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Hell Fire (Inspector Sejer Mysteries)



Synopsis

A gruesome tableau awaits Inspector Konrad Sejer in the oppressive summer heat: a woman and a young boy lay dead in a pool of blood near a dank camper. The details of the deaths of Bonnie Hayden and her five-year-old son Simon are mysterious. There is no sign of robbery or assault. Who would brutally stab a defenseless woman and her child? Sejer and his fellow investigator Jakob Skarre begin a hunt for the killer that will eventually lead them to a heartbreaking conclusion. In a parallel storyline, masterfully fused, Fossum tells the story of Mass Malthe and her troubled son Eddie as they navigate a relationship that some would call too close. Eddie constantly thinks about his unknown father "someone his mother would rather forget. When long-held secrets are revealed, it turns out that Mass and Bonnie share more in common than Eddie could have ever guessed.

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Customer Reviews

Norwegian writer Karin Fossum never fails to impress me with her diverse format approaches in writing crime fiction. My favorite, THE INDIAN BRIDE, transcends genre and fits more squarely into literature. Her focus is on characters and/or communities, but her novels have such varied design

that you can be sure of a fresh structure to each book.HELLFIRE is an Inspector Sejer story, like most of Fossum's books. Konrad Sejer is a laid-back, middle-aged widower-detective who is both thorough in his work and benevolent in his humanity. He is trying to solve the murder of a mother and her five-year-old son who were found in an abandoned caravan, stabbed to death. The bloodied knife was left at the crime scene, without fingerprints. In this crime, the questions are who and why. There are two separate narratives that each focus on a single mother and son. One storyline is of the victims--Bonnie Hayden and her son, Simon. Bonnie is an attractive woman who has made the best of her hardships. She's very protective of Simon, who suffers from separation anxiety when she drops him off at nursery school. To barely make ends meet, she works cleaning homes and running basic errands for the elderly and disabled. Twenty-one-year-old Eddie Malthe lives at home with his single mother, and barely remembers his father. He has no formal diagnosis, but is clearly on the autism spectrum (I am a psychiatric nurse, specializing in autism, and I recognize Eddie's key features). Abandoned by his now deceased father, who ran off with another woman, Eddie is obsessed with finding his grave somewhere in Copenhagen.

I love Karin Fossum's novels and this one is no exception. It is a continuation of her Detective Konrad Sejer series but is quite different from previous books in this series. Like the others, it takes place in Scandinavia, mostly Norway and Denmark. It opens up with a brutal murder but focuses primarily on two parallel character studies of very different people. From the outset, the reader wonders how the characters are connected and it takes virtually the whole novel to figure this out. Bonnie Hayden and her young son Simon are murdered brutally with a knife at beginning of the book. They are spending the night in a trailer on a farmer's property when the murder occurs. Bonnie is a single mom who works as a 'home help' in Norway. She and her son are very close and every day when Simon is let off at daycare, he cries for his mom. Eddie Malthe and his mother Mass are very enmeshed. Eddie is 21 and his mother is 56 but Eddie acts like he's a child with a mean streak in him. Eddie is on disability for some obscure psychiatric disorder. They have a dog named Shiba who is old and ill and is much-loved by Mass. Eddie takes joy in pulling Shiba's tail every chance he gets because he is jealous that Shiba takes his mother's attention. Eddie is obsessed about finding out about his dead father who left Mass for a younger and prettier woman when Eddie was a young boy. Sejer is the detective assigned to Bonnie's murder and, unlike previous books in this series, he does not play a very prominent role. There is the usual police work and interrogations but the novel focuses on the character studies of Bonnie, Eddie and Mass. Chapters alternate between Bonnie and Eddie's past, working up to the present time when the murder occurred.

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