



The Wall Between

Jesper Bugge Kold , K.E. Semmel (Translator)

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Why would someone want to murder the father he never knew?

After Peter Körber is stabbed to death in Berlin, his son, Andreas, leaves his home in Denmark, where he was raised by his mother and stepfather, and travels to that once-divided city to uncover the brutal truth. In his search to know this complete stranger, Andreas hopes to come to grips with his own identity crisis, stalled academic career, and failed relationship.

But what kind of man was his father? A complicated portrait begins to emerge concerning Peter's role in the German Democratic Republic before reunification. As Andreas struggles to find a chink in the wall of secrets and lies that obscures the real Peter Körber, he brings to light disturbing revelations that open fresh wounds and have devastating consequences.

Gripping and profoundly moving, *The Wall Between* is a haunting novel of the harsh realities of living under a repressive regime, the price of blind allegiance to ideology, and the moral complexity of personal culpability.

The Wall Between Details

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From Reader Review The Wall Between for online ebook

Jerrie says

After a life dedicated to a cause in which he believed over all else, a lonely man faces his death at 54, recognizes his murderer, and knows why he is dying. This book depicts difficulty of living in communist East Germany--some by choice, others merely captured by circumstance. You buy the lies, you own the product. Regrets? No joy to be found in this tale. Is it possible to really get to "know" a person you never met who is no longer alive even though you have a direct genetic link to him?

The story is marred by having to stumble past too many, too long and difficult to read names of places and streets. It also was confusing keeping track of the many stories jumping back and forth 30 years, 20 years, 10 years, present time, etc.--where are we now and with whom?

Lastly, it needed a proofreader, not just an automated spellcheck, in order to correct or remove misplaced words.

Anna-Sofie says

Bogen handler ikke bare om landet DDR, der med et slag bliver et "land i datid", men også om personernes fortid, og hvordan den har dannet og formet dem som mennesker i dag.

Bogen er længe lidt uforløst - velsagtens fordi hovedpersonen Andreas er mærkelig vattet og utsydelig som karakter, men det vejes op til sidst, hvor Andreas tager sin skæbne på sig og bliver sig selv på en helt anden måde end tidligere.

Jeg synes, bogens krydsklipning fungerer godt, plottet er spændende, og der en god fremdrift i bogen.

Trevor says

Very enjoyable read, by an author who I had not previously come across.

Told as two parallel narratives, one in the past and the other the present, this is the story of a family split by the Berlin Wall and brought together by a murder, which is not solved until the last pages.

This is a well paced, well written/translated story which I thoroughly enjoyed.

I was given a copy of this book by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Jenni DaVinCat says

I read Jesper Bugge Kold's first book, Winter Men, last year and really enjoyed Kold's style and his ability to write complex, complicated and believable characters. When I saw that he had another book being translated into English, I was very excited and picked it up as soon as I could.

This book was a little slow to start for me. There was a lot of German geography with very long street names

that were hard to distinguish from other street names (as a non-German speaking person). After about 50-70 or so pages, it really starts to pick up steam. He stops focusing so much on the research and geography (although the research is important!) and focuses more on characters and their relationships to each other. The book is told from the POV of three different characters, and weaves seamlessly back and forth through time (1975-2006).

One of my favorite aspects of the book was to read from the POV of someone who fully believes in Communism and their critiques and opinions of a capitalist society. I was very young when the Berlin wall fell, so it seems like ancient history to me. Reading this book helped place it into a more modern time-frame and helped me to realize that that event still has an effect on people living there today. It's not something you fully realize until you're staring it in the face.

As with his last book, Kold has created another excellent work of well-researched historical fiction. His characters are believable and sympathetic, and are easy to empathize with. He builds complex relationships and situations that are so rewarding to read about because the payoff at the end of the book makes it all worth the journey. If you are a fan of historical fiction, I highly recommend checking out either of Jesper Kold's books. You will not regret it!

Cphe says

Had this novel on pre-order early after reading the synopsis. The premise of a son Andreas searching for the truth about his father Peter who he has never known. The setting appealed to me as the novel takes place in the GDR before it was unified. It's a period and setting that I'm not overly familiar with.

The novel goes back and forth between two periods, from the 1970's to 2005/2006. The novel isn't overly long and the chapters are relatively short. The switching back and forth between time periods and the characters gave the delivery a choppy feel. It was confusing initially to read. Also it was difficult to get a good sense of the main characters their thoughts, feelings and real motivations. For such a time of upheaval, unrest and fear the characters themselves were emotionless and very difficult to feel any empathy for.

Enjoyed the historical detail and premise of the novel overall but it lacked in depth characters that you could really come to terms with.

Mette Thomsen says

Jeg var fanget fra start til slut... en meget intens og overraskende handling, der absolut ikke lægger fingrene imellem, men også prøver at forstå...

Stina says

Anmeldelsen kan læses på bloggen

Rex says

Jesper Bugge Kold's previous novel, Winter Men, is one of the best pieces of historical fiction I have ever read. I enjoyed it thoroughly and was greatly impressed by the level of detail Kold incorporated into his story. It was so obvious he had done extensive research (I read somewhere that he spent two years doing so) and did a masterful job of placing his protagonists in the times and places that engulfed Germany during World War II. When I finished Winter Men, my first thought was, I want to read this book again some day. For me that is as high as praise can get!

So I was very excited when I found out he had another historical fiction novel in the works. I hoped The Wall Between would meet or exceed the standard Kold set with Winter Men.

It came close. The first third of the novel works way too hard to try and impress us with the level of research and detail Kold is able to achieve. It's almost as if he took the praise he received for his efforts on Winter Men to an extreme. But unlike Winter Men, where he fully incorporated the details of location and geography into the plot, in The Wall Between it often felt as if he was simply reciting street names and locations in East Berlin for no reason other than to prove he had looked them up on a map. We really did not need to know the detailed footpath a person took to get from one location to another, and if you are not familiar with the German language, it becomes mind-boggling to try and sound out these incredibly long names in your head. My reading pace came to a standstill and I actually began to be annoyed.

Fortunately Kold picked up the pace and focused on his characters and the story line throughout the majority of the book. And the difference is night and day. It is a wonderfully rich tale that moves back and forth through time effortlessly and provides us rich insights into the tragedy that was Cold-War Berlin. I was impressed with the many layers of torment he was able to create for his protagonists and found myself deeply embroiled in their confusion and ambivalence toward what happened during the final days of a divided Germany. His dialogue is genuine and, as with Winter Men, he wove the true events of the day perfectly with the actions of his characters.

So four stars for being 2/3 of another masterpiece. I'm looking forward to what is next from this writer. And I still hope to one day re-read Winter Men; perhaps this work as well.

Hannelore Cheney says

When I started reading this book, I wasn't sure if I would like it. But as the story progressed it became obvious this was an engrossing, albeit depressing, story.

Andreas travels from Denmark to Berlin to settle his late father Peter's affairs. He has inherited Peter's apartment and after the funeral decides to stay on to discover the father he never knew.

Peter worked his way up as a Stasi operative from 1975 on, climbing the ladder of success. Blindly devoted to the cause he reports on the activities of the people around him, with disastrous results for some of them. The regime's claustrophobic, terrifying rule is ruthless and makes for dark reading.

As Andreas delves into his father's past he realizes the man he fantasized about didn't exist and as the truth finally opens his eyes, he falls apart.

Upon returning to Denmark, his soul searching changes him irrevocably. Realizing he and his father were probably more alike than not, he turns his life around and the book ends on an optimistic note.

Very well written, I couldn't tear myself away - despite the grey, dreary and hopeless feelings engendered by

the descriptions of life in East Germany. It beggars belief it took so long for the regime to collapse and also that history repeats itself over and over again.

When will we learn...

Thank you Netgalley and Amazon Crossing for the eARC.

Anthonia says

This book told an interesting story. There is sadness in this and the the book goes back and fourth between time periods which get me a little lost. Still a wonderful book to read, a must read for any and all lovers of books.

Liz Thackray says

Fascinating book. Three parallel and interweaving stories focusing on the life of a Stasi officer, his illegitimate son and one of his 'victims'. Rather than criticising the DDR State Sicherheit machine, we are left to draw our own conclusions as the motivation and actions of the three men are considered. Very clever and thought provoking.

Vicky-Leigh Sayer says

The Wall Between is the first novel I've read that features the falling of the Berlin Wall and life in Germany before the fall.

In it we meet Andreas, a son searching for and trying to get to know his father following his death.

Andreas' father is former Stasi officer and Andreas is forced to search for answers from people whose lives in East Berlin have led them to be cautious or even fearful of the truth.

They do not want to answer Andreas' questions, but he is desperate to know the truth.

The wall between offers us three differing perspectives, those of Peter; the deceased Stasi officer, his illegitimate son; Andreas and one of his 'victims'.

But rather than damning the DDR State Sicherheit, this novel lets us draw our own conclusions as we given the perspectives of those living through the troubled and difficult periods.

It is a clever and thought provoking novel and one that should be considered by anyone looking for something a little different to read.

Joyce says

5 Stars

This is the story of Peter, Andreas and Stefan, and Stefan's brother Alexander. The book goes back and forth between 1975 plus and 2006.

During his student days in 1975, Peter falls for a girl named Elisabeth. She is a student from Copenhagen. Unbeknownst to Peter when she returns home, she gives birth to a son whom she names Andreas.

Meanwhile Peter works for the Stasi, the German Democratic Republic's (GDR), secret police. As he rises in the ranks, he spies, reports and evaluates his neighbors and people he sees on the streets for desirability and to judge whether they are a danger to the state. What constitutes a danger is certainly in the eye of the beholder.

Stefan and Alexander dream of defecting to the West. They plan ways in which they can escape.

Andreas goes to Berlin after the fall of the wall to bury his father and to get to know him. Andreas is kind of a failure. He never finished his masters degree, has never really held a job and generally drifts through life. He decides to stay in Berlin to learn more about his father. That he worked for the Stasi comes as a big surprise.

The Stasi was built on fear and manipulation and a complete disregard for human rights. Repression by the state was transformed into protecting people – from themselves. This is a quote from the review, "...the price of blind allegiance to ideology, and the moral complexity of personal culpability." Andreas has a very hard time understanding why his father worked for such a system.

This book takes a very hard look at life in the GDR, the Stasi and the lengths some will go to preserve their idea of what is right. It is downright scary. I remember hearing occasional stories of people escaping from the GDR and this book brought it all back. It had to be truly awful to risk all for a taste of freedom. This book was both eye opening and so sad. Even after the fall of the wall, there was a group who still believed in the fall of capitalism and the decadence of the West.

Jesper Bugge Kold is a remarkable author. The book is thoughtful, well written and plotted. I will definitely read more of his work. (And hats off to his translator – he did a very good job as well.)

I want to truly thank Netgalley and AmazonCrossing for forwarding to me a copy of this most wonderful book to read.

Manchester Military History Society (MMHS) says

A gripping and moving story of the former East Germany.

Andreas lives in Copenhagen and receives a letter informing him that his father who he has never met has been stabbed to death in Berlin, and that he has inherited his flat. Keen to understand more about the father that his mother wouldn't speak of he travels to Berlin to discover more.

Jesper Bugge Kold combines multiple timelines and characters to produce a brilliant story of the GDR, the Stasi and relationships. This book reminded somewhat of the film "Life of Others" and anyone who liked the film or is interested in the former East Germany should read this.

It's tautly written but with some almost cinematic descriptions of Berlin. I found it an absolute page turner and read it within a day which is unusual for me.

Highly recommended.

I received this book free from Netgalley and was not required to write a positive review.

Laura H says

This was an interesting story about a son looking into the life of a father he didn't know and piecing together information he finds out from those who thought they knew him. Surprise ending that links all the stories together in the end. Well written!
