



Below the Surface

Leena Lehtolainen (Translator), Owen F. Witesman (Translator)

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When a woman's body turns up in a lake—a bullet to the back of her head—Violent Crime Unit commander Maria Kallio, freshly back from maternity leave, is fast to get on the case. The victim is ID'd as Annukka Hackman, wife of a prominent publisher and author of an upcoming unauthorized tell-all book on Sasha Smeds, Finland's celebrated racing rally driver.

Almost as soon as the inquiry starts, it goes off the rails, as those connected to Annukka—and to Smeds—seem to have more secrets than they have alibis. Was the journalist about to reveal a bombshell that someone was desperate to keep quiet? Or will it take some reading between the lines? The clues may be few, but the list of suspects is long. As she struggles to balance her home life, run a department tainted by career-threatening allegations, *and* catch a killer, Maria is shocked to find just what someone was willing to do in the name of love...or revenge.

Below the Surface Details

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Author : Leena Lehtolainen (Translator) , Owen F. Witesman (Translator)

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From Reader Review Below the Surface for online ebook

Hannelore Cheney says

Thank you Netgalley and Amazon Crossing for the eARC of this terrific book. A great story, set in Finland, a country we don't hear about that often, this was a real treat to read. Plus, the translation was a good one. Maria Kallio, Commander of the Espoo Crime Unit, a married mother with two children who has to juggle her career with her private life, is leading the case of a murdered journalist, shot while she was swimming. Anukka, a well-known journalist, was in the process of publishing her book about Sasha Smeds, Finland's foremost rally driver, but is killed before the event.

Maria and her team are stymied: who could have known Anukka was going to swim at that time and at that place? And what was the motive?

Solving the case isn't Maria's only problem. Ursula Honkaning, the new VCU Detective, is difficult, to say the least, probably leaking to the press and even accusing one of the male detectives of sexual harassment. The background story of the area where the Smeds family lives is fascinating. Russia leased the area from Finland for years and the history was so interesting. What's better than an exciting mystery that informs, has atmosphere and delivers a cracking, surprising ending? I love the series and can't wait for the next book. I believe there are several more waiting to be translated...hurry, please!

Charles says

Have enjoyed all the Maria Kallio series. This is one of her best.

Highly recommend.

Sue Williams says

This is a great mystery story. I wouldn't say it has twists and turns but it is like a spider's web. If you were trying to get to the center where the villain is, you would have a lot of false starts and dead ends to contend with. Like a maze. The book was written in Finland quite a few years ago and only translated into English recently. The translator did a wonderful job and the story reads well. I am not even going to attempt to tell you what is going on. You are going to traverse the spider web yourself, but do it. It is worth your trouble. I would definitely have given it 5 stars except after I read a few chapters I had to go back and start over, renaming all the characters.

Here is a short list of players. Maybe you can see why I renamed everyone.

Maria Kallio...Commander of Violent Crimes Unit

Kaartamo...Assistant Chief of Police

Jyrki Taskinen...Director of Criminal Division

Heikki Auto...VCU Detective

Ursula Honkanen...VCU Detective

Pokka Koivu...VCU Detective and Wang's husband

Lahde...VCU Detective

Lethtovuori...VCU Detective

Ville Puupponen...VCU Detective

Petri Puustjarvin...VCU Detective

Haikala..Patrol Officer

Anna Wang...VCU detective and Koivu's wife

Jukka Airaksinen... Patrol Officer

Makkonen...Patrol Officer

As I said, this is short list of the characters. Don't let it frighten you away from reading the book.

I won this e-book in a Goodreads Giveaway.

Stephanie Jane (Literary Flits) says

See more of my book reviews on my blog, Literary Flits

I was a little concerned before starting this novel that, as the eighth in a series, it might be either too formulaic for my tastes or that the storyline would necessitate my having read least a few of its predecessors. I need not have worried! Lehtolainen has created an interesting cast of characters, especially in her lead detective Maria Kallio, and given them a compelling case to solve. Being a Finnish novel, this book obviously falls within the Scandinavian crime genre, but I felt that it also had a certain refreshing otherness which I liked.

Below The Surface keeps a good pace, but is very much a realistic mystery rather than an action thriller. Kallio's case isn't all plain sailing. Neither solved by preternatural leaps of faith. The police work relies on a team of officers and this, together with Lehtolainen's frequent social commentary, was reminiscent for me of the excellent Martin Beck mysteries by Sjowall and Wahloo. I was pleasantly surprised by how much I enjoyed reading Below The Surface and would happily get more in this series.

Joyce says

4 stars

Detective Lieutenant Maria Kallio and part of her team respond to a woman in a lake who has been shot. Believing that hunters must have accidentally killed her, they soon find out that she was shot with a small caliber gun instead of a large rifle. The woman's name is Annukka Hackman. She is a journalist and the wife of a publisher whose name is Atro Jaaskelainen. She was writing a book on Sasha Smeds who is Finland's greatest rally driver. Apparently, the book is controversial.

As the team's investigation gets underway, the confusion starts. Someone is leaking information to the press. It seems several men thought that they were going to marry Annukka. The pathologist is only one among others. And Smeds has his own secrets. Was the book going to be such a bombshell that some felt they needed to kill her? Is there a more personal reason? There are many, many suspects. And Annukka would do

anything to get a story – or so it is said. Between new babies and a hectic home life Maria and Koivu seem to have less and less time for the job. Rough going as it is, they knuckle down and get the job done.

Sasha Smeds is in a fiery crash. Was his car sabotaged? Or was it an accident? Someone has a copy of Annukka's manuscript on a disk. She reveals at least one secret in it. More people die. The name of Annukka's killer comes as a surprise, but not as surprising as the reason for committing the murder.

This is a well written and plotted novel. It starts out suspenseful and the suspense continues to build throughout the book. I liked the way that Maria's team got along – for the most part that is. There was sufficient background information given on the major characters to flesh them out, but not so much that it intruded in the story. It only added color and a sense of human-ness.

I want to thank NetGalley and AmazonCrossing for forwarding to me a copy of this good book to read and enjoy.

Amalia Gavea says

I find this installement to be an adequate continuation of the series but there was nothing new or innovative, in my opinion. The mystery seemed interesting, at first, but the way the plot unfolded left me with an indifferent impression. At times, I found it detrimental, predictable.

I think that this is a series that definitely garners points and attention due to its Finnish setting that appeals to those of us who enjoy bleak, wintry, atmospheric settings. However, in my humble opinion, the constant weaknesses of the series are repetition, bland characters and average dialogue that is probably the result of a failed translation. Maria is interesting enough, unlike her husband and her co-workers and the focus on her family issues didn't really help "Below the Surface". I don't think I will continue with the series, although I can see that this installment will appeal to many people just like its predecessors.

Many thanks to AmazonCrossing and NetGalley for the ARC in exchange of an honest review.

Eric Jewett says

A winter read

Once again, Ms. Lehtolainen paints a complicated landscape of a murder in the Finnish countryside. Reading it in January amplified some of Maria's frustration with the weather.

Several side plots enrich the main line, which never really happens in a vacuum. Many of the supporting characters from previous stories are brought into the foreground.

I have enjoyed the series so far and am glad to see there is another title coming soon.

Ann says

Another solid entry in the series.

Maria Kallio is an appealing detective and the mystery was tight with a good selection of suspects. There was one odd scene that was a call back to an earlier book the basically just felt out of place, but, aside from that, it was pretty well put together. There were enough clues to figure out 'whodunit' but it really was nearly the very end before it became completely clear.

Besides catching murderers, she also has to deal with discord among her team and as well as personal issues. Sometimes those sorts of scenes feel forced but in this case it serves to better let us know what Maria is made of.

Diane Griffiths says

I was concerned being the 8th book in a series that I would be lost with the characters. The author did a good job of making sure you could pick it up right there!

The story starts with a woman being shot in the head while swimming. The investigation starts after the body was discovered. I liked the twists and the guessing as to who did the murder. Sometimes I found my mind wandering while reading the book and skimming some of the pages.

Overall I enjoyed the story and it was a good book. I would recommend it!

Terri Anderson says

This was a solid entry in the mystery series featuring a female police detective in Finland. She and her team are called to a scene in the woods where a reporter was shot while swimming. Initially, they thought that hunters had shot her by accident, but soon realized that it is a case of murder. Maria Kallio is the head of the department in addition to being married and having two young children, so there is conflict between her work and home life. There is extra tension in this book because her husband has lost funding for his own job and is more resentful than usual or her working so much.

Tom Jenckes says

Awesome Book

Wow! Leena crafted this novel to capture the readers interest with her excellent writing. Inspector Maria is good at her job and reveals her human side as well. Rhua and Victor's life story is incredible! Sasha is an amazing race car driver. What a wonderful way to spend your time!

Ilonita50 says

I was given an e-arc for an honest review, thanks a million!

This is the second book in the series which I have read, recently I finished #2 and absolutely loved this

Finnish detective and Below the Surface is no exception! I like that the covers are within the same as the rest of the series.

Book was interesting from the very start, it is realistic and although I did not fully understand the ending, I am absolutely suggesting everyone to read the book! It is a page turner, thinking all the way through the plot, who could be the guilty person and enjoying each of the characters. I felt I was cheating by jumping from #2 to #8 but now as I know a little "up-front", I am looking to read the rest of the ones I have not yet.

The book starts from the murder scene right there, and slowly revealing the investigation team work on the case, having plain data but no solution until it's start to develop - I loved the analyzing factor, the main character, Maria Kallio, Commander of the Espoo Crime Unit, being imperfect at all and thus I think I loved her more, faces sometimes so called disaster from her team and still has to handle the family life where's spouse is not happy about work overtaking their private time. As a reader I fully get the excitement of Maria's when she thinks she has solved one more step about the murder case, how small detail actually matters and how much it takes from team not to reveal any information to the press who works as detectives themselves...how difficult is to spot who is lying and who isn't, who would have had a motive to kill the Annukka Hackman, wife of a prominent publisher and author of an upcoming unauthorized tell-all book on Sasha Smeds, Finland's celebrated racing rally driver.

Candy Goulette says

Leena Lehtolainen never disappoints! Her descriptions of life intermingled with Maria's role as a policewoman, wife, mother and friend are not only wonderful glimpses into Finland, but a look at many global constants. That aside, her ability to write compelling and addictive murder mysteries is unparalleled. The "Whodunit" at the end is always a surprise.

I have followed Maria from her beginning police work to her position as detective lieutenant and she is one sharp cookie. I love to watch her mind at work on her cases, her life with her family and her interactions with her teammates. The fact that it all takes place in Finland is a bonus for me.

This book just came out and I can't wait for the next one!

Ken Fredette says

As a muder mystery I think that Leena Lehtolainen did just that. At first I was confused because of the person she was talking in sounded like Maria Kallio was the murderer, putting on the things (on her feet and on her hair) to keep DNA in check. Also throwing the gun and i-phone away in another location. After Maria found out that Annukka Hackman was murdered I knew that I was wrong. Many other red herrings were given and we went through a whole load of other possible people who could have murdered her. The Medical examiner was suppose to marry her, she changed her mind at the last minute an married another, she was writing about the Smeds family (father, mother, brother, wife of a rally driver, and the rally driver).

Maria has other problems with her staff in that there are allegations of misconduct among her male staff and she also has problems with information becoming public. The murder mystery comes to a head when Maria finds a tape with new information that leads to the final outcome. She's held at gun point but we find out who

the murder is. This is an interesting read and it takes place around the rally drivers family. The story has many things to play on your empathy at all times. It was a good read.

clm says

This series never disappoints

Besides being a straight up good procedural, there is plenty of exploration of the tensions in families, the particular difficulties of working women, particularly mothers, even in Scandinavian societies where daycare and gender equality is so much better than the U.S.
