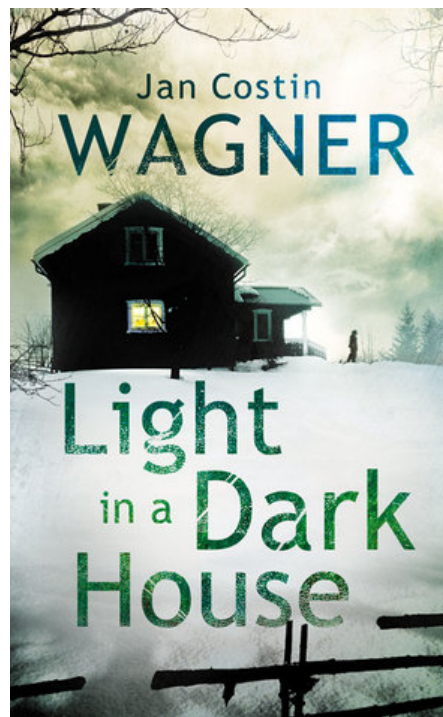




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Light in a Dark House Details

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From Reader Review *Light in a Dark House* for online ebook

Cleo Bannister says

Blurb

Finnish detective Kimmo Joentaa is called to the local hospital in which his young wife died several years before. An unidentified woman in a coma has been murdered by someone who wept over the body, their tears staining the sheets around her. The death marks the start of a series of killings, with the unknown patient at their centre.

As you can see for a lover of serial killer crime fiction this seemed like the perfect read. I found the start of this book quite slow, there are quite a few characters all of whom initially seem unconnected.

The book starts with an excerpt from a diary written in August 1985 about a woman sat at a piano, the writer of the diary is a complete mystery. We then skip to autumn in Finland where policeman

‘Kimmo Joentaa was living with a woman with no name. The anticyclone keeping the weather fine had been christened Magdalena. The woman told people to call her Larissa.’

This style of writing took some getting used to and maybe if I hadn't been given this book in return for a review that I may not have persevered. I am glad that I did if only to experience a different kind of crime fiction. Once the strands of the story begin to come together the links between the unknown woman in the hospital and other murders in public places become clear. The excerpts from the diary from 1985 and the present time really helped to move the plot along and bring clarity to the story.

The underlying themes are sadness and casual violence. There aren't massive descriptions of horrific deaths, these almost happen off-stage but the feeling of menace is there on every single page. It is quite an unsettling book with all the policemen involved in hunting the hunter having sub-plots with characters that didn't always seem to entirely fit into the story but increased the feeling of sadness, it felt like there wasn't one uncomplicated moment in the whole book.

If you like dark novels with a twist in the tale then this may be the one for you.

Ellen Dunne says

Kurzzusammenfassung:

Turku, Finnland: Der verwitwete junge Polizist Kimmo Joentaa ist nach Jahren der Trauer wieder verliebt. In eine Frau, die kommt und geht wann sie will, und eines Tages einfach verschwindet. Außerdem ermittelt er in einem besonders mysteriösen Fall des Mordes an einer unbekannten Frau, die im Koma liegt, und deren Mörder Tränen an ihrem Bett hinterlassen hat ...

Kurzleseprobe:

“Kimmo Joentaa lebte mit einer Frau ohne Namen in einem Herbst ohne Regen. Das Hoch wurde auf Magdalena getauft. Die Frau ließ sich Larissa nennen.”

Meine Meinung:

Wo fange ich nur an mit Jan Costin Wagner? Am Besten damit, dass ich innerhalb von zwei Büchern ein schwärmender Fan von ihm geworden bin. Und das passiert mir beileibe nicht oft, zuletzt bei Gillian Flynn vor 2 (!) Jahren. Doch Jan Costin Wagners einfach formulierter und gerade dadurch so poetischer Stil, seine Liebe zu Finnland und zur Stille, seine Solidarität mit den Einsamen, den Melancholischen, den Verlorenen und vor allem sein Sinn für den Rhythmus der Sprache haben mich in "Eismond", dem ersten Joentaa-Roman, überzeugt, und jetzt in "Das Licht in einem dunklen Haus" begeistert.

Ja, die Mordfälle, die sich im Lauf der Handlung quer durch Finnland fortsetzen, sind gut konstruiert. Der Fall eines Mörders, der um sein Opfer weint ist spannend. Das Ende ist meiner Meinung nach ein wenig arg schnell abgehandelt, doch das ist mir egal, denn um die akkurate Nacherzählung von Polizeiarbeit geht es in den Joentaa-Romanen (zum Glück) nicht. Es geht um die Stimmung, die erzeugt wird, und um das Ermittlerteam noch fast mehr als um den Fall.

Wer klassische Krimis liebt, wird mit Kimmo Joentaa möglicherweise weniger glücklich sein als ich es bin. Das Innenleben der Ermittler nimmt mehr Raum ein als die Action, Figuren werden in nur wenigen Sätzen zu Charakteren, über die man gleichzeitig wenig weiß und sie doch sofort wiedererkennt. Anstatt Prozeduralbeschreibungen gibt es wortkarge, oft schmerzhaft realistische Dialoge, die viel mehr über die handelnden Personen sagen als jede Beschreibung. Und genau deshalb sollte man sich von Jan Costin Wagner und seinen Romanen berühren lassen. Möglichst bald, möglichst viel.

Fazit:

Spannungsliteratur, im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes. Unbedingt lesen. Unbedingt.

Rachel Hall says

After reading *Silence*, the second novel in the series which follows the work of Finnish detective Kimmo Joentaa, I was enamoured by the rather circuitous, yet strangely beguiling approach that he takes to his work. The focus of this series is firmly centred around the morose Joentaa and his personal life and private thoughts occupy as much of this novel as the crimes at issue. *Silence* dealt with the immediate aftermath of wife Sanna dying of cancer and in this fourth outing there is evidence of Joentaa trying to move on without his beloved wife. In *Light in a Dark House*, Joentaa is involved in a casual relationship and living arrangement with a prostitute who goes by the name of Larissa. When Larissa abruptly disappears following a birthday party for the Turku chief of police Kimmo Joentaa is disconsolate and alongside his work he does his best to locate a woman that he realises he knew very little about.

Silence opened with a haunting prologue from 1974 and Jan Costin Wagner uses the same ploy of providing two lines of narration in this novel, opening with a series of diary extracts dating from 1985 and relaying the nightmare of a childhood devastated by a despicable act. It quickly becomes apparent that this past episode has a crucial connection to the events which Kimmo Joentaa is faced with investigating in *Light in a Dark House* as the Turku police are presented with the strange case of an unknown patient in a coma whose breathing apparatus is switched off, hence amounting to murder. For Kimmo this means returning to the intensive care unit of the very hospital his wife Sanna died in and the very raw memories that remain. With the identity of the patient unknown and the only clue being the presence of 'lacrimal fluid' (effectively salty tears) on the sheets surrounding the corpse this is a case which has its roots very firmly in the past. A photograph from an earlier summer seems to hold many of the answers, and with an email clue from Larissa and the eventual connection of two murders being handled by detectives in Helsinki, Joentaa is led to a

conclusion which sends a shocking message about the men who treat women as their property.

This is not your run-of-the-mill police procedural and lacks the frenetic buzz of activity which is the more familiar territory of this genre, but it is a pleasure to be alongside the reflective and thoughtful Kimmo Joentaa and appreciate the fragility of a man trying to find a new way of living following the devastation of losing his wife at such a young age. Not everything always makes sense or is neatly resolved with Jan Costin Wagner at the helm but the ways of his introverted loner Kimmo Joentaa ultimately make for a satisfying resolution and never fails to shock by showing the far reaching effects that the miseries of the past can have on the events of today.

Liz Barnsley says

3.5 stars

Thank you to the author and publisher for a copy of this book via netgalley.

When an unidentified woman in a coma is murdered, Finnish Detective Kimmo Joentaa is called to the scene - the hospital in which his wife died several years earlier. More deaths follow and as he attempts to unravel the mystery his life is further complicated by the disappearance of his sometime girlfriend Larissa.

I liked this one. I don't read an awful lot of European/Nordic fiction it has to be said, an error I am currently correcting with several of my reading choices lately and this novel has made me want to continue on that quest. I found the characters to be quirky and intriguing - I believe there are other novels in this series but this is my first foray into the world of Kimmo Joentaa - with a well imagined mystery and enough past information to go by it was one that kept me up late into the night and thats always a good sign. However...

There were some downsides - I struggled to keep up with some of the characters and in places it felt like you had the start of a sub plot that never went anywhere. Also there were a great many peripheral characters that I felt the book could have done without. But these are small things, overall it kept me interested and reading onwards to discover the resolution.

The ending was slightly abrupt for me as well it has to be said. It kind of meandered along during the last few chapters before coming to a reasonably satisfying conclusion..which didnt immediately make me want to read more but did make me feel like there was more to be had.

Overall a pleasant read, one that I enjoyed very much without ever becoming completely immersed in it. Perfect escapism, well written crime fiction.

Happy Reading Folks!

Jim Coughenour says

An enjoyable elliptical crime novel. Like Wagner's previous books featuring the dolorous detective Kimmo Joentaa, *Light in a Dark House* moves at the pace of a Finnish glacier and threatens to freeze in place, but in the end almost everything crumbles together. As with many Scandinavian novels, atmosphere is everything. On the other hand, being the sour fellow I am, I have a hard time stomaching Kimmo's romantic doldrums,

which are only complicated in this book by a disappearing whore. Enough already.

The translation by Anthea Bell is as smooth as always.

btw, fans of Wagner's fiction should check the film version of *The Silence* - an excellent adaptation of the book.

Caroline Thorley says

Really good as Jan Costin Wagner Kimmo Joentaa books always are. I enjoyed reading it. I look forward to reading the next in the series "*Tage des letzten Schnees*".

Jeremy Megraw says

Posted in Crime Fiction Lover

Finnish detective Joenta is called in to investigate the murder of a woman in a hospital bed. Two strange aspects of the killing immediately arrest our attention. The victim is an unidentified woman who had been in a coma as the result of an attack, long before her murder. The other thing is that apparently someone, presumably the murderer, has left tears on her body. Who killed the comatose woman and wept for her?

In addition to the mysterious murder victim, there are also two other female characters who continually habituate Kimmo Joentaa's world in *Light in a Dark House*. One is Kimmo's dead wife, who died in the very same hospital, and whose memory still haunts him. The other is his new girlfriend Larissa, a mysterious prostitute. Larissa disappears around the time of the murder and directly after a dinner party wherein it becomes obvious Kimmo's chief was one of her clients under the alias 'August'. All three women – the victim, the wife and the love interest – are essentially absent, yet their presence permeates the moody course of the investigations, which take place in snow-laden Finland just before Christmas.

The book gradually relays the back-story of the victim, leading up to her death, as recorded in the unidentified killer's diary. Meanwhile, as the police try to determine the coma patient's identity, more murders pile up that are somehow related. Kimmo's colleagues are chasing down leads while the preoccupied Kimmo wanders around with the burden of his wife's death, the whereabouts of Larissa, and the mysterious tear-stained corpse. Sometimes the central mystery takes a back seat to our detective's musings and personal tangents, such as a friend's gambling problem. Often, these ponderous meanderings mean that it is the killer's diary that seems to propel the story rather than the narrative of the investigation. Eventually, Kimmo starts to receive emailed clues about the investigation that seem to come from the missing Larissa.

Readers new to Jan Costin Wagner may initially balk at the slow pace and the morose ramblings of its unusually sensitive detective. Wagner is not an ordinary crime writer nor are his novels ordinary procedurals. I picked up this book expecting an alternative take on Scandinavian crime fiction, as Costin Wagner writes in German but sets his stories in Finland where he resides. In many ways, his work represents some of the best in contemporary fiction. In terms of Nordic fiction, Costin Wagner can be compared to Johan Theorin's thoughtful, atmospheric mysteries, wherein the detective figure is often peripheral to the existential tenor of the mystery. As crime fiction, *Light in a Dark House*'s broad ruminations on sadness and loneliness will be

seen as a deficit for many enthusiasts of the genre.

A sudden spark of hope at the end of *Light in a Dark House* – the title refers to the absent Larissa – might make up for the sustained sadness that prevails from its opening pages. However, it may also be a point of frustration for some readers. Although the central mystery is resolved, all threads of the story are not tied up, and the ending is a bit abrupt. This might be attributed to the fact that this is the fourth in the Kimmo Joentaa series, presumably with more to come. One thing's for sure, don't expect a fast-paced thriller. Recommended for fans of mysteries who want to pause and ponder the human condition.

Heidi says

In an autumn when no rain fell, Kimmo Joentaa was living with a woman who had no name. The anticyclone keeping the weather fine had been christened Magdalena. The woman told people to call her Larissa. She came and went. He didn't know where from or where to.

Thus starts Wagner's latest novel, *Light in a Dark House*. Young detective Kimmo Joentaa has finally found the courage to move on after the death of his wife and is living with a mysterious woman who calls herself Larissa. When he is called to the scene of the murder of a nameless woman at the local hospital in Turku, Joentaa is surprised – the woman had been the victim of an unsolved violent crime and had been in a coma for weeks, not expected to survive. What would be the motive to kill her? Even more mysterious is the evidence that the killer has shed tears at the woman's bedside – a murderer who weeps for his victim? For Joentaa, solving this particular crime takes on a new meaning when he not only has to deal with the memories of his wife's death on the same hospital ward years ago, but also Larissa's disappearance from the house at the same time the victim is murdered. Soon more victims follow, and Joentaa links the murders to his nameless victim in Turku – someone is apparently seeking revenge for a crime committed years ago, but what was it, who was the woman, and most importantly, who is the killer?

German born and raised and having made Finland his new home, Wagner writes an unusual hybrid type of mystery – a Scandinavian setting with the melancholy atmosphere of Northern Europe. The scenes play out almost movie like in front of the reader's eyes - imagine a kaleidoscope of atmospheric visual backdrops accompanied by mournful violin music. Snow softly falling on a lost key under an apple tree, a lonely cabin with its lights burning waiting for Joentaa's lover to return, the stark halls of a hospital where Joentaa's wife died. Each scene providing a small glimpse into a character's most innermost feelings, hopes and dreams. Wagner doesn't offer explanations, but instead slowly develops the picture of his characters through carefully placed hints and descriptions which circle in the air like carelessly blown smoke rings, expanding and intertwining until the reader can form his/her own picture.

Unlike many other Scandinavian thrillers, violence is understated in *Light in a Dark House*, though it is always present, a menacing shadow bearing down on its characters. Wagner is not interested in serving up graphic scenes of violent death to shock his readers, but instead focuses on the crime's victims and its aftermath of sadness and loss on others. Often the boundaries between good and evil, justice and crime are blurry, with the victims becoming the perpetrators and vice versa. Wagner does not judge, simply presenting each character's thoughts and emotions and letting them speak for themselves. And yet the novel deals with

some dark and disturbing issues: domestic violence, sexual abuse, trauma, loss, grief and the fate of the nameless victim with nobody to fight for them.

Sadness is a dominant thread running through the entire novel, expressed in the tears the murderer sheds for his nameless victim, in Joentaa crying when confronted with the crime's secondary casualties, or in Larissa sobbing in her sleep. Wagner shows a rare insight into the dark night of the soul when a loved one dies, and explores this in the thoughts and actions of his characters. Everyone who has ever lost a loved one will relate to some of the desolation described in the novel – both in its symbolism as well as its characters. Light in a Dark House is more than simply a murder-mystery, but deals with intricate emotional issues which stay with the reader long until the last page has been turned. In the end not everything is explained and much is left to the reader for interpretation, which in this case worked well for me and left me mindful of the complexities of the human psyche. For my part, I loved Wagner's writing style, which is both sparse and yet rich in emotional depth. Joentaa, who is not afraid to shed tears for the victims of the crimes he is trying to solve, is a complex, mysterious character who I would love to know more about. Only after reading this novel did I find out that Light in a Dark House is the fourth book in a series featuring Kimmo Joentaa, with earlier novels dealing with the aftermath of his wife's untimely death and developing a character with rare psychological insight into the minds of the perpetrators.

I highly recommend Light in a Dark House to anyone who is looking for a bit more than your average murder-mystery. For my part, I am planning to read all of Wagner's earlier books, and eagerly await the next Kimmo Joentaa book in the series.

Thank you to Netgalley and the publisher for providing me with a free electronic preview copy of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

Emma Kerry says

I read an English translation of this book.

Light in a Dark House by Jan Costin Wagner

Finnish detective Kimmo Joentaa is called to the local hospital in which his young wife died several years before. An unidentified woman in a coma has been murdered by someone who wept over the body, their tears staining the sheets around her. The death marks the start of a series of killings, with the unknown patient at their centre.

As autumn turns to winter, and Christmas fast approaches, Kimmo's attempts to unravel the case and identify the first victim are complicated by the disappearance of his girlfriend, who has vanished after an awkward encounter at a party thrown by the head of the police force, and by a colleague's spiral into the depths of a gambling addiction.

Light in a Dark House is an atmospheric, haunting and beautifully written psychological crime thriller from an award winning crime writer.

I really enjoyed this book. I just read that this is the third in a series and I am desperate to read the other two. There is so much I love about this book, its difficult to know where to start. The characters, in particular Kimmo are brilliantly and quirkily drawn. A lot of the peripheral characters are equally well written and

there are a few I would love to see more of.

I really enjoyed the somewhat clippy writing style. This is translated from German and I really wish I was competent enough in German to be able to read the original. I've not read anything like this before.

There are no big, gory descriptions of the murders, instead a general feeling of dread and unease. This book is quite unsettling in places, but this all adds to its magic. I have to say that I found the ending quite abrupt. I turned the page, expecting more, which at first left me a little confused and even bereft, but in hindsight added to the mystery. Not all loose ends are perfectly tied up, which imitates real life. I have a feeling this would translate really well to the screen.

I recommend this to crime fiction lovers.

I received an advanced reader copy from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Marie Graßhoff says

Ich lese nicht sehr oft Krimis, das muss ich sagen, bevor ich meine Meinung zu diesem Buch hier darlege. Zumindest habe ich in letzter Zeit wenige gelesen, früher mehr, aber diese "Phase" war irgendwann vorbei. Aber dieses Buch interessierte mich auf den ersten Blick, der Klappentext klang interessant und anders. Ohne zu wissen, dass der Roman der vierte Teil einer Reihe war, habe ich ihn mir zugelegt - erst später herausgefunden, dass es noch Bände vorher gibt, aber auch ohne sie gelesen zu haben, ist dieses Werk in sich geschlossen und stimmig. Ich denke, ich kann schon zu Anfang sagen, dass mir dieses Buch wieder richtig Lust auf das Genre gemacht hat. Und dass ich vorhabe, mir die ersten drei Teile gleich bei meinem nächsten Einkauf zuzulegen.

Aber der Reihe nach. Schon bei auf den ersten Seiten fiel mir auf: Dieses Buch ist außergewöhnlich. Anders. Knapp. Wenn ich ein Wort suchen müsste, um den Stil des Autoren zu beschreiben, dann würde ich "knapp" wählen, ich habe bisher kein Buch mit einem ähnlichen Stil gelesen - und ich muss gestehen, dass ich mir anfangs nicht sicher war, ob ich das gut finden sollte. Wenn ich das Buch nun aber nach dem Lesen beschreiben müsste, würde ich an "Knapp" noch "Genial" und "Poetisch" fügen. Und nachdenklich. Ruhig. Stimmig. Leise. Und fesselnd.

Ich habe "Das Licht in einem dunklen Haus" innerhalb von 3 Tagen durchgelesen. Wer jedoch einen spannungsgeladenen Thriller mit wilden Verfolgungsjagden erwartet, ist hier an der falschen Adresse. Viel mehr ist es gekennzeichnet durch eine tiefe Traurigkeit, einen kühlen Zustand der Nachdenklichkeit. Manchmal wirre Dialoge, die so nah am Leben sind, so seltsam verzerrt und echt, dass es sich surreal angefühlt hat, sie in dieser Form zu lesen. In positiver Art und Weise.

Es gab einen Vorfall. Einen Vorfall, der schon so lange zurück liegt, dass er schon fast vollkommen aus der Erinnerung des Ortes gewichen zu sein scheint - und doch alle Betroffenen und jene, die davon gehört haben, in Ohnmacht versetzt, der in all seiner bedrückenden Schrecklichkeit noch immer über den Seelen derer hängt, die mit ihm zu tun hatten. Hier spielt weniger die Jagd nach dem Mörder eine Rolle, als die Seele des Menschen, die Verletzlichkeit, die so lange andauern kann, dass man selbst Jahre später noch an Erinnerungen zerbrechen kann.

Ein Mörder, der intelligenter und sympathischer ist als seine skrupellosen Opfer. Und Kimmo Joentaa: ein

Ermittler, der das einzige "Licht" in seinem Leben - seine Freundin Larissa - verloren zu haben scheint und nicht weiß, wo ihm der Kopf deswegen steht. Wie in Trance durchlebt er immer wieder Erinnerungen an seine eigene Vergangenheit, den Tod seiner geliebten Frau Sanna, an den ihn so vieles immer wieder erinnert und die zerrenden Sorgen um Larissa, die ihm keine Ruhe lassen.

Schritt für Schritt kommen er und seine Kollegen dabei nur den geheimnisvollen Morden auf die Spur, entdecken aufgrund eigenartigster Hinweise die richtigen Spuren, die alle an einem Tag im Sommer 1985 zusammenlaufen. Durchsetzt ist die Ermittlung, die aus verschiedenen Sichten erzählt wird, dabei immer wieder durch verschiedene Tagebucheinträge des Mörders, die zwischen dem Jetzt und dem Sommer von vor 25 Jahren wechseln. Eine berührende und traurige Geschichte - und bald muss man sich fragen: Wer ist der eigentliche Böse in dieser Geschichte? Denn eines steht fest: Erkennt man das Motiv des Mörders und auch die weiteren Opfer sehr viel schneller als die Ermittler, fiebert man - zumindest bei mir war es so - nicht mit den Polizisten, sondern mit dem Mörder mit, dessen Motiv man - verrückterweise - einfach so gut verstehen kann.

Und als sich die Spannung am Ende steigert und alle Spuren immer weiter führen, sich die Fäden verstricken und zu einem Punkt führen kommt der Wendepunkt der Geschichte - so überraschend, war man sich doch die ganze Zeit über sicher, alles genau zu wissen. Ein Ende mit dem ich nie gerechnet hätte und das ich gleichzeitig so erschreckend und berührend fand.

- F A Z I T -

Ein wundervolles, bedrückendes, berührendes und vor allem außergewöhnliches Buch über Liebe, Gewalt, Rache und die Suche nach einem Weg zurück ins Leben. Interessante und liebenswerte Charaktere, die man gern begleitet, mit ihnen forscht und leidet. "Das Licht in einem dunklen Haus" bekommt von mir 5 von 5 Sternen.

Ich tue mich immer schwer, 5 Sterne zu vergeben, aber dieses Buch hat sie mehr als verdient. Trotz anfänglicher Zweifel habe ich den Schreibstil zu lieben gelernt und ich bin restlos überzeugt. Ich kann das Buch jedem empfehlen, der offen für einen etwas ruhigeren Kriminalroman ist - versetzt mit viel Menschlichkeit.

John Brooke says

This is the fourth in a series featuring Kimmo Joentaa, a doleful Finnish cop created by German writer Jan Costin Wagner (who spends much time in Finland with his Finnish wife).

Kimmo Joentaa is based in Turku, a city about two hours west of Helsinki. He is a dreamy cop, in perpetual mourning for a wife who died too young. But Kimmo has managed to find a new kind of love with a woman who calls herself Larissa, who works as a prostitute during the day, who cries in her sleep, who plays hockey (goalie) with the kids on the lake in front of his house; who is as damaged as he. It's a detached kind of love. Larissa is not her real name. Kimmo has no idea who this woman really – and somehow it works.

The book begins in a daring way for a cop story. After a first chapter in which we are introduced to the mystery of Kimmo and Larissa, Chapters 2 - 4 find Kimmo and Larissa at a birthday party for the chief of police. This is an extended scene, like a slow traveling shot in a film, the camera wandering through the party, always returning to this strange couple. We get a deep sense of the tender thing happening between the dreamy, damaged cop and the damaged, elusive Larissa. And the motif of false names and the idea of 'names don't matter' that runs through the book is quietly and humorously introduced. In my opinion, this is ten pages of brilliant writing.

Then to work: a comatose woman in hospital has been murdered where she lay helpless and dying in her bed. Why? She would have died anyway – what is the point? And since she was found in a coma, no one knows her identity. When he visits the crime scene - the room on the same ward where his wife died - Kimmo is beset with memories and associations. When he comes home, Larissa has disappeared. Is there a connection? In a sort of daze, Kimmo Joentaa sets about solving the mystery.

The doleful tone of the story – which is the default mode tone of Kimmo Joentaa - pushes a limit. I came close to thinking there is too much reflective silence enveloping the lead character when people are waiting for answers. Ultimately I accepted that and very much enjoyed this story.

Set against Kimmo's contemplation is a diary, appearing every few chapters in the present tense. We soon understand this contains the thoughts and plans of the killer.

Westerberg and Seppo are two cops from Helsinki. Westerberg appeared in *Winter of the Lions*, the 3rd Kimmo Joentaa book. In this story the two Helsinki cops are investigating a bizarre murder in which the victim was thrown from a roof garden in the middle of a business conference reception – and no one noticed. Then another killing occurs in the same 'out in the open' fashion and connections slowly begin to fall into place. Those connections connect with the leads Kimmo Joentaa has been following. The two cases join.

The Helsinki cops provide a well-drawn counterpoint to Kimmo, but not what you'd expect; i.e., they are not high-energy opposed to Kimmo's spacey drifting; to the contrary, Westerberg works in the same quiet, almost sleepy manner; and Seppo, though obsessed, does not make noise. In portraying this, author Wagner is excellent at creating interaction between police investigators working blind, struggling to grasp each their colleagues' hunches and half-thoughts. As mentioned, the rhythm... riddled with ellipses... can be excruciatingly slow. But the subtext psychology is fascinating – and (for my money) true to life.

The mysteries in Turku and Helsinki dovetail in a small city and the surrounding villages on a lake near the border with Russia. There is a photograph, taken at the beach twenty-five years before. There was a piano teacher whom the adolescent students loved, and an abusive boyfriend. Finally an old crime, well known by the locals but never reported, is linked to the present murders.

The resolution of *Light in a Dark House* is oblique. But it feels right for Kimmo Joentaa.

4 stars. I admire Jan Costin Wagner's writing; and how it is translated by Neil Smith.

Linda says

This is another fine addition to the surge of Scandinavian fiction that seems to attach themselves to the success of "The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo."

The beginning was a little slow with a brooding policeman still mourning the loss of his wife and the sudden disappearance of his prostitute girlfriend. Throw in a possible serial killer and the circular trail that leads several police departments to the culprit, plus a surprise ending that you don't see coming, and you are drawn

into this dark, appealing nordic thriller. You won't regret it.

Jacqueline says

Kimmo Joentaa, an atypical Finnish cop, faces a series of murders. The plot did not really catch me. I had a good time, nothing more.

Ellen says

"Kimmo Joentaa leefde met een vrouw zonder naam in een herfst zonder regen. Het hogedrukgebied werd Magdalena gedoopt. De vrouw liet zich Larissa noemen. Ze kwam en ging. Hij wist niet waarvandaan en waarheen."

Namen. Dat is het grootste probleem van Kimmo Joenta. Het is namelijk niet alleen Larissa van wie hij de (echte) naam niet weet, maar hij weet ook niet wie die vrouw is die weken geleden bewusteloos in de berm van de weg is gevonden. Net zomin als hij weet wie het nodig heeft gevonden om deze sindsdien in het ziekenhuis in coma liggende vrouw, huilend en al te vermoorden.

Op het moment dat Kimmo Joentaa de opdracht krijgt om de moordenaar van de naamloze vrouw op te sporen, verdwijnt ook Larissa. Dat deed ze wel vaker, maar dit keer heeft ze de huissleutel achtergelaten. Kimmo mist haar. Anders dan Sanna om wie hij nog steeds rouwt, maar hij missen doet hij haar en dus gaat hij ook naar haar op zoek. Maar het is moeilijk om een vrouw die niet gevonden wil worden, te vinden. Zeker als je over niet meer dan haar werknaam en mailadres - veryhotlarissa@pagemails.fi - beschikt. Er is echter ??????n naam die, naarmate er meer moorden worden gepleegd op diverse plekken in Finland, steeds vaker opduikt: Karjasaari, een klein dorpje in het zuiden van Finland ten oosten van Helsinki. In de zomer van 1985 blijkt daar iets te hebben plaatsgevonden dat 25 jaar later resulteert in diverse, zeer publieke moorden.

De zoektocht van Kimmo Joentaa en een aantal van zijn collega's naar de moordenaar(s?), wordt afgewisseld met fragmenten uit een dagboek. Wie er schrijft blijft lang onduidelijk. En of hij iets met de gebeurtenissen in de tegenwoordige tijd te maken heeft is net zo onzeker. Het is allemaal wat schimmig. Net als de gedachtegang van Kimmo Joentaa bij tijd en wijle schimmig is. Zo ziet Joentaa als hij het ziekenhuis verlaat waar hij naar toe geroepen werd vanwege de vermoorde vrouw, naast een paar fietsen een bromfiets staan en denkt dan: De kleur klopte, het nummerbord niet. De eerste letter was al fout.. Bromfiets? Waarom let hij op bromfietsen? Wat hebben bromfietsen met de zojuist gepleegde moord te maken? Niets. Maar wel alles met Larissa; zij reed op een brommer.

Het is niet alleen Kimmo Joenta die alert moet zijn en blijven, dat eist auteur Jan Costin Wagner ook van zijn lezers. Iemand die lekker voor de vuist weg wil lezen en daarbij regelmatig pagina's diagonaal scant, zal niet gelukkig worden van Licht in een donker huis. Die mist dan te vaak en te veel van de kleine hints en zijsprongen die het verhaal, maar vooral de personages kleur geven. Voor wie zich buiten de gebaande (Scandinavische) thrillerpaden durft te begeven en op reis wil gaan naar Karjasaari in het gezelschap van een aardige, ietwat na???eve, soms wat verwarde, maar op het juiste moment scherpe Finse rechercheur is Licht in een donker huis een aanrader.

Prima vertaald door Gerda Meijerink

Lisa Marie says

This book was okay. It picked near the middle, but I think the writing style was a bit choppy and I found that I couldn't care for the hero Kimmo; like he was in too much of a fog from his wife's death, that he himself didn't make sense as a detective.
