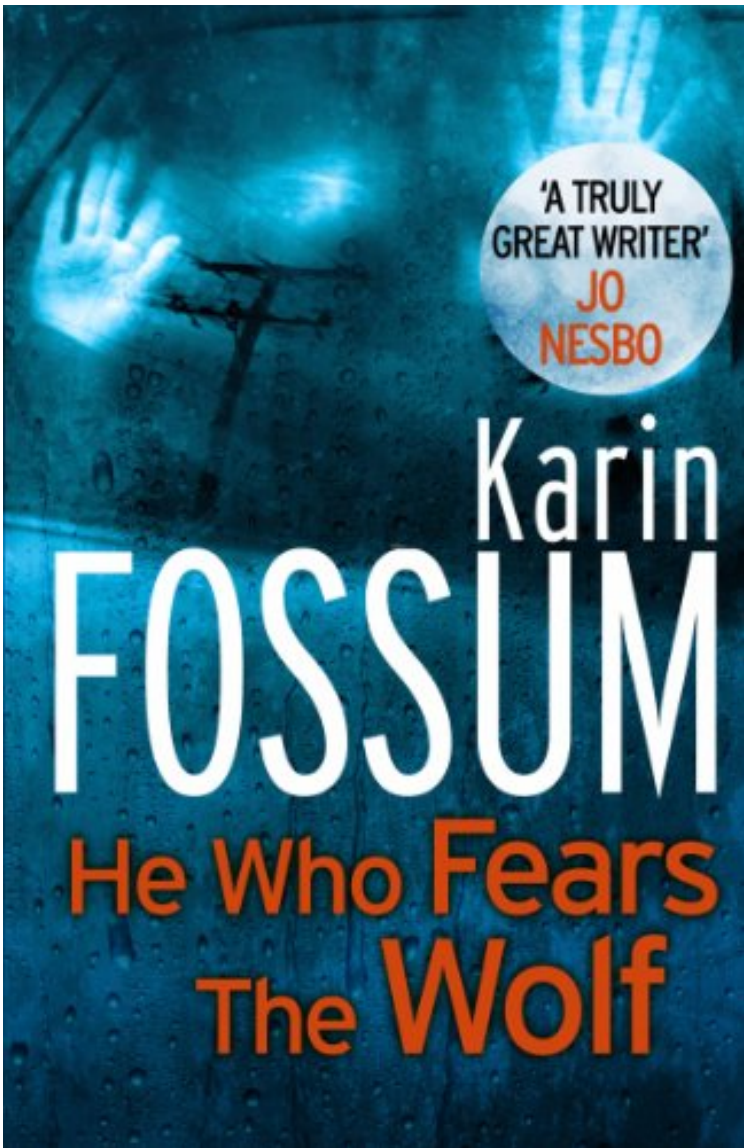


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He Who Fears the Wolf



Par Karin Fossum
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA twelve-year-old boy runs into his local police station claiming to have seen a brutally dismembered corpse. Errki Johrma, an escaped psychiatric patient and known town misfit, was spotted at the scene before he disappeared into the woods. The next morning the local bank is robbed at gunpoint. Making his escape, the robber takes a hostage and also flees into the woods.As the search for Halldis Horn's killer continues all fingers of suspicion point to Errki - except one. Errki's doctor refuses to believe that he could have committed such a horrific act and, for the first time since his wife's death, Inspector Sejer finds himself intrigued by another woman.The second novel in the Inspector Sejer series displays all of Karin Fossum's acclaimed plotting and characterisation.ExtraitCHAPTER 1A dazzling ray of

light slanted in through the trees. The shock brought him up short. He wasn't ready. He had got out of bed, made his way one foot in front of the other through the dark house, still half-asleep, and come out on to the front steps. And there he encountered the sun. It struck his eyes like an awl. He raised his hands to his eyes, but the light kept coming, penetrating cartilage and bone, all the way into the dark of his skull. Everything turned blindingly white inside. His thoughts fled in all directions, shattered into atoms. He wanted to scream, but he never screamed because to do so was beneath his dignity. Instead he clenched his teeth and stood as still as he could on the steps. Something was happening. The skin on his head began to tighten; a tingling sensation that was getting stronger. Trembling, he stood with his hands on his face. He felt his eyes being pulled apart as his nostrils flared, growing as big as keyholes. He whimpered faintly and tried to resist, but he couldn't stop the violent force. Bit by bit his features were erased. All that remained was a naked skull covered with translucent, white skin. He struggled, frantic, moaning as he tried to feel his face, to be sure it was still there. His nose had turned soft and disgusting. He took his hand away he had ruined what little was left, could feel it sliding off, losing its shape like a rotten plum. And then it released him. Anxiously he took a breath, and felt his face slip back into place. He blinked several times, and opened and shut his mouth. But as he was about to move forwards he felt a deep pain in his chest, the sharp claws of an invisible monster. He doubled over, wrapping his arms around his torso to restrain the force that was yanking the skin of his breast tighter and tighter. His nipples vanished into his armpits. The skin on his bare chest grew thinner, the veins stood out like knotty cables, pulsing with black blood. He was bent nearly double, and knew that he was no longer able to resist it. Suddenly he split open like a troll in the sunlight. His guts and intestines poured out. He tried to keep everything in by seizing hold of the edges of the wound and pulling them together, but it seeped out and ran through his fingers, collecting at his feet like the entrails of a slaughtered animal. His heart was still beating, trapped behind his ribs, terrified, pounding. He stood like that for a long time, bent double and gasping. He opened one eye and cast an anxious glance down his body. His abdominal cavity was empty. The outpour had stopped. He began clumsily to gather up what had come out, stuffing it back in any old how with one hand while he held on to his skin with the other, to prevent it from sliding out again. Nothing was in the right place; there were strange bulges everywhere, but if he could get the wound closed, no-one would know. He wasn't made like other people, though this wasn't plain to see. He held on to the skin with his left hand, continuing to shove with his right. At last he got most of it inside again. Only a small spattering of blood was left on the steps. He pressed hard on the wound and felt it starting to close up, breathing cautiously so it would not open again. The sun was still shining through the trees, its white beams as sharp as swords. But he was whole again. Everything had happened too fast. He shouldn't have gone straight from bed out into the sunlight. He had always moved in a different space, seeing the world through a murky veil that took the sting out of the light and the sounds coming from outside. He held the veil in place by concentrating hard. A moment ago he had slipped up, had run out into the new day without taking stock, like a child. His punishment seemed unreasonably harsh. Because as he slept on the dark bed, he had dreamed about something that made him sit bolt upright and then rush outside without thinking. He closed his eyes and recalled some images. He was looking at his mother at the bottom of the stairs. Out of her mouth gushed warm red blood. Fat and round, wearing a white apron with big flowers, she reminded him of a toppled jug, emptying red gravy. He remembered her voice, always accompanied by a dark velvety tone. Then he went back inside the house. *This is a story about Errki. It began like this: at 3 a.m. he left the asylum. We don't refer to it as the asylum, Errki, and even though you surely have the right to call it whatever you like in private, you ought to take other people into consideration and give it a different name. It's a matter of courtesy. Or tact, if you will. Have you ever heard of that? She was so eloquent, God help her, that her words seemed to seep out of her like oil. After the words came her sound, a shrill electric organ. It's called the Beacon, he said, and gave an acid smile. Those of us here in the Beacon are all one big family.

The telephone rings, may I speak to the Beacon please? Could someone get the mail for the Beacon? Precisely. It's all a matter of habit. Everyone has to show a little consideration. Not me, he replied in a sullen voice. I was committed against my will, per paragraph five. Dangerous to myself and possibly to others. He leaned forward and whispered in her ear. Thanks to me you can swan around on pay grade 27. The night nurse shivered. This was the time of day when she felt most vulnerable. This no-man's land between night and morning, a grey void when the birds stopped singing and you couldn't be sure that they'd ever sing again. When anything might have happened and she didn't yet know about it. She slumped a little, feeling faint. She didn't have the strength to see his pain, to remember who he was, that he was her charge. She just found him repulsive, self-absorbed and nasty. I realise that, she snapped. But you've been here for four

months now, and as far as I can tell, you seem to like it well enough. As she said this her lips pursed like the beak of a hen. The organ struck a strident chord. And so he left. It wasn't hard. The night was warm, and the window was ajar with a gap of 15 centimetres. It was locked with a steel bar, but he managed to remove the whole bar, using his belt buckle. The building was more than a hundred years old, and the screws came smoothly out of the rotting wood. His room was on the first floor. He jumped from the window as light as a bird and landed on the lawn. He didn't cross the car park, but instead headed through the woods towards the small lake, which they called the Well. It didn't matter which route he took. The point was that he didn't want to stay in the Beacon any more. The lake was beautiful. It didn't put on airs, just lay there without a ripple, resting in the landscape, open and still. Didn't push him away, didn't lure him forward. Didn't touch him. Was simply there. The asylum was only a stone's throw away, but invisible because of the trees. Nestor asked him to stop for a moment, and he did. He stared down into the black Well, and thought of Tormod, who was found floating face down in the water, wearing rubber gloves, as always, with his blond hair waving in the greenish-black water. He didn't look very good, but then he never had. He was fat and sluggish with colourless eyes, and besides he was stupid. A disgusting, pudding-like fellow who went around asking people to excuse him, afraid of infecting them or of being in the way, afraid that someone would notice his contaminated breath. Now the poor man was with God. Maybe he was sloshing around on a cloud, freed at last from his clammy gloves. Maybe he'd met Errki's mother up there, maybe she was floating on the cloud next to his. Errki loved his mother. The thought of Tormod's fluttering eyes with the blond eyelashes made him swallow hard. He gave a couple of irritated shrugs of his thin shoulders and kept walking. His dark figure was quite visible against all that light-green foliage, but no-one saw him. The others were asleep. After his suicide Tormod was reduced to a practical phenomenon for which they had need: an empty bed. An astonishing transformation. Tormod was no longer Tormod, he was an empty bed. And he too would become an empty bed, with the sheets tucked in tight. He listened to the voice and gave a brisk nod. Then he walked on, sauntering through the dense woods. By the time the night nurse arrived to peek into his room, he had been walking for more than two hours. She didn't dare repeat their conversation. No, I didn't notice anything unusual, he was as he always is. The sun had come up and shone in her face through the window of the staffroom where they held their morning meetings. The words burned her throat like acid. He passed the riding centre. Heard the big dark animals restlessly scraping their hooves. One of them saw him and gave a loud snort. He looked at them out of the corner of his eye and felt a deep longing to stay with them, to be like them. No-one would go up to a horse and ask: who are you? A horse had to bear whatever burden it was given, and afterwards it was allowed to rest. And the horse that was incapable of doing anything got a bullet in its forehead. One day at a time. Walk around the enclosure with a child on its back. Take a drink from the old bathtub. Sleep standing up with its head drooping. Shake off a few insects. Until the end of its days. Now he was walking on the road. People would soon be crawling out from under sheets and quilts. Tumbling out of holes and anthills. He could feel it approaching, like a vibration in the air. Before long the traffic would be on the move. Errki picked up his pace. It would be better to go back into the woods. Occasionally he raised his head. He liked the... From Publishers Weekly In Fossum's impressive psychological police procedural, her second to be published in the U.S. to feature Insp. Konrad Sejer (after 2004's *Don't Look Back*), a troubled youngster claims to have seen escaped mental patient Errki Johrma, a schizophrenic rumored to have left a string of corpses in his wake, in the vicinity of a brutal murder. Sejer himself becomes a crucial witness to another crime a daylight bank robbery that turns into a hostage situation. Blaming himself for not acting on his suspicions of the man who held up the bank, Sejer races to prevent further bloodshed. The gripping plot takes another sharp turn when the possible killer Johrma is identified as the robber's captive. Fossum succeeds in evoking sympathy for all her characters while maintaining the conventions of the fair-play whodunit. Her detective's shy, slow courtship of the psychiatrist responsible for Johrma's care is patiently and convincingly integrated into the plot. Fossum's harrowing journey inside Johrma's warped mind elevates this above the pack and bodes well for future efforts. (July 6) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.