



The Wolfen

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The savage killing of two New York City policemen leads two detectives, a man and a woman bound together by a strange, tough passion, to hunt down the wolfen, called werewolves in former days.

The Wolfen Details

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From Reader Review The Wolfen for online ebook

Graeme Reynolds says

The first time that I ever heard of this book was when I was nine years old. I was at a boy scout camp and one of the other children took great pleasure in telling me about this book and how it was about werewolves ripping children apart at a scout camp. I was scared to the point that in the middle of the night, I packed my gear and walked ten miles home through country lanes.

It wasn't until I found the courage to actually read the book, two years later, that I found out that the kid had been full of it and the book had nothing to do with children or boy scout camps at all. In many respects, the book was even scarier than that. Reading it as an eleven year old, it terrified me into having many sleepless nights.

In many respects, this book (and the bullshit story that I was told as a nine year old) sparked a lifelong interest in werewolves that turned into the novel that I am a few short chapters away from completing (And yes, the scene with the boy scout camp and the werewolf is in there).

So, when I came across an old, tattered copy of the book in a second hand shop, almost thirty years later, I figured it was as good a time as any to revisit the story that had scared me so much as a child.

Now, some of you reading this might remember the movie adaption with Albert Finney, from 1981. Forget all about it. Its one of those classic examples of a movie missing the entire point of its source material. The movie lifts a couple of scenes and some of the core concept from the book, but glosses over or ignores what makes this novel as good as it is. I'll get to that in a second.

The central characters in the novel are two police officers, George Wilson and Becky Neff who share a complex love / hate relationship as partners in the NYPD. When the partially devoured corpses of two police officers are discovered in a scrap yard, the two detectives find themselves hunted by a foe that is stronger, faster and smarter than they are.

That is the plot in a nutshell. Nothing too complex at first glance, I will admit. There are quite a few things that make this book really stand out from the crowd though.

Firstly, the gradual build up of tension in this book is rivetting. Once the two protagonists realise that they are being hunted, and more importantly, what they are being hunted by, the book really takes off. They escape their fates by the narrowest margins and you can feel the abject terror that threatens to take control of their actions. Nowhere is safe and as the novel progresses, their chances of survival look bleaker and bleaker.

Secondly, the portrayal of the monstrous Wolfen is handled exceptionally well. These are not your average antagonists. Rather than being supernatural in origin, they are a branch of the canine family tree that broke away millenia ago. Their paws are more like hands, allowing them to, for example, climb the sides of buildings and open doors. Their senses are so accute that they can track a vehicle by the scent of its tires across New York City. They are fast, savage and are highly intelligent. The sort of intelligence that allows them to understand cause and effect. The sort of intelligence that allow them to form strategies and lay complex, subtle traps for the humans that know their secret.

Streiber portrays his creatures as almost sympathetic characters. A significant amount of time is spent in the

packs point of view, showing their reasoning, the social dynamic within the pack, even to the extent of showing their love for one another and their fear of discovery. At times, you almost sympathise with them. You feel their loss, their excitement at the hunt and their fear of what will become of their race should mankind gain definitive proof of their existence.

When the attacks occur, they are brutal, uncomfortable reads. Streiber certainly is not scared of dishing out the gore. The devastation that the creatures cause to their prey stays with you, and plays on the human protagonist's mind. Wilson especially finds himself musing on what it would feel like to be torn apart and eaten by the creatures.

As with any 1970's novel, it has dated a little, although not as much as I would have expected. The most noticeable thing is the misogynistic attitudes of Wilson and the other male police officers to Becky Neff, Wilson's partner. It's nothing like as bad as something like Robert Heinlen's "Stranger in a Strange Land", however, and didn't affect my enjoyment of the story, although it might offend someone more sensitive to that kind of thing.

If you are a fan of horror stories, and werewolves in particular, you owe it to yourself to hunt this book down. Forget about the naff movie adaption, as it has very little in common with what is without a doubt one of the best werewolf novels ever written.

Eddie Generous says

Better than The English Patient

Gary says

Great suspenseful fun....engaging....hard to put down.....I loved how the author told much of the story from the Wolfens' points of view...as if in their head, listening to their thoughts....great read for the Halloween season...if you haven't read it, get a copy, and save it back for Oct. 2016!

Jeff French says

I'm not sure what it is about 70s horror novels, but many of them have a certain feel that I just love; Carrie, The Exorcist, Rosemary's Baby, The Omen all great. Now I can add The Wolfen to that list.

This book starts out with a couple of policemen being killed in an automobile pound, under very strange circumstances. This puts a couple of very smart, determined detectives on the trail of the killers, which turn out to be werewolves. These are not your normal werewolves however. They are not people that change into monsters during a full moon, they do not stand upright, nor do they go around killing everything in sight. They are more like huge dogs, with almost human faces, very strong and very smart.

Strieber has done a fantastic job with the characters. I love the descriptions of the werewolf pack. They live in the slums of the city, feasting on the homeless. These werewolves are capable of setting traps to lure victims, cover up the evidence of their kills, and track prey relentlessly. They are vicious killing machines

and yet, I didn't hate them. I found myself empathizing with them. They do what they have to do to survive. There is a certain nobility in the pack, treating the members with respect and caring for each other. I loved the characters of Becky and Wilson, and even Dick Neff. The ultimate showdown at the end was unusual in the fact that I didn't want the detectives to die, but if they didn't, the existence of the pack would become public knowledge and put these creatures in danger. A real catch 22. Strieber pulls it all together and creates an ending that satisfied my conflicted emotions.

A strong 4 stars.

Baal Of says

This book was loaned to me by one of the guys at the Nightmare Factory book club. I believe he said something like, this isn't a good book, but its great fun, and he was right. This is the same Whitley Strieber who has sunk into making self-aggrandizing claims about aliens, and launched a completely bullshit-filled career, but before that, he wrote a couple decent trashy horror novels, this being one. It's not literary in any sense, but the plot is good, and the gore is nasty, and the viewpoints from the perspective of the Wolfen are entertaining. The human characters are almost all shitbags, or perhaps if I want to phrase that in a less extreme way, they are almost all unlikable. George Wilson is a sexist, brutish, asshole, but of course he has a soft spot, cause that's the easy thing to do with that kind of character. Becky Neff is the best character, but then Strieber has her falling for her cop partner Wilson, despite his condescending attitude toward her. Underwood is just a pathetic, manipulative asshole.

But fuck all that. This book was like riding an out-of-control four-wheeler through the mud, and for that it gets four stars. I was entertained. Guts get ripped out and eaten, hands gets sheared off by claws, brains get splattered by bullets, what more could a gore hound want. I wanted everybody to die in the end, and they didn't, but I guess I can forgive that.

Rian says

uuuggghhhhhh

This book was not good. It was recommended to me as one of the scariest books that person had ever read, which, lol. It had enjoyable moments--in the beginning, it seemed like it was going to be a fast-paced supernatural thriller, grounded in the reality of two cops just doing their jobs--but it quickly became very, very boring. Sluggish. Ill-paced. The pacing really was its most damnable trait (though far from its only one). The narrative was bogged down by perspectives from literally every character--the protagonists, their friends, their spouses, their superiors, random cops on the street, pedestrians, murder victims only present for a page and a half, those victims' relatives, *this is not an exaggeration*--as well as telling the same sequences over and over again. First you'd hear it from Becky's POV with jumps into the heads of people around her; then you'd get the same sequence narrated by the werewolves; then maybe you'd get it again from a third party, ruminating on it; then maybe you'd get it *again* from Becky as she thought about it for a second time. The story was bloated with unnecessary characters and diversions, subplots that never came to fruition, hysterically misplaced romantic tension, pages upon pages of characters calmly pondering that romantic tension *while literally in fear for their lives*, throwaway characterizations that served no purpose but to demonize the people you weren't meant to sympathize with or uplift the ones you were, and oh my god, the wolves! The utterly ridiculous, noble savage wolves!

The concept was interesting: rather than a supernatural creature, part man, part wolf~, the wolfen are evolutionary marvels, offshoots of actual wolves some millennia ago that then developed into perfectly engineered apex predators. That's a good take on werewolves I haven't seen before, and one that neatly eliminates the tiresome trope of the pained, cursed man beneath the wolf skin, or the struggle in those hunted of killing another human being. But boy, that did not make up for everything else that was wrong with this book. The two protagonists were just dreadful, two-dimensional, deeply uninteresting cops who never seem to make mistakes, at least by reputation, which is really all we have to go on with everything from their police record to their interpersonal relationships. Apparently Becky and Wilson are the greatest cops on the force, possibly in the entire world; apparently Becky and her husband are happy and satisfied until her partner confesses his sudden and inexplicable obsession with her (that isn't then met with shock and disgust that the gross old man who has literally been treating her like a secretary and chauffeur has been doing so because he really just loves her so very much). But do we ever see that on the page? Nope. Becky and Wilson fuck up and lose their standing in the force almost immediately when they latch onto the werewolf case. Becky and Dick only interact a few times and are cool at best, except the one time they have really vigorous sex for some?? reason??? The entire thread of political corruption and sweeping things under the rug gets dropped about two-thirds of the way through; the Dick-Becky-Wilson love triangle exists almost entirely in Becky's and Wilsons thoughts about the Dick-Becky-Wilson love triangle.

But more than anything else, this book was just flat out *boring*. The prose was staid and stiff, prosaic and about as interesting to plod through as plain, soggy oatmeal. Constant telling rather than showing. Instead of seeing two characters interact with the tension between them, we are treated to 8 or 12 paragraphs of inner dialogue of them ruminating on the tension between them. Over and over and over again. For a book of less than 300 pages, it would not *end*, and though a lot seemed to be happening, none of it jumped off the page, none of it grabbed you and held on. Not even the climax, which, I guess, was supposed to be exciting? But was mostly our intrepid heroes standing in the cold, and the werewolves being noble and angry and sad. And then more standing, and then a shootout that didn't make much sense, ended abruptly, and--the book was over. What???

A.R. says

This is a brilliant werewolf book--one of the first--that ties spirituality into the monstrosity. Brilliant!

Dan Quigley says

This short book took a while to read because I had to read it twice. The book starts out wonderfully. It's super-fast paced. We're locked into the main characters, and looking forward to seeing how they survive their gruesome situation when all of a sudden at the halfway point we get hit with digression after digression. Starting at page 139 we get all this background and folklore we really don't need or care about. When that finally ends, in comes new characters (a reporter and a photographer) I care nothing about. We've all but left the protagonists' story. By page 209, I realized I was reading words between characters whom I had no idea why they were in the story or who they were. So, back I went to page one to read the whole thing again only this time faster, keeping a character chart as I went.

That worked better. Pages 139-233 are pretty much disposable. When Strieber picks up his main story again starting at page 235, the magic is back all the way through to an exciting conclusion 40 pages later. Okay,

Strieber made some rookie mistakes on the pacing in this novel, his first. Thirty pages in to the book I couldn't believe how much of the story he had already told. I wondered then how in the world he was going to fill 240 more pages. It felt like we were already up to the middle.

Pacing problems aside, this is still one hell of a good werewolf story. There is much to like about the book. First, Strieber breaks new ground. Never before 1978, I believe, do we see werewolves portrayed as a hidden, intelligent society living by and preying on man. Second, the characters and situation are presented in a gritty, realistic vein. One has to remember that Frank Miller was at this time revolutionizing noir-style comics with his *Daredevil* work. Strieber is revolutionizing the werewolf story the same way. It's brutal and frightening stuff Strieber writes. It works well because the protagonists are so flawed: (view spoiler) This makes them real people to us.

The deaths which take place aren't described gratuitously as say Stephen King can sometimes get, but rather in a matter-of-fact way that serves to heighten the horror by understatement. Much of the book plays out in my mind like a horrifying movie. It really needs a faithful-to-the-book film remake in our time. It would do well at the box office.

Most of the other reviewers who give this book five stars give it that because they like Strieber already for his cooky because serious "I encountered aliens on their spaceship" books, or they are kids titillated by the gruesomeness of the horror presented. Okay, that's cool if either of those do it for you. What I appreciate most about the book is its gritty *Hill Street Blues* like reality and its very fast-paced and exciting beginning and finish.

Rob Twinem says

Some time ago I made a comment on an online forum that I felt annoyed and depressed at the complete lack of intelligent and readily available horror reading material. Recently I have been pleasantly surprised to discover such gems as "The Concrete Grove" by Gary McMahon and the ultimate werewolf tail (little play on words !) *High Moor* by Graeme Reynolds a new and rising star in this genre...so belief and a smile are slowly returning to my face.

After some difficulty I was successful in securing a copy of "The Wolfen" by Whitley Strieber and am so pleased that I did. In essence *The Wolfen* is a story of man and *Canis Lupus Sapiens* or more commonly referred to as the Werewolf trying to eke out a living and cohabit in an overcrowded world and a world that refuses to acknowledge it's existence. Two policemen are murdered whilst carrying out routine duties at a car pound in a district of New York, and the investigating officers Rebecca Neff and George Wilson are tasked with bringing the perpetrators to justice. Wilson and Neff soon discover that this is not a simple case and suspicion soon falls on the Werewolf, *The Wolfen* as named in the book. The story evolves with a great list of characters and a cracking storyline that never relaxes. It soon becomes clear that *The Wolfen* pack are themselves hunting Wilson and Neff, as the knowledge these two officers now possess concerning the existence of *The Wolfen*, threatens the werewolf community and way of life....the hunters have become the hunted!! The chief of police Underwood is only interested in his promotion to Commissionaire and refuses to accept that a pack of Werewolves are living and running amok in his city, and are responsible for the death of two of his officers. Carl Ferguson the curator of the Natural History Museum is haunted by the possibility of an imminent Werewolf attack and in one particularly tense scene he is walking the museum late at night and is deeply troubled and frightened by every sound the building exudes. This tension and fear prevailing throughout the book draws the reader in and creates a great sense of unease. *The Wolfen* is a silent predator

who can destroy his prey efficiently and with clockwork precision. To understand the mind of The Wolfen it must be appreciated they only really attack to satisfy their hunger and they view man as a means to exist and a good source of nourishment. They are also selective in their choice of victim,(the murder of the two policemen was a mistake) and choose to kill only those who they see as weak and who live in the fringes. They kill with ruthless and silent efficiency and it is this ability that totally immerses the reader in a nightmare reading experience! The brutal strength and beauty of The Wolfen is best described in one memorable scene from the book.....

“Now she was down, she was pushing her nose past cloth, slick hot flesh, feeling the vibration of subvocal response in the man, feeling his muscles stiffening as his body reacted to her standing on it, then opening her mouth against the flesh, feeling her teeth scrape back and down, pressing her tongue against the deliciously salty skin and ripping with all the strength in her jaws and neck and chest, and jumping back to the wall with the bloody throat in her mouth. The body on the bench barely rustled as its dying blood poured out....Now her job was over,she dropped behind the wall and ate her trophy. It was rich and sweet with blood. Around her the pack was very happy as it worked....Then the pack ate in rank order. The mother took the brain. The father took a thigh and buttock. The first mated pair ate the clean organs. When they returned from their duty the second mated pair took the rest. And then they pulled apart the remains and took them piece by piece and dropped them in the nearby lake...When this was done, they went to a place they had been earlier, a great meadow full of the beautiful new snow that had been falling. They ran and danced in the snow, feeling the pleasure of their bodies, the joy or facing headlong across the wide expanse, and because they knew that no human was in earshot they had a joyous howl full of the pulsing rhythm they liked best after a hunt.....

Neff has a difficult home life and a complicated working relationship with Wilson, however they must lay aside these differences to keep focused and avoid being consumed by The Wolfen. The chase becomes a game of cat and mouse and a marvellous experience for the reader as the tension never relaxes and we rush towards a bloody conclusion. This is not merely a horror story but the portrayal of a misunderstood group trying to exist and survive in the shadows of the city and avoid the wrath of man....I strongly recommend....

Nick says

The Wolfen features two New York City detectives (one male, one female) who are investigating the killing of two cops. Their investigation leads them into unknown territory as it becomes clear that the two cops were not killed by humans. So who did kill them? The Wolfen.

Strieber has created a new take on the werewolf genre. The Wolfen are not werewolves as such. They are not humans who turn into wolves but more of a crossbreed between humans and wolves. They show characteristics of both species. The book presents an interesting history of The Wolfen, how the pack lives together and how they hide amongst human society.

The book moves along at a good pace with tension building as no one believes the two detectives. The Wolfen attacks are gory as they seek to keep their existence secret. The book did drag during the middle but this is probably because I am such a slow reader. Everyone else would probably read it in one sitting and find no slowing down of the story.

There is a simmering sexual tension between the two detectives whose arguments and comments can not hide their lust for one another (ok, maybe not that strong feelings) but my imagination went wild that this was going to be the original supernatural sexy romance story that inspires so many books with photoshop

covers featuring a six pack hunk with a slim pretty lady draped over him. I mean, two cops denying their feelings for each other with wolf shifters involved as well. Move over Twilight!

Not that I have read Twilight or any supernatural romance book. Not my cup of tea (although I only drink coffee) as us English like to say.

The Wolfen is nothing like Twilight etc. It is a great horror read and an excellent original expansion of the werewolf genre.

Jeffrey Keeten says

"The paw. He turned it in his hands, looking at its supple efficiency for the hundredth time. He placed it on the desk, then picked it up again and ran its claws along his cheek. It would do its job well, this paw. The long toes with their extra joints. The broad, sensitive pads. The needle-sharp claws. Almost...what a human being might have if people had claws. It had the same functional beauty as a hand, a lethal one."

I first became aware of Whitley Strieber in 1987 when he published his first “non-fiction” work titled *Communion*. In the same year Budd Hopkins published his book titled *Intruders*. Both were about alien abduction, and the fact that they both came out in the same year created a synergy of dread and doubt. We were selling out of these books so fast and furious at the bookstore that I finally decided to take them home and read them. Spooky damn stuff.

I didn't know what to believe, but let's just say uncertainty had purchased a townhouse in my mind.

In 1985 I had skipped school to drive my buddy around to several dealerships in neighboring towns to try and find him a good used pickup. It was late when we were coming back home. He fell asleep leaving me with the soft sound of the radio and with heavy eyes peering into the inky black night of the middle of nowhere. We were North of Hill City when a flash of bright light illuminated the ditch beside my Pontiac. It was so bright; it was as if it were lighting the grass on fire, and to look at it left bright red spots in my eyes. The light followed along in the ditch with the car. I turned off the radio and rolled down the window (Yes, to those youngster out there we actually used to have to physically roll down windows on vehicles.). I leaned out of the window as far as I could and looked upward trying to spot a helicopter.

There was nothing, no sound. Just stars and darkness.

The light continued to follow alongside of my vehicle. I tried to wake Oren up. I shook him. I grabbed his jacket and gave it a good yank. He slept on.

The light came over and landed on the car for probably a half a second, but it felt like longer. The road disappeared as my eyes were overwhelmed with too much brightness. I couldn't see a thing. The car shimmied to the left and back to the right due to the death grip my hands had on the wheel that was causing me to oversteer. The light moved off my car across the road to the other ditch.

I hit the gas, pushing the car up to **90**.

The light stayed parallel with my car.

After another three miles or so the light just disappeared.

As soon as it vanished, Oren woke up. He looked at his watch and looked over at me. "Did you pull over and take a nap?"

"No, I haven't stopped."

"Why we running so late?"

I shrugged and told him about the light. He fell back asleep before I even got to the good part.

Now I don't know what it was, but I don't remember no aliens or any probing, so with what I know the only logical explanation is that it was something terrestrial, maybe some flyboy from McConnell Air Force Base having a bit of fun making me piss my pants.

As far as the missing time, well hell, maybe we lost track of more time than we thought.

I digress.

While investigating the brutal evisceration of two beat cops, Wilson and Neff, the two investigating detectives, see something they don't understand. It is kind of interesting that Strieber was exploring this concept with his first book in 1979. When we see something that doesn't make any sense, our minds go through a rolodex of images we've seen before until it hits on the most logical explanation.

The unexplained becomes...well...explainable.

As they investigate further, they start to understand that what they saw was not a dog or wolf, but something unknown. Something much more dangerous. The Wolfen have existed alongside human culture for thousands of years. They are trained to eat the weak, the homeless, the people who will be missed least which is why they live in the abandoned buildings next to the disintegrating tenements where people who have lost everything or never had anything have to live. To attack a healthy human goes against all of their instincts, but as Wilson and Neff close in on not only what they are, but where they live, they are forced to try and kill them before they find the means to eliminate the pack.

I found the story much more interesting because The Wolfen are a separate species, not humans turning into werewolves. *"Professors Slusser and Rabkin comment that Strieber makes the supernatural an "explainable part of the real universe" and undercuts the fantastic to give a more scientific explanation."* Strieber actually takes us into the minds of The Wolfen and explains how they think, what they believe, and why they do what they do. Knowing more about their motivations actually splits my loyalty between the cops trying to solve a crime and The Wolfen who were only trying to survive.

Strieber continues to ratchet up the tension as The Wolfen become more desperate to kill the humans who threaten their existence, and Neff and Wilson face the real terror of trying to fight something no one else will believe exists.

We are so skeptical of things we deem supernatural, whether it be ghosts, the devil, aliens, Donald Trump's hair (so if I'm projecting an image of the closest thing his hair can be compared to...then what does it really look like? *shudder*), or a creature like The Wolfen. We have a hard time believing things that we have not seen ourselves, and even when we do see something that doesn't make sense, we convince ourselves that it

was something else.

I remember one time I was working in the backroom of the bookstore in Tucson with another man I'll call Justin. We were sorting books and talking. Suddenly, I felt this force push me back against a wall of boxes of books. Justin was pushed further into a cubical away from me as this unidentifiable shape went between us. As quickly as it was there, it was gone. Now Justin and I are both well over six feet, fit individuals, and it moved us as easily as if we were made of straw. There was the usual **HOLY SHIT WHAT WAS THAT** conversation, but we never did come to any conclusions that made any sense. Ultimately, whatever it was didn't hurt us, and probably a team of scientists could have come up with a plausible explanation regarding trapped air and this door opening and that door closing at the right time.

Sometimes in the dark or even moving among us in broad daylight, there are things we can not explain. I'm alright with that.

If you wish to see more of my most recent book and movie reviews, visit <http://www.jeffreykeeten.com>
I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Gary Willett says

Don't be surprised when you find yourself looking over your shoulder and into shadowed areas while the hairs on your neck are sticking straight out. "They now have three minutes to live..."

Beware the film - it totally misses the mark and the story - it sucked.

Mimi Wolske says

You think werewolves scare the bejeeber cr#p out of you? These creatures are not werewolves and they have zilch to do with shape-shifting thingys, but, as the hookline on the cover states, they will tear the scream out of your throat.

After years of reading about humans who get bitten and are cursed to turning into werewolves who now kill/eat humans and after learning that's what makes the werewolf such a formidable and terrifying adversary (I mean, how the heck does anyone know who is or is not a werewolf until the creature changes?), Strieber gives us not just a different but another part of the werewolf concept. Taking the human mind and letting it direct a powerful body in all the myriad ways that a higher intelligence can wield some truly awe inspiring physical capacities. You think that last sentence explains the werewolf? Well, it also kind of explains Wolfen. But, there's more...there is so much more.

So, What are they? you ask.

Wolfen is this race, this species of highly intelligent and evolved predators. At some point, thousands of years ago, they broke free of the canine evolutionary tree—and created their own branch.

They aren't just any typical predator. No. Their prey is...Humans. Only Humans.

Until the late 1970s on a rainy day in NYC, the only non-Native American humans aware of the fact they are the prey are slaughtered by Wolfen before they can do anything with their new found knowledge.

The reader is led on a walk through the wolfen evolution through a series of scenes...scientists and researchers at the Museum of Natural History, exploring library archives, and, (holding your breath) through the Wolfen's POV (point of view) descriptions of their remembered history. These are scenes that the author uses to provide not only a plausible explanation for where the Wolfen come from, but Strieber gives the researchers and book-lover readers a visceral thrill. He leverages the legend of the werewolf as humanity's way for trying to understand attacks that, in fact, were made by the Wolfen all along.

This is a short (thank goodness), fast-paced (thank goodness again) book that suspends disbelief in the reader and takes us to the genius of Strieber. This is a Scary Book.

David Cordero says

A mix bag for me. The author sometimes weaves you into the story in a macabre way, sometimes in a weak and flaccid way. I like the story and some of the tricks he pulls in trying to scare you, even though he doesn't. Still I recommend it. There's some great gore in it and an excellent background.

DeAnna Knippling says

Two cops investigate a series of killings performed by what seem like enormous, intelligent wolves.

Fast, enjoyable read, with strange "pack dynamics" meditations on humanity vs. wolves. Not that scary; it has more of an overall tone of an urban fantasy, for all the blood that gets thrown around (by the bucket). Not a masterpiece, but does its job competently and without fuss, which I can only admire.
