VINTAGE

SIDETRACKED

HENNING MANKELL

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About the Book

Midsummer approaches, and Inspector Kurt Wallander is preparing for a holiday with the new woman in his life, hopeful that his wayward daughter and his ageing father will cope without him. But his summer plans are thrown into disarray when a teenage girl commits suicide before his eyes, and a former minister of justice is butchered in the first of a series of vicious, but apparently motiveless, murders.

Wallander’s desperate hunt for the girl’s identity and his furious pursuit of a killer who scalps his victims will throw him and those he loves most into terrible danger.

About the Authors

Henning Mankell has become a worldwide phenomenon with his crime writing, gripping thrillers and atmospheric novels set in Africa. His prizewinning and critically acclaimed Kurt Wallander thrillers are currently dominating bestseller lists all over the globe. His books have been translated into over forty languages and made into numerous international film and television adaptations: most recently the BAFTA-award-winning BBC television series *Wallander*, starring Kenneth Branagh. Mankell devotes much of his free time to working with Aids charities in Africa, where he is director of the Teatro Avenida in Maputo. In 2008 the University of St Andrews conferred on Henning Mankell an honorary degree of Doctor of Letters, in recognition of his major contribution to literature and to the practical exercise of conscience.

Steven T. Murray has translated numerous works from the Scandinavian languages, including the Pelle the Conqueror series by Martin Anderson Nexø and three of Henning Mankell's Kurt Wallander series. He founded Fjord Press in Seattle and was Editor-In-Chief from 1981 to 2001.

ALSO BY HENNING MANKELL

Kurt Wallander Series

Faceless Killers
The Dogs of Riga
The White Lioness
The Man Who Smiled
The Fifth Woman
One Step Behind
Firewall
Before the Frost
The Pyramid
The Troubled Man

Fiction

The Return of the Dancing Master
Chronicler of the Winds
Depths
Kennedy's Brain
The Eye of the Leopard
Italian Shoes
The Man from Beijing
Daniel

Non-fiction

I Die, But the Memory Lives On

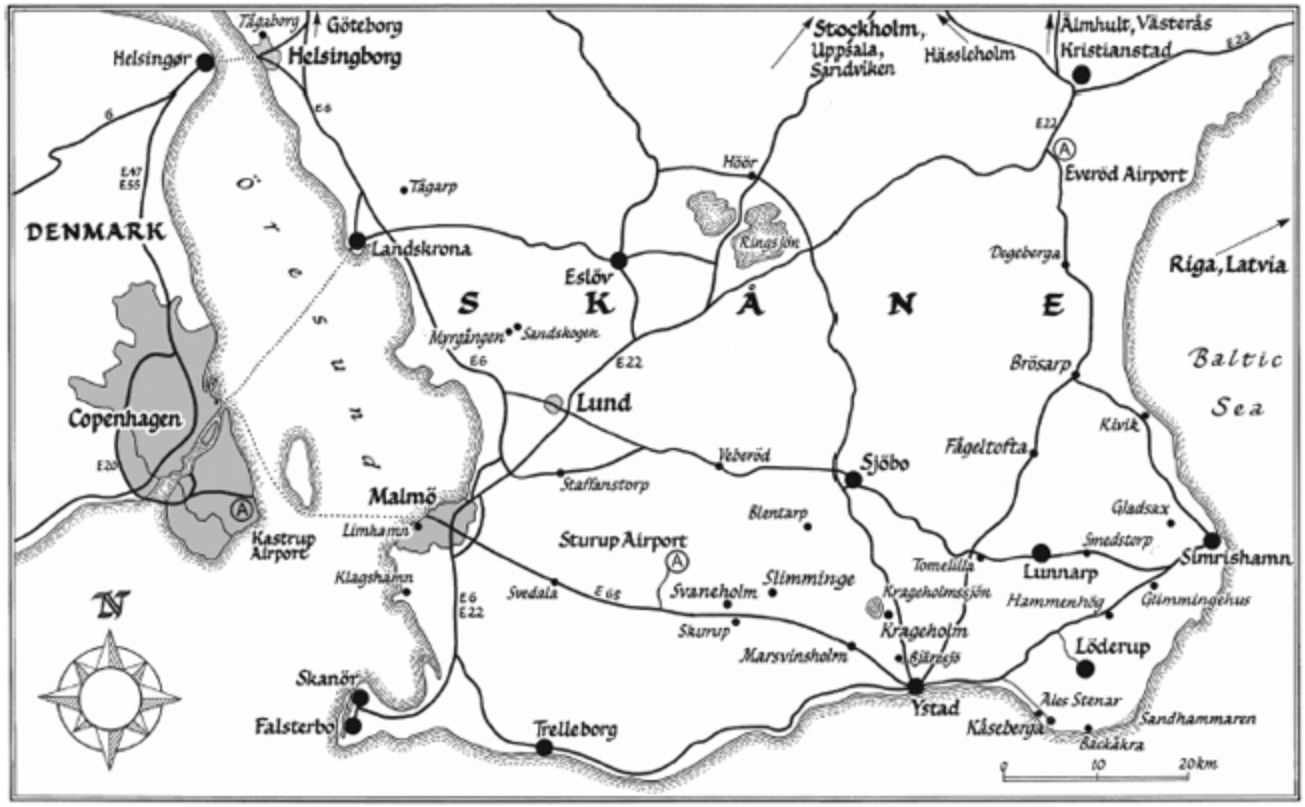
Young Adult Fiction

A Bridge to the Stars
Shadows in the Twilight
When the Snow Fell

The Journey to the End of the World

Children’s Fiction

The Cat Who Liked Rain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DENMARK
Öresund
Tågarp
Landskrona
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Everöd Airport
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Eslöv
SKÅNE
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Myrgången
Sandskogen
E6
E22
Lund
Brösarp
Baltic
Sea
Kivik
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Fågeltofta
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Svaneholm
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Glimmingehus
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To Jon

This is a novel. None of the characters in it are real people. However, not every similarity to real people is possible or even necessary to avoid. I am grateful to everyone who helped me with the work on this book.

Paderne,
July 1995

HENNING MANKELL

Sidetracked

TRANSLATED FROM THE SWEDISH BY

Steven T. Murray

VINTAGE BOOKS
London

Shall I bend, in vain, shall I shake
the old, hard, immovable bars?
– they will not stretch, they will not break
for the bars are riveted and forged inside myself,
and the bars will not shatter until I shatter too

From “A Ghasel” by Gustaf Fröding

Dominican Republic 1978

PROLOGUE

JUST BEFORE DAWN, Pedro Santana woke. The kerosene lamp had started to smoke. When he opened his eyes he didn’t know where he was. He had been roused from a dream in which he wandered through a peculiar, rocky landscape where the air was very thin, and he knew that all his memories were about to leave him. The smoking kerosene lamp had penetrated his consciousness like the distant smell of volcanic ash. But suddenly there was something else: a human sound, tormented, panting. And then the dream evaporated and he was forced to return to the dark room where he had now spent six days and six nights without sleeping more than a few minutes at a time.

The kerosene lamp had gone out. He lay completely still. The night was very warm. He smelt of sweat. It had been a long time since he had last managed to wash. He got up cautiously from the earthen floor and groped for the plastic jug of kerosene over by the door. It must have rained while he had slept. The floor was damp under his feet. Off in the distance he heard a rooster crow. Ramirez’s rooster. It was always the first in the village to crow, before dawn. That rooster was like an impatient person. Like someone who lived in the city, someone who always seemed to have too much to do, but never did anything other than attend to his own haste. Life wasn’t like that in the village: here everything moved as slowly as life itself. Why should people hurry when the plants that nourished them grew so slowly?

He found the jug of kerosene and pulled out the piece of cloth stuffed into the opening. The panting that filled the darkness grew more and more uneven. He found the lamp,

pulled out the cork, and carefully poured in the kerosene. He struck a match, lifted the glass cover, and watched the wick start to burn.

Then he forced himself to turn around. He couldn’t bear to see what was waiting for him. The woman lying in the bed next to the wall was going to die. He knew this now, even though for a long time he had tried to persuade himself that she would recover. His last attempt to flee had been in his dream. But a person could never escape death. Not his own, nor that of someone he loved.

He squatted down by the bed. The kerosene lamp threw restless shadows across the walls. He looked at her. She was still young. Even though her face was pale and sunken, she was beautiful. The last thing to leave my wife will be her beauty, he thought, as tears came to his eyes. He touched her forehead. The fever had risen again.

He glanced through the broken window patched with a piece of cardboard. Not dawn yet. If only it would come, he thought. Just let her have the strength to keep breathing until dawn. Then she won’t leave me all alone in the night.

Suddenly her eyes flew open. He grasped her hand and tried to smile.

“Where is the child?” she asked in a voice so weak that he could hardly understand her.

“She’s sleeping at my sister’s house,” he replied. “It’s best that way.”

She seemed reassured by his answer.

“How long have I been asleep?”

“For many hours.”

“Have you been sitting here the whole time? You must rest. In a few days I won’t need to lie here any longer.”

“I’ve been sleeping,” he replied. “Soon you’re going to be well again.”

He wondered whether she knew he was lying, whether she knew she would never get up again. Were both of them

lying to each other in their despair? To make the inevitable easier?

“I’m so tired,” she said.

“You must sleep so you’ll get well,” he answered, turning his head at the same time so she wouldn’t see his face.

Soon the first light of dawn seeped in. She had slipped into unconsciousness again. He was so tired that he could no longer control his thoughts.

He had met Dolores when he was 21. He and his brother Juan walked the long road to Santiago de los Treinta Caballeros to see the carnival. Juan, who was older, had visited the city once before. But it was Pedro’s first time. It took them three days to get there. Once in a while they got a ride for a few kilometres with an ox and cart. But they walked most of the way.

At last they reached their destination. It was a February day and the carnival was in full swing. Astonished, Pedro had stared at the garish costumes and the terrifying masks of devils and animals. The whole city was dancing to the beat of thousands of drums and guitars. Juan piloted him through the streets and alleys. At night they slept on benches in Parque Duarte. Pedro was afraid that Juan would disappear into the swirling crowds. He felt like a child frightened of losing his parents. But he didn’t let on. He didn’t want Juan to laugh at him.

On their last evening, Juan did suddenly vanish among the costumed, dancing people. They hadn’t agreed on a place to meet if they were separated. Pedro searched for Juan all night. At daybreak he stopped by the fountain in the Plaza de Cultura.

A girl about his own age sat down beside him. She was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen. He watched as she took off her sandals and rubbed her sore feet. When she met his gaze, he lowered his eyes, embarrassed.

That was how he met Dolores. They sat by the fountain and started talking. Dolores had been looking for work as a housekeeper, going from house to house in the rich neighbourhood without success. She too was the child of a *campesino,* and her village was not far from Pedro's. They left the city together, plundered banana trees for food, and walked more and more slowly the closer they came to her village.

Two years later they were married, and moved into a little house in Pedro's village. Pedro worked on a sugar plantation while Dolores grew vegetables and sold them. They were poor, but they were happy.

Only one thing was not as it should be. After three years Dolores was not yet pregnant. They never talked about it, but Pedro sensed Dolores's increasing anxiety. Without telling him, she had visited some *curiositas* on the Haitian border to seek help.

Eight years passed. And then one evening when Pedro was returning from the sugar plantation, Dolores met him on the road and told him she was pregnant. At the end of the eighth year of their marriage, she gave birth to a daughter. When Pedro saw his child for the first time, he could see at once that she had inherited her mother's beauty. That evening Pedro went to the village church and made an offering of some gold jewellery his mother had given him. Then he went home singing so loudly and fervently that the people he met thought he had drunk too much rum.

Dolores was asleep. She was breathing harder, and stirred restlessly.

"You can't die," whispered Pedro, no longer able to control his despair. "You can't die and leave me and our child."

Two hours later it was all over. For a brief moment her breathing grew completely calm. She opened her eyes and looked at him.

“You must baptise our daughter,” she said. “You must baptise her and take care of her.”

“You’ll be well soon,” he answered. “We’ll baptise her together.”

“I don’t exist any more,” she said and closed her eyes.

Then she was gone.

Two weeks later Pedro left the village, carrying his daughter in a basket on his back. His brother Juan followed him down the road.

“What are you doing?” he asked.

“What has to be done.”

“Why must you go to the city to baptise your daughter? Why can’t you have her baptised here in the village? That church has served us well. And our parents before us.”

Pedro stopped and looked at his brother.

“For eight years we waited for a child. When our daughter finally came, Dolores died. She wasn’t yet 30. She had to die. Because we are poor. Because of poverty’s diseases. Now I will return to the big cathedral on the plaza where we met. My daughter will be baptised in the biggest church there is in this country. That’s the least I can do for Dolores.”

He didn’t wait for Juan’s reply. Late that evening, when he reached the village Dolores had come from, he stopped at her mother’s house. Again he explained where he was going. The old woman shook her head sadly.

“Your sorrow will drive you crazy,” she said.

Early the next morning Pedro resumed his journey. As he walked he told his daughter everything he could remember about Dolores. When he had no more to say, he started again.

Pedro reached the city one afternoon as heavy rain clouds gathered on the horizon. He sat down to wait on the steps of the cathedral, Santiago Apóstol, and watched the black-clad priests passing by. They seemed either too young, or in too

much of a hurry to be worthy of baptising his daughter. He waited many hours. At last an old priest came slowing towards the cathedral. Pedro stood up, took off his straw hat, and held out his daughter. The old priest listened patiently to his story. Then he nodded.

"I will baptise her," he said. "You have walked a long way for something you believe in. In our day that is rare. People seldom walk long distances for their faith. That's why the world looks the way it does."

Pedro followed the priest into the dim cathedral. He felt that Dolores was near him as they made their way to the font.

"What will the girl be named?" he asked.

"She will be named Dolores, after her mother. And María. Dolores María Santana."

After the baptism Pedro went out to the plaza and sat down where he had met Dolores ten years before. His daughter was asleep in the basket. He sat completely still, deep in thought.

I, Pedro Santana, am a simple man. I have inherited nothing but poverty and relentless misery. I have not even been allowed to keep my wife. But I vow that our daughter will have a different life. I will do everything for her. I promise you, Dolores, that your daughter will live a long and happy and worthy life.

That evening Pedro left the city with his beloved daughter, Dolores María Santana. She was then eight months old.

Skåne
21 – 24 June 1994

CHAPTER 1

BEFORE DAWN HE started his transformation.

He had planned everything meticulously so that nothing could go wrong. It would take him all day, and he didn't want to risk running out of time. He took up the first paintbrush and held it in front of him. From the cassette player on the floor he could hear the tape of drum music that he had recorded. He studied his face in the mirror. Then he drew the first black lines across his forehead. He noted that his hand was steady. So he wasn't nervous, at least. Even though this was the first time he had put on his war paint. Until this moment it had been merely an escape, his way of defending himself against the injustices he was continually subjected to. Now he went through the transformation in earnest. With each stroke that he painted on his face, he seemed to be leaving his old life behind. There was no turning back. This very evening the game would be over for good, he would go out into the war, and people were going to die.

The light in the room was very bright. He arranged the mirrors carefully, so that the glare didn't get in his eyes. When he had locked the door behind him, he had first checked that everything was where it was supposed to be: the well-cleaned brushes, the little porcelain cups of paint, the towels and water, next to the little lathe his weapons in rows on a black cloth – three axes, knives with blades of various lengths, and spray cans. This was the only decision still to be made. Before sundown he had to choose which to take with him. He couldn't take them all. But he knew that

the choice would resolve itself once he had begun his transformation.

Before he sat down on the bench and started to paint his face, he tested the edges of his axes and knives. They were as sharp as could be. He couldn’t resist the temptation to press a little harder on one of the knives. His finger started to bleed. He wiped it and the knife with a towel. Then he sat down in front of the mirrors.

The first strokes on his forehead had to be black. It was as if he were slicing two deep cuts, opening his brain, and emptying the memories and thoughts that had haunted him all his life, tormenting him and humiliating him. Then the red and white stripes, the circles, the squares, and at last the snake-like designs on his cheeks. None of his white skin should be visible. Then the transformation would be complete. What was inside him would be gone. He would be born again in the guise of an animal, and he would never speak as a human being again. He would cut out his tongue if he had to.

Just after 6 p.m. he was done. By then he had chosen the largest of the three axes. He stuck the shaft into his thick leather belt. Two knives were already there in their sheaths. He looked around the room. Nothing was forgotten. He stuffed the spray cans in the inside pockets of his jacket.

He looked at his face in the mirror one last time, and shuddered. Carefully he pulled his motorcycle helmet over his head, switched off the light, and left the room barefoot, just as he had come in.

At 9.05 p.m. Gustaf Wetterstedt turned down the sound on his TV and phoned his mother. It was a nightly ritual. Ever since he had retired as minister of justice more than 25 years earlier, leaving behind all his political dealings, he had watched the news with repugnance. He couldn’t come to terms with the fact that he was no longer involved. During his years as minister, a man in the absolute centre of the

public eye, he appeared on TV at least once a week. Each appearance had been meticulously copied from film to video by a secretary and the tapes now covered a whole wall of shelves in his study. Once in a while he watched them again. It was a great source of satisfaction to see that never once in all those years as minister of justice had he lost his composure when confronted by an unexpected question from a malicious reporter. He would recall with unbounded contempt how many of his colleagues had been terrified of TV reporters, how they would stammer and get entangled in contradictions. That had never happened to him. He was a man who couldn't be trapped. The reporters had never beaten him. Nor had they discovered his secret.

He had turned on his TV at 9 p.m. to see the top stories. Now he turned down the sound. He pulled over the telephone and called his mother. She was now 94, but with a clear mind and full of energy. She lived alone in a big flat in Stockholm's innercity. Each time he lifted the receiver and dialled the number he prayed she wouldn't answer. He was more than 70, and he had begun to be afraid that she would outlive him. There was nothing he wanted more than for her to die. Then he'd be left alone. He wouldn't have to call her any more, and soon he'd forget what she even looked like.

The telephone rang at the other end. He watched the silent anchorman. At the fourth ring he began to hope that she was dead. Then she answered. He softened his voice as he spoke. He asked how she was feeling, how had her day been, but now he knew that she was still alive, he wanted to make the conversation as brief as possible.

Finally he hung up and sat with his hand resting on the receiver. She's never going to die, he thought. She'll never die unless I kill her. All he could hear was the roar of the sea, and then a lone moped going past the house. He walked over to the big balcony window facing the sea. The twilight was beautiful. The beach below his huge estate was deserted. Everyone is sitting in front of their TVs, he

thought. There was a time when they sat there and watched me make mincemeat of the reporters, back when I was minister of justice. I should have been made foreign minister. But I never was.

He drew the heavy curtains, making sure that there were no gaps. Even though he tried to live as discreetly as possible in this house located just east of Ystad, occasional curiosity-seekers spied on him. Although it had been 25 years since he left office, he had not yet been entirely forgotten. He went out to the kitchen and poured himself a cup of coffee from a thermos he had bought during an official visit to Italy in the late 1960s. He vaguely recalled that he'd gone to discuss efforts to prevent the spread of terrorism in Europe. All over his house there were reminders of the life he had lived. Sometimes he thought of throwing them away, but to make the effort seemed pointless.

He went back to the sofa with his coffee. He switched off the TV with the remote, and sat in the dark, thinking through the day's events. In the morning he'd had a visit from a journalist on one of the big monthly magazines. She was writing a series about famous people in retirement, but he couldn't really see why she had decided upon him. She had brought a photographer with her and they took pictures on the beach and inside the house. He had decided in advance that he would present the image of a kindly old man, reconciled with his past. He described his present life as very happy. He lived in seclusion so that he could meditate, he said, and he let slip with feigned embarrassment that he was thinking of writing his memoirs. The journalist, who was in her 40s, had been impressed and clearly respectful. Afterwards he escorted her and the photographer to their car and waved as they drove off.

He hadn't said a single thing that was true during the entire interview, he thought with satisfaction. This was one of the few things that still held any interest for him. To deceive without being discovered. To continue with the

pretence. After all his years as a politician he realised all that was left was the lie. The truth disguised as a lie or the lie dressed up as the truth.

Slowly he drank the rest of his coffee. His sense of well-being grew. The evenings and nights were his best time. That was when his thoughts of all that he had lost sank beneath the surface, and he remembered only what no-one could rob him of. The most important thing. The utmost secret.

Sometimes he imagined himself as an image in a mirror that was both concave and convex at the same time. No-one had ever seen anything but the surface: the eminent jurist, the respected minister of justice, the kindly retiree strolling along the beach in Skåne. No-one would have guessed at his double-sided self. He had greeted kings and presidents, he had bowed with a smile, but in his head he was thinking, *if you only knew who I really am and what I think of you.* When he stood in front of the TV cameras he always held that thought – *if you only knew who I really am and what I think of you* – foremost in his mind. His secret. That he hated and despised the party he represented, the policies that he defended, and most of the people he met. His secret would stay hidden until he died. He had seen through the world, identified all its frailties, understood the meaninglessness of existence. But no-one knew about his insight, and that was the way it would stay.

He felt a growing pleasure at what was to come. Tomorrow evening his friends would arrive at the house just after 9 p.m., in the black Mercedes with tinted windows. They would drive straight into his garage and he would wait for them in the living-room with the curtains drawn, just as now. He could feel his expectation swell as he started to fantasise about what the girl they delivered to him this time would look like. He had told them there had been far too many blondes lately. Some of them had also been much too old, over 20. This time he wanted a younger one, preferably of

mixed race. His friends would wait in the basement where he had installed a TV; he would take the girl with him to his bedroom. Before dawn they would be gone, and he would already be daydreaming about the girl they would bring the following week.

The thought of the next evening made him so excited that he got up from the sofa and went into his study. Before he turned on the light he drew the curtains. For a moment he thought he saw the shadow of someone down on the beach. He took off his glasses and squinted. Sometimes late-night strollers would stop on the edge of his property. On several occasions he had had to call the police in Ystad to complain of young people lighting bonfires on the beach and making noise.

He had a good relationship with the Ystad police. They came right away and moved anyone disturbing him. He never could have imagined the knowledge and contacts he had gained as minister of justice. Not only had he learned to understand the special mentality that prevails inside the police force, but he had methodically acquired friends in strategic places in the Swedish machinery of justice. As important were all the contacts he had made in the criminal world. There were intelligent criminals, individuals who worked alone as well as leaders of great crime syndicates, whom he had made his friends. Even though much had changed since he left office, he still enjoyed his old contacts. Especially the friends who saw to it that each week he had a visit from a girl of a suitable age.

He had imagined the shadow on the beach. He straightened the curtains and unlocked one of the cabinets in the desk he had inherited from his father, a distinguished professor of jurisprudence. He took out an expensive and beautifully decorated portfolio and opened it before him on the desk. Slowly, reverently, he leafed through his collection of pornographic pictures from the earliest days of photography. His oldest picture was a rarity, a

daguerreotype from 1855 that he had acquired in Paris, of a naked woman embracing a dog. His collection was renowned in the discreet circle of men who shared his interest. His collection of pictures from the 1890s by Lecadre was surpassed only by the collection owned by an elderly steel magnate in the Ruhr. Slowly he turned the plastic-covered pages of the album. He lingered longest over the pages where the models were very young and one could see by their eyes that they were under the influence of drugs. He had often regretted that he himself had not begun to devote himself to photography earlier. Had he done so, he would today be in possession of an unrivalled collection.

When he had finished, he locked the album in the desk again. He had extracted a promise from his friends that upon his death they would offer the pictures to an antiquities dealer in Paris who specialised in the sale of such items. The money would be donated to a scholarship fund he had already established for young law students, which would be announced after his death. He switched off the desk lamp and remained sitting in the dark room. The sound of the surf was very faint. Once again he thought he heard a moped passing.

In spite of his age, he still found it difficult to imagine his own death. During trips to the United States, he had managed twice to be present anonymously at executions, the first by electric chair, the second in the gas chamber, which even then was rather rare. It had been a curiously pleasurable experience to watch people being killed. But his own death he could not contemplate. He left the study and poured a little glass of liqueur from the bar in the living-room. It was already approaching midnight. A short walk down to the sea was all that remained for him to do before he went to bed. He put on a jacket out in the hall, slipped his feet into a pair of worn clogs, and left the house.

Outside it was dead calm. His house was so isolated that he could not see the lights of any of his neighbours. The cars on the road to Kåseberga roared by in the distance. He followed the path that led through the garden and down to the locked gate to the beach. To his annoyance he discovered that the light on a pole next to the gate was out. The beach awaited him. He fished out his keys and unlocked the gate. He walked the short distance onto the sand and stopped at the water's edge. The sea was still. Far out on the horizon he saw the lights of a boat heading west. He unbuttoned his fly and peed into the water as he continued to fantasise about the visit he would have the next day.

Although he heard nothing, suddenly he knew that someone was standing behind him. He stiffened, seized with terror. Then he spun round.

The man standing there looked like an animal. Apart from a pair of shorts he was naked. The old man looked into his face with dread. He couldn't see if it was deformed or hidden behind a mask. In one hand the man held an axe. In his confusion the old man noticed that the hand around the shaft of the axe was very small, that the man was like a dwarf.

He screamed and started to run, back towards the garden gate.

He died the instant the edge of the axe severed his spine, just below the shoulder blades. And he knew no pain as the man, who was perhaps an animal, knelt down and slit an opening in his forehead and then with one violent wrench ripped most of the scalp from his skull.

It was a little after midnight. It was Tuesday, 21 June.

The motor of a moped started up somewhere nearby, and moments later died away.

Everything was once again very still.

CHAPTER 2

AROUND NOON ON 21 June, Kurt Wallander left the police station in Ystad. So that no-one would notice his going, he walked out through the garage entrance, got into his car, and drove down to the harbour. Since the day was warm he had left his sports jacket hanging over his chair at his desk. Anyone looking for him in the next few hours would assume he must be somewhere in the building. Wallander parked by the theatre, walked out on the inner pier and sat down on the bench next to the red hut belonging to the sea rescue service. He had brought along one of his notebooks, but realised that he hadn't brought a pen. Annoyed, he nearly tossed the notebook into the harbour. But this was impossible. His colleagues would never forgive him.

Despite his protests, they had appointed him to make a speech on their behalf at 3 p.m. that day for Björk, who was resigning his post as Ystad chief of police.

Wallander had never made a formal speech in his life. The closest he had come were the innumerable press conferences he had been obliged to hold during criminal investigations.

But how to thank a retiring chief of police? What did one actually thank him for? Did they have any reason to be thankful? Wallander would have preferred to voice his uneasiness and anxiety at the vast, apparently unthoughtout reorganisations and cutbacks to which the force was increasingly subjected. He had left the station so he could think through what he was going to say in peace. He'd sat at his kitchen table until late the night before without getting anywhere. But now he had no choice. In less