Lovereading Reader reviews of

The Fire Witness by Lars Kepler

Below are the complete reviews, written by Lovereading members.

Rachael Anderson

**A gripping thriller which does not disappoint. Action packed, with lots of twists and turns to keep you on your toes.**

This is the third book in the Joona Linna series. Joona Linna is a highly driven police detective with a dark past, which is touched upon throughout the course of the novel.

The story opens with a brutal murder at an institution for troubled young girls. The main suspect goes missing and a large portion of the story centres around trying to find her. However, everything is not what it seems.

The action packed chapters are very short and, combined with a present tense narration, you want to keep on reading until you have effectively found out all there is to find.

An excellent, fast paced page turner. I finished it within twenty four hours. I will certainly look out for the sequel.

Rebecca Cockeram

**A fast paced thriller that keeps going until the very last page.
Excellent read, I couldn’t put it down.**

The ‘Fire Witness’ is an excellent book. The chapters are short and to the point, there's no long unnecessary descriptions which means reading the book gives you a sense of urgency mirrored in the story itself.
It is a suitably creepy thriller, which I possibly shouldn’t have read on my nightshift because it definitely plays on your mind.

The author keeps the pace moving quickly, giving you only the information you need, no long back stories and this is refreshing.

This is the first book of Keplers that I’ve read but it won’t be the last. I loved the easy way it’s written and Joona Linna is a likeable protagonist that you really care about. He’s intuitive and excellent at his job, ignoring the fact that he shouldn’t be investing the murder and disappearance, but never comes across as arrogant. The author keeps the pace of the book going to the very end, the story never drags.

This is a definite must read.

Magda North

A stand out read. ‘The Fire Witness’ brings together great writing, phenomenal plotting and very credible characters. And whilst in some novels, the focus on teen girls can feel tacky and even voyeuristic, Lars Keplar gets away with it here because his storytelling is so good. I believe in the horrible, disturbed and very vulnerable girls in care. They feel real as do the predatory males around them. And the girl accused of a double murder is amazingly resourceful in the way she looks after the people she cares about. The cop, Joona Linna, also has sides to him. I will definitely look out for ‘The Sandman’ which is the next thriller in the series.

Emma Barton

‘The Fire Witness’ grabs your attention from the first page and the fast paced story holds it to the very end.

The Fire Witness is the third Lars Kepler book (a husband and wife writing duo) that features the detective Joona Linna. I read the first book, ‘The Hypnotist’ when it was first published and although I remembered enjoying it, I cannot remember the details. It is obvious from this book that there are prequels and I do wish I’d read ‘The Nightmare’ before ‘The Fire Witness’.

The story moves at a fast pace and keeps your interest throughout. It begins with two horrific murders at a care home for troubled teenage girls. Joona Linna is under internal investigation (obviously part of the story in the second book) and is instructed to only observe the investigation. He cannot help but get involved
and the story proceeds as he follows the clues. New characters are introduced throughout but it is easy to follow the narrative, and a little too easy to work out who the bad guy is! This is an enjoyable read that ends with you desperate to pick up the next Lars Kepler book ‘The Sandman’.

**Alan Brown**

*A success for style over substance with the readers' reactions to the story more important than the story.*

**This is a book which scares as well as horrifies.** The short chapters, use of the present tense and the timing of the chapter ends all contribute to this.

This feeling is set up at the very beginning as no time is spent setting the story into a background or describing reference points for the reader. **Even though this is the third book in the series** about Inspector Joona Linna the style of the writing makes this irrelevant as **the book is self-sufficient and can be read as a stand alone noir fiction story.**

As far as the story goes the last part is not as interesting for the story has almost been given away but it is just as important as the rest of the book for increasing the intensity and pace of the story as all the unsettling feelings are corralled into the story’s end.

The one question that kept coming up was about the quality of the translation for the style of the writing means that almost every word contributes to the feelings of headlong abandonment essential to the tale.

**Sarah Williams**

*Not the best example of the genre.*

*I was keen to read ‘The Fire Witness’, it had been described as “psychologically tense and with great appeal to fans of Stieg Larsson and Jo Nesbo”. This was the first of the Joona Linna series I had read and I now had high expectations, sadly it wasn’t long before I realised that this book could only be compared with those of Larsson or Nesbo on a very superficial level i.e. the Scandinavian setting. The book wasn’t dreadful but the comparison did it no favours, beyond increased sales figures no doubt.*

*The detective who solves the case by ignoring protocol whilst battling his inner demons has become cliché but I don’t care, I love that tired old image but Joona Linna was a bad example and, along with every other character, he was so two*
dimensional I didn't care about him. Not being emotionally invested in the lead character wouldn't necessarily have been a problem though if the plot had been exciting and convincing.

The initial set-up was promising but as the story developed it became more and more implausible. As a crime reader I understand that certain liberties will be taken with reality in order to provide a good story so I can forgive a lot but again it was just so badly executed I became frustrated. I don't want to go into detail and risk spoiling the story so I will just say that there is a major twist which should have left me reeling but got more of a "oh right, that explains that other bit from earlier". The technical foundations of this novel were just too visible.

Not a terrible novel but not one I'll come back to and probably the only Lars Kepler I'll read.

Ray Orgill

The story opens in a Swedish state approved home for vulnerable young girls. One of the residents has been brutally murdered and then laid out in a bewildering pattern. Another of the girls has disappeared and a search of her room reveals a blood coated hammer under her pillow and this calls into question her involvement in the crime. Detective Inspector Joona Linna is instructed to observe the investigation but as he is under suspension over another matter, he must not interfere. Even so he is drawn deeper and deeper into the search for evidence. Then follows the discovery of the remains of the night warden of the home who has also been slaughtered.

The investigation proceeds at a breakneck pace but at every turn there is a reversal of fortunes and not the least of which is the approach by a self-professed medium who wishes to sell the information she is gleaning by listening to the deceased. She is dismissed as a fake but there is a suspicion that this time there may be an element of truth in her claims.

It is a truly horrendous set of circumstances which keeps the reader glued to the page...not to be read in solitude.

Melanie Rose

A good read full of unexpected twists.

This wouldn't normally be my book of choice but, having said that, I did enjoy
It is the third in the series but I don't feel I missed anything by not reading the first two. The chapters are short and to the point but it is a big book (nearly 600 pages). Coupled with the fact that it is set in Sweden with unusual names it took me longer than normal to read (about 2 weeks).

It is difficult to say a lot without giving away the plot but if it wasn't for DI Joona Linna going out on a limb, an innocent girl would be tried for murder. It ends with DI Joona Linna looking into his past and leaves you wondering what will happen to him next and will this be explored in the next book?

Kerry Bridges - www.iamalwaysreading.wordpress.com/

Joona Linna is on suspension from the National Police so he shouldn't even be investigating the case; he's just an observer. But Joona doesn't agree with the conclusions of the prosecutor or the investigating officer so he is determined to solve the case himself - whatever the cost.

The novel centres around a pair of murders which take place in a home for troubled girls - after the murders some of the girls run away and Vicky Bennet doesn't come back; instead, she steals a car with a little boy in it and runs away. Joona Linna doesn't think that Vicky is the bad person she was made out to be and tries to investigate her story himself - of course, there is more to it all than meets the eye.

This is apparently the third outing for Joona and although I have not read the previous two novels, I would now like to do so as I really enjoyed this one. The translation from Scandinavian is slightly stilted (not as smooth as Steven Sartorelli's perfect translations of Montelbano for example) but I feel that this adds to the dark atmosphere of the novel rather than detracting from it.

My only complaint was that the last 3 chapters seem to be rather irrelevant and in a book this length, there was no need for them; especially as the extracts from the next novel given in this one are almost a word for word repeat. I am sure there will be overlap between the stories but it did feel that they were an add-on rather than completing this story. Still, as my only small issue they did not detract from my overall enjoyment of this excellent novel. I look forward to the next one with interest.

Helen Lowry

Vicky Bennet is a young girl living at a home for troubled girls. One of the other
girls has been found brutally murdered, along with an employee. Vicky disappears, kidnapping a young boy en route, and is the obvious suspect. But, she has plenty of supporters, including the murdered employee’s husband, a psychologist.

Joona Linna is a top detective, under investigation with the Internal Investigators, but with a reputation of finding his man. He is a rebel with his boss, but aren’t the best detectives? He has his own issues as becomes clear as the book progresses.

I wasn’t sure about the introduction of Flora, a medium, unsure how much she actually contributed to the story.

The pace is quick, helped by the short chapters, which move the plot on very well, which I liked. There is plenty to keep your interest, in particular at the end; where a bit of previous knowledge would have helped. Then again, it makes me want to read the earlier books to find out what has already happened to Joona.

A good read and highly recommended.

Les Warriner

Perseverance pays - a slow start but it just gets better and better.

I found this book very difficult to get into. After two gruesome murders in a home for troubled girls, the story wends its way, seemingly purposeless through what appear to be unrelated events. However, I stuck with it, much as it turns out, did the hero DI Joona Linna and found the various threads coming together into a fascinating climax.

Linna was only on the case as an observer, but doggedly took the lead role, sometimes surreptitiously, but always to the annoyance of the case officers and his bosses. He refused to accept that the principal suspect was automatically guilty, and followed his intuition to bring the real culprit to book.

The conclusion came as a total surprise to me - I never saw it coming. I enjoyed the book so much I have already loaded my e-book with the first two novels in the series for some holiday reading.

Jenn O'Neill

This was my first foray into Scandi Noir genre. I found this book thrilling from the outset that gripped me straight into the story and the characters.
Being my first book and not having read the first two in the Joona Linna series, I felt like I was playing catch up at some points but did not feel like I was too distracted from the main story. I enjoyed the journey that the book took and the twists and turns through the eyes of the different characters.

Bev Farningham

First of all you have to get your head around all the Swedish names! A young girl is found brutally murdered with her hands covering her eyes. A carer is also found dead as bloody hammer is found under another girl’s pillow. Was she a witness or the actual killer? Then another girl unconnected with the Home who acts as a medium starts getting visions. Are these of this murder or go further back?

Enter DI Joona Linna to try and get to the bottom of this, and finds more than he wanted to. Some connected to him personally found it difficult to interact with the characters as the chapters were so short – two to three pages. Seemed like bullet points! Also this is part of a series and I feel it would be advisable to read the first two prior. Open for a sequel. Interesting title - could relate to three events but will not disclose these as it could give some of the plot away.