

THE FALLEN by John Sutherland

Published by Orion (a division of HarperCollins)

My latest book recommendation is ‘*The Fallen*’ by John Sutherland. When police negotiator, Alex Lewis, is tasked with dissuading a young woman from jumping off Westminster Bridge, he is unaware of the political scandal he is about to uncover.

MY REVIEW

Plagued with memories of two previous hostage situations, police negotiator Superintendent Alex Lewis is sent to Westminster Bridge, where Becca Palmer is threatening to jump into the Thames. Successfully managing to talk the young woman down, Alex is then alarmed to discover two weeks later that the same woman is back on Westminster Bridge, once again threatening to jump.

During their conversations, Becca claims she had been having an affair with Simon Jones MP, the charismatic Policing Minister, but that he had just ended it. She also tells Alex she suspects Simon is involved with something criminal. However, when told of her claims and suicide attempts, the Minister denies all knowledge of her ‘obvious fantasy’. Instead, concerned for her welfare, he advocates the belief she needs help.

Convinced Becca could be telling the truth, and worried about her state of mind, Alex visits the Home Office to interview the Minister but is unable to speak to him. He is then warned by his superior to drop the matter and concentrate on his other duties, but when he learns that a freelance reporter, Rowan Blake, is carrying out her own investigation into Simon Jones’s possible illicit dealings, he decides to join forces with her to find out exactly what the Minister is up to – a decision that not only puts Becca’s life in danger but also his own.

Having liked John’s debut novel ‘*The Siege*’, I was keen to read ‘*The Fallen*’, his second novel following the traumatic life of police negotiator Alex Lewis. I was not disappointed. In fact, I found it even more engrossing.

The plot is well constructed, and the tension expertly maintained. Not only does the author manage to convey the enormous stress and sense of responsibility felt by a police negotiator, but he also provides an intriguing, multi-layered storyline – one which gradually reveals the dangerous consequences of trusting the wrong person.

Right from the start it is difficult to decide who is telling the truth. Becca has a history of instability and an over-active imagination, while Simon is a perfect family man with a spotless track record. Even Rowan's motives are potentially suspect. After all, she is an ambitious journalist who is hoping to write a story that will make her name. Add to that a backdrop of political corruption and ruthless ambition and the stage is set for a thrilling read.

'*The Fallen*' is a brilliantly written story which I can thoroughly recommend. It also has an explosive ending that will take your breath away.

THE AUTHOR

John Sutherland is a father of three who lives with his wife and children in south London. For more than twenty-five years he served as an officer in the Metropolitan Police, rising to the rank of Chief Superintendent before his retirement on medical grounds in 2018. John is a sought-after public speaker and commentator on a broad range of issues, who regularly appears on TV and radio and writes for major newspapers. His first book, '*Blue*', written and published while he was still serving in the Met, was a *Sunday Times* bestseller. It tells the remarkable story of his policing life and describes his long road to recovery following the serious nervous breakdown that ended his operational policing career.

'The Fallen' is published by Orion and is available in ebook, hardback, paperback and audio format from Amazon. It is also available in hardback, paperback and audio from Waterstones and Foyles.