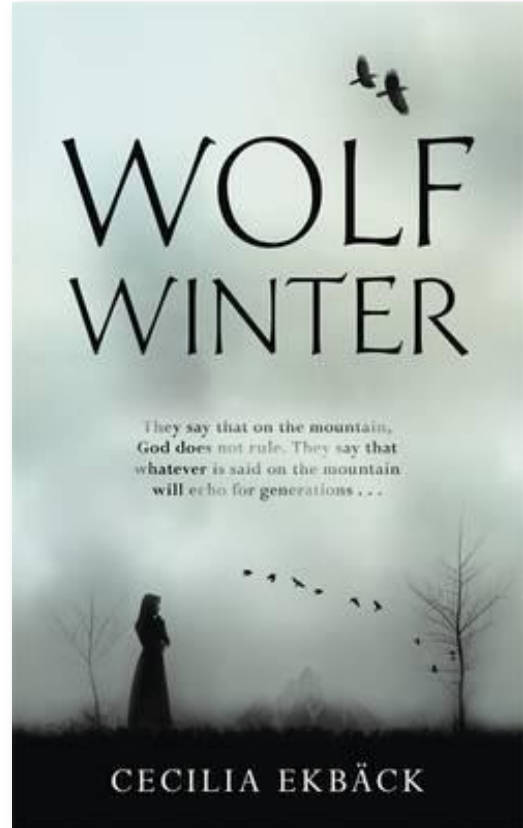


LoveReading Reader reviews of Wolf Winter by Cecilia Ekbäck

Below are the complete reviews, written by LoveReading members.

Alan Gee

*This book is described inside as “Part historical thriller, part Swedish Gothic novel” and it does just what it says on the tin. 408 pages of mysticism, superstitions, hauntings by dead people, mysterious wolf packs – are they real? – and all set in the 18th century wilds of northern Sweden. What’s not to like? I had some difficulty at first in sorting out one character from another, particularly some of the men but, once that was clear, **a thoroughly enjoyable read. The parts about the onset of the “Wolf Winter” and the gathering snow had me turning up the central heating, so vividly descriptive were they.***



Sarah Musk

‘Wolf Winter’ is a sombre but compelling book. Once read you will never forget the beautiful descriptions of the stark winter landscapes. A memorable read.

Cecilia Ekbäck has written a sombre but compelling book. At first I found her writing style a bit complex and sometimes quite stark but once I became used to it I actually found the book to be beautifully written. I have rarely read a book which describes so well a landscape dominated by harsh weather and its accompanying hardships.

The book deals with some very dark issues and is quite violent in parts but the inner lives and troubles of the characters are so vividly described that the

violence seems to become part of who they are and the environment in which they live.

Maija, one of the main characters, is a tough resilient woman but it is her teenager daughter who is the heart of the book and all the events swirl around her. It is a supernatural thriller and at times is quite scary and disturbing. The early eighteenth century in which the book is set, was still a time of superstition and an almost feudal society. A time when people were prepared to believe in ghosts and magic. In the end though, the issues are timeless ones - those of human frailty and weakness.

A wonderful book which I will not forget - a memorable read.

Sue Broom

A highly descriptive story, full of tension and atmosphere, with a cast of characters I came to care about - a perfect choice for cold winter evenings.

Cecilia Ekbäck is such a talented writer. She has written a well-paced, highly descriptive story, full of tension and atmosphere, with a cast of characters I came to care about. The landscape of the mountain wilderness of northern Sweden is central and takes on the role of another character in the story - beautiful but brutal, and inhabited by wild and predatory animals. As soon as winter arrives, one wonders why anyone would choose to try to live there but, as the story unfolds, it becomes clear that more than a few of the characters are escaping from their past, starting over in a new place where nobody knows them. They are resourceful and resilient, yet isolated and prone to superstition - the Church wields great power but, in the hardest winter for years, many are drawn to the 'old ways', with dangerous and frightening results.

Sarah Harper

You can tell straight away that Cecilia Ekbäck grew up in the landscape of northern Sweden, as Blackåsen Mountain is so perfectly depicted that you are immediately immersed in its world. The hardship of life as a settler in this brutal landscape is unimaginable. However the author is familiar with all of the small details and as she builds them into the story it creates a truly believable existence. Newly arriving as the sixth family on Blackåsen Mountain, you really care about Maija and her daughters Frederika and Dorotea and how they will manage to survive. When the girls discover the badly mutilated corpse of

Eriksson, another settler, Maija knows instinctively that the damage wasn't caused by any wild animal and she won't give up until she discovers the truth. Why are the remaining settlers acting so strangely? Why is the bishop so interested in the murder and could the Lap stories about the devil being on Blackåsen Mountain be true? Maija is belligerent but her own past has its secrets too. What were they running from in their old village life? Why did their uncle abandon the farm so long ago and what is behind Frederika's strange behaviour and her encounters with the dead man?

Stories of hardship, resilience, secrets and magic are woven together into this truly memorable début. The bond between Maija and the priest is palpable and young Dorotea's frostbite is truly heart wrenching. A thoroughly enjoyable read which will keep you guessing until the final secrets are unearthed. 'Wolf Winter' will take you away to a different place and time.

Angela Rhodes

'Wolf Winter' is set in the shadow of the Blackasen Mountains, in Swedish Lapland, the year is 1717 and Summer has arrived with a new family of settlers, Maija, her husband Paavo and their two daughters, Dorotea and Frederika.

It is Frederika who stumbles across the mutilated body of a man, a man they say a wolf killed, but this is not the case in Maija's eyes and she is going to find out, who or what killed a grown man.

The Church knows something, but the tales are of Devils children going missing, and then there's Nils, with his wife Elin, being for sorcery.

While reading you will feel the cold and damp enter your body, so wrap up warm, turn the lamps on and read.

Victoria Whish

Atmospheric, tautly-written tale of settlers battling to survive and forge a community in the harshness of 18th century Lapland. Murder and secrets evoke a chilling sense of menace.

A perfect curled up by the fire, wintry read that takes a while to get going but is fantastic at creating a mood of unease and foreboding as the story unfolds.

You really get a sense of how difficult life was like for settlers in such an unforgiving place and the murder that starts the story off, shows how swiftly

mistrust and suspicion can grow in such an insular community.

This is an assured debut and a successful blend of Scandi murder mystery and historical fable.

Helen Lowry

A winter known a Wolf Winter descends upon a group of settlers in the shadow of a mountain with dark secrets, Blackasen.

I have to admit to finding this book hard work at first. The slow pace of writing and so many different characters made it hard work.

Gradually, it grew on me and I found the atmospheric setting helped with that, especially with the garden covered in snow at the moment! This is the book's main strength.

The story centres around a mountain, Blackasen, and the power it holds over people. A body is found on the mountain by a young girl, Frederika, who has recently come to live in the area with her family. Her mother, Maija, is a central character who soon realises she cannot trust anyone. Most of the characters have a guilty secret or some darker side to them.

Secrets come tumbling out from the local settlers as an extremely harsh winter, known as a Wolf Winter descends upon them.

A little slow moving for my tastes but I'm glad I stuck with it to the end.

Ian Harvey-Brown

After reading this book, winter will never be the same again. Certainly I will not take warmth and the comfort of home for granted. Not now, not ever.

I thought the writer has very powerfully evoked Sweden of the 18th Century. I was so totally swept along with the story which moved through the seasons but mainly concentrated on the dark winter months when there is little or no sunshine and when nasty things tend to happen. In terms of landscape think bleak, think snow, think dark, brooding mountains. Add a touch of howling wolf and a small community falling in on itself. Oh and a murder for good measure. The title 'Wolf Winter' really sums it up.

This wonderfully researched book is sprinkled liberally with believable

characters; characters who more than match the landscape, in particular Maija and her daughter Fredericka.

There is warmth too in this book. To survive, you need to hang on to those you love, hold them close. Especially as the institutions where you previously went to for refuge are deeply compromised.

Above all this is a book about human nature and our ability to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds.

Vikki Patis

Set in Swedish Lapland in 1717, 'Wolf Winter' is an intriguing, beautiful tale, full of mystery and magic.

Maija and her family arrive from Finland to a harsh, desolate place, to take over their uncle's homestead. Looming above them is the mountain Blackåsen, which whispers dark secrets to the new arrivals.

After finding the mutilated body of local man Eriksson, Maija's eldest daughter Frederika embarks on a fascinating journey, pulled towards the mountains and the powers it threatens to engulf her in. Maija is drawn into discovering what happened to Eriksson, and in doing so, uncovers many dark tragedies and mysteries surrounding the town.

The main characters are unique, full of feminine strength and intuition. Maija is determined, dedicated to bringing her family through the horrifying winter, and uncovering the truth. But her fear of fear itself only serves to hold her back from embracing the history of the mountains. Frederika, unburdened by the past that plagues her mother, is more perceptive, and soon accepts her fate. Both women must find a way to survive in the face of adversity.

The harsh landscape is described beautifully. The beautiful, unforgiving mountains, the horrifying snowstorms; this atmospheric story will captivate and stun you.

'Wolf Winter' will delight fans of 'Burial Rites' by Hannah Kent. A delightful murder mystery, full of captivating characters, seductive scenery, and mystical magic, you won't want to put this book down.

Celeste McCreesh

This story is set in Swedish Lapland, 1717 where we meet Maija, her husband Paavo and her daughters Frederika and Dorotea whom have arrived from their

native Finland, hoping to forget the traumas of their past and put down new roots.

One day Frederika unexpectedly comes across the mutilated body of one of their neighbours, Eriksson while herding the family's goats on the mountain. His death is dismissed as a wolf attack, but Maija feels certain that the wounds could only have been inflicted by another man. She feels that she needs to investigate despite her neighbours strange disinterest in the death. Maija is attracted to the dark history of tragedies that have taken place on Blackåsen.

As the "Wolf Winter", the harshest winter in memory, descends upon them and the snow gathers, secrets are increasingly laid bare. Maija doesn't know who she can trust and who may betray her, but is determined to find the answers.

*I liked this book, however I found this story difficult to get into at first - I had to read the first few pages several times to get the characters straight in my head and I did find that it dipped a bit in the middle, maybe a bit too long but once the story picked up I flew through the book. It's worth the effort though as it's **a good story that is well told and the setting is evocative and atmospheric** - especially reading it at this time of the year.*

Tania

*It is the year 1717, a family of new settlers, Maija, her husband and two children arrive in Swedish Lapland, leaving their native Finland behind to start a new life. Their new life is a struggle especially with winter arriving. One day, the eldest daughter, Fredericka and her sister come across a horrible discovery not far from their home, the body of another settler. The locals try to dismiss the culprit as a wolf or bear but Maija is not convinced and starts investigating. Maija will not let the case drop. As the seasons pass, Maija discovers the other settler's secrets that the church has tried to hide. All the actions happens in the shadow of the Blackasen Mountains and its mythology. 'Wolf Winter' by Cecilia Ekback is **a dark and beautiful novel full of suspense. This well written story will keep you guessing until the end.***

Ailsa Hindhaugh

Wolf Winter is set in the 18th Century Swedish wilderness, where witchcraft is still placing women under suspicion.

You meet Maija and her family (husband and two daughters), whom have all recently moved to Blackasen Mountain. Their eldest daughter, Frederika, finds a body and while the rest of the town think it was the work of bears or wolves, Maija has other ideas. Maija thinks it may have something to do with a human rather than an animal due to the precision of the wounds on the body. This leads Maija to want to dive deep and start her own investigation in to this 'incident'.

Maija is searching for the truth, which sets the town rushing to ensure long hidden secrets stay that way. Frederika sees the determination in her mother to find out what truly happened, which lead her to go on her own adventure.

Frederika is drawn to the mountain and the mystical side for her own heritage.

This story shows two points of view: the first from Maija, the mother, and her determination to find out the truth about a death that others say was the work of an animal; the other is from Majia's eldest daughter, Frederika, who sees her mother's determination to find the truth and embarks on finding out about her mystical heritage.

This book was well written, the way the author was able to bring to life the story in my minds-eye due to the description alone was fantastic.

This book is hard to place genre-wise as it was intriguing, atmospheric, thrilling, gripping as well as being rather creepy and ghost-like. If you are into the new 'Nordic' wave of books/TV shows currently out right now, then this is the perfect read for you, or if you are just into a great crime/thriller/suspense or classic 'who done it?', then this is a one for you to try.

*I would give this book a good 4 out of 5. **Truly was full of suspense. Wolf Winter is gripping from the get go. If you like a story about survival, struggles and a determination to find out the truth, then I would say go for it.***

It really reminds me of old-school murder mysteries from authors such as Agatha Christie, or from modern day authors such as Stieg Larsson or Karin Slaughter.

<http://ailsahindhaughabookworm4life.weebly.com>

Richard Hamlin

Set in Sweden in 1717, this is a novel that exudes atmosphere and description. New settler Maija and her family arrive in Blackasen, only for her young daughters to make a gruesome discovery; one that is the catalyst for a host of secrets and fears to be discovered within the group of settlers in that

mountainous region.

*This is a read that needs patience; it takes a while to gather momentum but give it time and you'll be rewarded. Ekback's strength is the depth of her description which is evocative and captivating. The narrative takes you back to 18th Century Lapland and a way of life that is stark, brooding and unforgiving. Ghosts exists in the shadows and there is a real supernatural undercurrent throughout the novel. Ultimately however **this is a tale of human spirit and endurance and it really is a super piece of storytelling. It's unusual, original and absorbing.***