



The Fire Dance

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In this sixth installment in the critically acclaimed Swedish crime series, the murder of a young ballerina named Sophie, apparently an arson victim, sets off shrill alarm bells for Detective Inspector Irene Huss, who remembers the matching details of an unsolved case from fifteen years earlier, when Irene had only just started in the police force. The stepfather of the then eight-year-old Sophie has been murdered in a very similar way, and at the time the girl herself had been under suspicions. The circumstances force Irene and her colleagues to confront an uncomfortable question: can a child be responsible for the cold-blooded murder of an adult? The case awakens vivid memories that take the reader back to Irene's days as a young police officer.

The Fire Dance Details

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From Reader Review The Fire Dance for online ebook

Laura says

I find this series to be a bit uneven, and this installment was one of the weaker ones. The mystery itself is OK, but the dance writing feels a little forced and Angelika and Sophie are kind of flat as characters. I also thought we spent a little bit too much time on Huss' home life - I like that it fleshes out her character, but the plotlines with her daughters just seemed extraneous.

This is a solid book, and if you're a fan of the series, I'd definitely check it out. However, it's not the strongest example of Tursten's work.

Melissa says

Still looking for escapist reading after the election. It is good to read about the nuts and bolts of detective work, even when the crime isn't easy to take -- this one concerns a young woman, a dancer/choreographer, who disappears and then is found dead in the remains of a fire. It turns out old crimes cast long shadows, especially when they were made with fire.

Diane S ? says

I love when the title of a novel is actually indicative of what one will find in the book, so many of them are not. This case takes Irene Huss back fifteen years to one of her first cases, a case that involved a fire. Go figure. In the present, the person they questioned as a possible suspect back then is now found dead.

Although I felt Irene was not quite as sharp as in her previous novels, this one is still very entertaining. I loved all the information on dance and learned a new term, which is also a type of dance called capoeira. There are a few secondary plots, including one involving a Hell's Angel that had once put Irene in the hospital. Her personal ;life takes a scary turn as well. Good, solid and entertaining read.

Deb says

Slow moving and disappointing. Sophie, 11-year old girl, Accused of setting a fire that killed her stepfather. Fast forward 15 years and Sophie is dead having been burned in a dilapidated shed. Irene Huss had investigated the first fire and interviewed Sophie at that time and is now investigating Sophie's death. The circumstances re the fires were a bit obvious; therefore, the ending was a disappointment.

Gloria Feit says

Fifteen years is a long time between police investigations involving the same person, but that is what

Inspector Irene Huss finds as she investigates the death of a young woman, Sophie, who as an eight-year-old girl was suspected of arson in the death of her stepfather when their house burned down. What is so striking in the present is that Sophie was burned to death.

The novel proceeds basically in fits and starts, as Irene and the rest of the Gotberg Murder Squad encounter other cases taking up time, and as she seeks either a clue to the past, as well as the present, or inspiration. Sophie had grown up to be a choreographer and dancer who created a dance called, naturally, The Fire Dance, which debuts posthumously to great acclaim.

As in the previous five installments in the series, Irene juggles her police duties with family life, her gourmet chef husband and twin daughters who now exhibit minds of their own in relation to their interests and boyfriends. This portrayal makes Irene a sympathetic, and somewhat harried, character. But she prevails somehow in both roles. At the same time, the author manages to move a crime story forward subtly with panache.

Recommended.

Julie says

Well done! Tight plot, interesting subplots; this is my favorite book in the series so far. Although the other detectives on Irene's team remain as dimension-less as usual, if not more so, at least the oh-so-perfect husband character, Krister, finally shows some realistic human frailties.

Sharon Chrust says

Another well done Irene Huss mystery. I'm eager to get to the next one. At the end of this, there is a bit of a cliff-hanger, which I usually do not like at all. But in this case, I'll forgive it.

The body of the work was Tursten's usual cast of characters working on a current arson that seems to link to one that is decades old. A brilliant, young dancer is found dead in a burned out shack but she is the same person who as an 11 year old was on the outside of another fatal fire. Was there a connection and if so what and how. Family secrets provide a backdrop.

I enjoyed this look back at Irene's early years as a detective, including her current colleagues as seen as that time. It's probably not a good stand-alone but I enjoyed it.

Bonnie Brody says

I have read several of the Irene Huss mysteries and this one does not disappoint. It takes place in two separate time periods, one fifteen years ago, and the other right now. Irene is investigating the arson death of a dancer named Sophie who was burned alive. Sophie's death reminds Irene of a fire and murder fifteen years previously when Sophie's step-father was killed in a similar manner.

Sophie is a strange person. She most likely has schizoid personality disorder and may have a mild case of Asperger's Syndrome. She has no friends and her one true passion is dance. She speaks little and there is no one who is important in her life except perhaps her father who is a composer.

The investigation into Sophie's murder is very interesting and the characters are well-developed. Irene is a police detective, mother, ju jitsu champion, dog lover, and wife. All these aspects of her persona are explored. She comes across as a whole human being which is not often the case in a police procedural.

The novel takes place in Goteburg, Sweden, a cold and foggy place. Even Goteburg comes alive in Tursten's words as we read about the people who populate this sub-arctic region. Laura Wideburg's translation is excellent.

As Irene gets closer and closer to solving the murder, other crimes enter the story like red herrings and this is what keeps me from giving it a five. There are gangland murders, the release from prison of a criminal who terrorized Irene in a past novel, and the like. If the novel had focused solely on Sophie's murder and its investigation, it would have been much better.

Amy Chan says

This is my first time reading this series, and I had no problem jumping into Irene's life and work. The character's voice are strong. The twist and turns fascinated me. Side stories of family and friends are engaging to read as well, but they do not distract one from the main plot. I particularly love how Helene had successfully interwoven the art of ballet with the story behind Sophie's secrets and death. I truly enjoyed this novel.

Nancy Oakes says

like a 3.75

This one is definitely not representative of the best of Tursten's work -- that honor goes to *The Torso*, much more edgy and less chick-ish. However, I am always happy to read anything new by Tursten, one of my favorites among a dwindling list of Scandinavian crime writers I still read.

The Fire Dance splits time periods -- the first, from 1989-1990, when Irene has been with the department only a month. Her girls are very young, and husband Krister is grateful for his 30-hour/wk part-time job. A difficult case found its way into her lap when after three months, a young girl named Sophie Malmborg, possible witness to a fire at her home that killed a man, has been unwilling to speak for three months. Despite the best efforts of professionals, Sophie will not talk. Irene's boss, Sven Andersson, figures that since Irene is a woman with small children, she might have much more luck getting Sophie to say something. She gets plenty from all of the other people in Sophie's life, but Sophie still isn't talking. With no further clues, and with other cases coming up, the case goes cold, and life moves on. Flash forward to 2004 -- fifteen years after the house fire, Sophie is dead, after having disappeared for three weeks. Irene now has only very meager clues, but several suspects, and as was the case fifteen years earlier she's needed on another big case and time is growing short. In the meantime, things are happening on the home front that will require her attention.

Helene Tursten is always able to provide her armchair-detective readers with a solid mystery to ponder, and that is certainly the case in *The Fire Dance*. Irene must rely on the fifteen-year old unsolved case to make any headway in the present, and the way Tursten sets up this up case gives it kind of an eerie turn. She also does a fine job in conveying Irene's devotion both to the job and her family, and does so a way that never seems forced. I could do with less of the dog (I think I say that about every Irene Huss novel) and the emphasis on the food choices made by the vegan daughter, but otherwise, I appreciate this aspect of Tursten's series. While I didn't find it as edgy or as solid as her book *The Torso*, my favorite of the series, *The Fire Dance* still very much pleased my picky crime-fiction reader self. All I would say in the negative zone is that I would have loved to have seen less cute and more edge. But that's a personal thing.

Regular followers of this series will not be disappointed; probably not a good read for hardboiled, noir or cozy crime readers; more for those who enjoy solid police procedurals with a personal twist. As my list of favorite Scandinavian crime writers is dwindling, I'm am so happy to have found this series, and I'm even happier that Soho continues to publish them for American readers.

Leela4 says

Terrible. I'm sorry I looked at it. It's no mystery. I hope this is nothing like what passes for police procedure in Sweden. The characters are mostly vicious and all unintelligent. Nor was the book edited. I think the narrative problems were the most unbearable thing about it, such as a sequence when a police officer loudly knocks on a door twice, enters, then is assaulted for "sneaking" around--nor sees anything either odd or actionable about this. Ew!

Michael Quillin says

Long walk for a short drink of water. A slight plot padded with painstakingly detailed descriptions of every scene leading to an unsatisfying conclusion.
Not her best effort.

Patricia Ann says

English speaking audience will enjoy reading another Irene Huss novel by the Swedish author Helene Tursten. After investigating a house fire Irene finds a girl by the side of the road. The girl is expressionless and disengaging and does not speak even though she can. Irene solves the riddle of this girl while investigating gang killings. An unexpected person from one of her past cases reappears.

Lynn says

Very good entry in the Irene Huss series. Learned a bit about some mental illnesses I didn't know about.....so that was fun. Also reading about capoeira made me want to learn more and watch it online.

Kathleen says

Irene Huss is a favorite of mine as is the Goteborg Sweden setting and this book did not disappoint. The author has aged her characters gently and appropriately with enjoyable status updates on their present activities. Even Sammie the dog is enjoying life as much as he did when I last visited the family.

Aiding the readjustment was a split timeframe for the mystery, two or more mysteries were taking place over a fifteen years period. A child was suspected of knowledge of a crime but was protected by family and child protective service workers. Fast forwarding over those years we meet the young woman who was the child Sophie as a victim of a violent murder. Was she a victim or merely a disturbed child who grew up in a terribly dysfunctional family?

Sophie's mother, brother, father and other family members definitely warranted Inspector Huss' attention. She is accused of spying, trespassing and causing bodily harm to at least one member of this family. At the same time her husband developed amnesia and her twin daughters add their own distractions to her successful policing of the case.

The ending was unexpected but well done. Helen Tursten knows how to weave a plot successfully and to maneuver her characters in a believable manner. I received a review copy from NetGalley and am quite glad I did.
