emma Kavanagh has played to her strengths again and based her serial killer thriller in a close knit community where everyone seems to be linked to the crimes committed 20 years ago. Can everyone be trusted especially now it looks like the murders have started up again? And how and why are they happening if the Killer on the Wall is now locked away from society for his crimes.

This is the sort of book where everyone seems like they could be a suspect and we learn to trust no one. Due to the location (which I loved by the way) there was a fabulously claustrophobic atmosphere with all the characters preparing to come together even though their fears were that the murderer was one of their own.

I found this an easy read in a way. I was gripped by the plot details and fascinated by the murderers stylish method of displaying his victims so I read it in one suspense filled session which seemed to fly by as I hardly even raised my head. I had my suspicions about who was responsible but with red herrings galore, I was never able to quite convince myself I was right....Which is just as well as I wasn't!

I enjoyed The Killer on The Wall more than the authors last book The Missing Hours which took me longer to get into. This one is more on a par with Falling and Hidden so if you enjoyed the writing style of those then you will love this one too.

Roman Clodia says

Definitely a book that needs a large suspension of disbelief: there's a kind of muddy feel to the writing, a lack of clarity and direction. At the same time, there are so few suspects that anyone familiar with the genre is likely to see where this is going from pretty early on - the denouement doesn't really make psychological sense despite a last minute half-hearted revelation of childhood abuse as a kind of explanation for psychopathy.

The close atmosphere is both a plus and a minus: on one hand it's unlikely in the extreme that such a close-knit group of people would be allowed to work together like this (and any university ethics committee would have a problem with a researcher experimenting on a criminal who tried to kill the researcher's husband and who was caught and jailed by her father: biased? just a bit!) - on the other, it does create atmosphere and a sense of claustrophobia.

This works as a switch-off read but is awkward and unbelievable in comparison to Kavanagh's The Missing Hours which was far slicker and tighter.

Thanks to the publisher for an ARC via NetGalley

Susan says

Twenty years ago, fifteen year old Isla Bell discovered three bodies propped against Hadrian's Wall. The case was solved by her father, Detective Sergeant Eric Bell, who became a hero to the local town of Briganton. Now Isla is married to the brother of one of the victims and is a forensic scientist, studying serial killers to try to find a neurological reason for their behaviour.

When the novel begins, Isla is about to carry out tests of Heath McGowan, the man who was the 'Killer on the Wall,' and has been incarcerated for the murders carried out all those years ago. Isla's husband, Ramsey, is uncomfortable about Isla meeting with McGowan and there are obvious mind games going on. However, shortly after Isla does meet with McGowan, the unthinkable happens and there is another murder...

This is an interesting crime novel, with a good setting and characters. Briganton is almost a character itself – nestled under the shadow of Hadrian's Wall, surrounded by bleak moorland and uncomfortably known as the site for the infamous series of murders. This definition has marked not only the town, but the people. In such a small town, everyone knew someone affected by the crimes and this pall of fear and despair seems to lay over many of the residents.

There are, however, new residents and these include a transplanted Londoner, of Iraqi origin; Detective Constable Mina Arian. Along with Isla, Mina was the character that made the novel work for me and it was a great idea for the author to have an outsider involved in the investigation, who did not bring all of that local history along with her. However, when it seems that there is another murderer on the loose, the now Detective Superintendent Eric Bell, is reluctant to consider any links with the previous case, that he solved. Was another person involved in the original murders? Is there a copycat killer on the loose, or is there another explanation?

Isla is convinced that her research can help find answers, while Mina has to fight against her superior officer to investigate. The author really does use the small, fairly isolated, community to her advantage and also shows the long term damage that such crimes can have on those affected. One of the problems with a small town though, is that there are a limited number of suspects. Still, an enjoyable and atmospheric read and an enjoyable setting. I received a copy of this book from the publisher, via NetGalley, for review.

Kate says

Intense and atmospheric.

Christine says

Emma Kavanagh's psychological novels are a thing of beauty. She does something a bit different and unique this time, with the horrors of small town murder. The Killer on the Wall is the latest to hit the shelves.

Isla Bell, a teenager on a morning run, discovers three bodies murdered and displayed at Hadrian's Wall in

Northumbria. This leads to her fascination with killers. She pursues a career investigating them, using technology to identify psychotic tendencies through biology. In the present day, Isla is a Professor of Criminal Psychology and is married to one of the victims. The so called 'Killer on the Wall' was caught by Isla's father and is behind bars, much to the relief of the community. This man is Heath McGowan. Isla seeks Heath out for her studies, like Clarice Starling meeting Hannibal Lector. When a new body is found propped up on Hadrian's Wall in the present day, this sets off a chain of events. The town is soon under renewed fear and distress. Mina Arian, Detective Constable and newcomer to the locality, is part of the investigative team. She is the only one looking at the case objectively and with intelligence. Did the killer have an accomplice? Or is something far more disturbing the case?

As we have come to expect from Emma Kavanagh, this is intelligent and blisteringly thought-provoking. She brings her background in psychology to the book and a shed-load of research. It is ever so apparent in the insight we get from Isla Bell, into the killings and the behaviour of psychopaths. Fascinating, we see the case that psychopaths may be identified via brain scans. We would all like to spot evil in our midst. We can all identify with Isla trying to outwit killers and make sense of what she has been through. Isla Bell uses imaging on convicted killers to spot any biological differences. Imagine if this was to be let loose on the general population. Wow!

I love the small town creepy atmosphere, where no one feels safe. A walk home from the pub at night might result in murder. You could be outside one minute and just disappear. He might be in your home. He might be lurking around street corners. Kavanagh gets the tone and atmosphere very right!

Clever, consuming and just a little bit worrying! Yes, I am still wondering who the psychopaths around me are. A truly disturbing and quality psychological drama, from a must-read author! Recommended!

Helen says

Enjoyable crime thriller with a few twisty-turny bits, not all of which I saw coming. Isla and Mina were great characters, but it was the setting of Hadrian's Wall that really distinguished this novel for me.

Pat says

4.5

Really good book. Created a spooky atmosphere.

In the quiet village of Briganton, Isla Bell is a fifteen year old teenager out for her morning run. She runs the perimeter of the moors and passes by a well-known landmark - Hadrian's wall. On this morning, Isla finds three bodies strangled and poised on the wall. She runs home to tell her father, the local constable, of the tragedy. The police spend some time on the investigation but soon capture the killer.

Twenty years later, Isla Bell is now a psychologist who specializes in serial killers. She is at the prison working with inmates but today, she is working with none other than the infamous "killer on the wall". She receives information that another murder has taken place in her Briganton village and the body has been positioned at Hadrian's wall.

So begins this novel. Is this a one-time murder meant to copy the original crime? Or, is something beginning again after 20 years? The convicted killer is in jail so authorities know it is not him but does he have someone on the outside who he is teaching? Or is there a fan of his? This novel moves at a nice pace which kept me involved with the investigation and a lot more happens than I ever expected. As a fan of Emma Kavanagh, she does a great job with this one. Highly recommended to those who enjoy a good police procedural/investigation.

Cleo Bannister says

Isla was just fifteen when she came across three dead bodies sat up against Hadrian's Wall. Alongside them was the brother of one of the victims, injured but still alive. Isla ran to get help from her father Sergeant Eric Bell and he made it his mission to find out who committed this atrocity in the small town community of Briganton. Life was never the same again, the scars of the events of 1995 never quite healing.

In the present day Isla is Professor of Criminal Psychology, her way of trying to ensure that future killers are stopped before they inflict any damage. She is currently involved in a project to scan the brains of serial killers to see what, if any difference, she can find to contrast their make-up to the vast majority of the population who don't feel the urge to kill others.

It is no great surprise that one of the candidates for her study is Heath McGowan the man convicted of the terrible crimes that she discovered. Isla has had to overcome her fear, she does it daily, running the same path along the wall to banish those demons from twenty years ago but will she be able to face up to this particular psychopath? Imagine Isla's horror shared with the rest of the small community, when another victim is found positioned in a similar pose to those of all those years ago.

The face of the Police investigation should be Eric Bell whose career flourished after he found the killer back in 1995 but I was far more entranced by Detective Constable Mina Arian who wasn't afraid to follow her instincts in coming up with an explanation why the killings have started again.

As with all her previous books Emma Kavanagh draws heavily on her background in psychology, having gained a PhD in the subject at Cardiff University, and so you can rest assured this is not pop psychology but the real deal. It is this underlying truth that make her books so fascinating. The Killer on the Wall is fundamentally about psychopaths and in part how to first spot them (face it, you will know at least one) and to know that they will lie and cheat to get what they want no matter the cost to others. Fortunately for the rest of us, not all psychopaths need to kill us but nevertheless this is a book that hits that nerve where you realise that even in a community where everyone knows each other, you're not as safe as you would like to believe.

The plot is not as fast moving as in the author's previous books but as I've mentioned before, I've come to appreciate the slower pace which gives you time to reflect on the knowledge gained so far and I firmly believe that it is this pace that gives headroom for those deep-seated fears so the tension comes from as much within the reader as the words on the page – far more scary!!

Tracy Shephard says

This is a novel with the WOW factor.

Isla has lived with the murders of Briganton, since she was a girl and she found the bodies propped against the wall. The Wall being the famous Hadrians wall, but the history of the Northern sleepy town in which she lived was lost when a serial killer took over.

Now twenty years later, Isla's job as a Forensic psychologist has brought her in touch with the man who killed three people and left for dead the man who is now her husband.

Heath McGowan, having been arrested by Isla's father is now undergoing an MRI to find out why he killed and is the 13th serial killer that Isla has tested.

Then... a body is found, killed and propped up against the wall.

The Killer on the Wall is dark, twisted and very very good.

Emma Kavanagh is one of those authors who can do wrong. She has a knack for taking the reader on a journey is so cleverly plotted I honestly didn't see the ending at all.

I must admit, halfway through the tale. Isla is having a group discussion and it was this that made start thinking differently about who the killer might be.

I was hooked from the start and what must have been lengthy research, Kavanagh's 4th novel is superbly brilliant.

The characters, the setting, and of course the whole scene of Police involvement and the serial killer insights was for me an enjoyable learning curve as well as a fabulous read.

Highly recommended
