



We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves: A Novel (Pen/Faulkner Award - Fiction)

By Karen Joy Fowler



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Shortlisted for the 2014 Man Booker Prize

Winner of the 2014 PEN/Faulkner Award

One of the *New York Times Book Review's* 100 Notable Books of 2013

Named by *The Christian Science Monitor* as one of the top 15 works of fiction

The *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Jane Austen Book Club* introduces a middle-class American family, ordinary in every way but one...

Meet the Cooke family: Mother and Dad, brother Lowell, sister Fern, and Rosemary, who begins her story in the middle. She has her reasons. “I was raised with a chimpanzee,” she explains. “I tell you Fern was a chimp and already you aren’t thinking of her as my sister. But until Fern’s expulsion...she was my twin, my funhouse mirror, my whirlwind other half and I loved her as a sister.” As a child, Rosemary never stopped talking. Then, something happened, and Rosemary wrapped herself in silence.

In *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, Karen Joy Fowler weaves her most accomplished work to date—a tale of loving but fallible people whose well-intentioned actions lead to heartbreaking consequences.

“A gripping, big-hearted book...through the tender voice of her protagonist, Fowler has a lot to say about family, memory, language, science, and indeed the question of what constitutes a human being.”—Khaled Hosseini

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review As a girl in Indiana, Rosemary, Fowler's breathtakingly droll 22-year-old narrator, felt that she and Fern were not only sisters but also twins. So she was devastated when Fern disappeared. Then her older brother, Lowell, also vanished. Rosemary is now prolonging her college studies in California, unsure of what to make of her life. Enter tempestuous and sexy Harlow, a very dangerous friend who forces Rosemary to confront her past. We then learn that Rosemary's father is a psychology professor, her mother a nonpracticing scientist, and Fern a chimpanzee. Fowler, author of the best-selling *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004), vigorously and astutely explores the profound consequences of this unusual family configuration in sustained flashbacks. Smart and frolicsome Fern believes she is human, while Rosemary, unconsciously mirroring Fern, is instantly tagged "monkey girl" at school. Fern, Rosemary, and Lowell all end up traumatized after they are abruptly separated. As Rosemary—lonely, unmoored, and caustically funny—ponders the mutability of memories, the similarities and differences between the minds of humans and chimps, and the treatment of research animals, Fowler slowly and dramatically reveals Fern and Lowell's heartbreaking yet instructive fates. Piquant humor, refulgent language, a canny plot rooted in real-life experiences, an irresistible narrator, threshing insights, and tender emotions—Fowler has outdone herself in this deeply inquisitive, cage-rattling novel. --Donna Seaman

Review

Praise for *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*

"A novel so readably juicy and surreptitiously smart, it deserves all the attention it can get...[Its] fresh diction and madcap plot bend the tone toward comedy, but it never mislays its solemn *raison d'être*. Monkeyshines aside, this is a story of Everyfamily in which loss engraves relationships, truth is a soulful stalker and coming-of-age means facing down the mirror, recognizing the shape-shifting notion of self."—Barbara Kingsolver, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Fowler's interests here are in what sets humans apart from their fellow primates. Cognitive, language and memory skills all come into playful question. But the heart of the novel—and it has a big, warm, loudly beating heart throughout—is in its gradually pieced-together tale of family togetherness, disruption and reconciliation. *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* is Fowler at her best, mixing cerebral and emotional appeal together in an utterly captivating manner."—*The Seattle Times*

"Elegantly and humorously orchestrated...Knitting together Rosemary's at times poignant, at times hilarious scraps of uncovered memories, Fowler creates a fantastical tale of raw, animalistic love."—*O, The Oprah Magazine*

"[The novel] lies somewhere between psychological thriller, scientific theory and coming-of-age story, a seemingly untenable combination. But Fowler, through wit and mastery of her craft, handles the complexity effortlessly."—*USA Today*

"This brave, bold, shattering novel reminds us what it means to be human, in the best and worst sense."—*The Miami Herald*

"Rosemary's voice—vulnerable, angry, shockingly honest—is so compelling and the cast of characters,

including Fern, irresistible. A fantastic novel: technically and intellectually complex, while emotionally gripping.”—*Kirkus* (starred review)

“Piquant humor, refulgent language, a canny plot rooted in real-life experiences, an irresistible narrator, thrashing insights, and tender emotions—Fowler has outdone herself in this deeply inquisitive, cage-rattling novel.”—*Booklist* (starred review)

“A strong, unsettling novel...Fowler explores the depths of human emotions and delivers a tragic love story that captures our hearts.”—*Library Journal* (starred review)

“Rosemary’s experience [is] a fascinating basis for insight into memory, the mind, and human development.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“In this curious, wonderfully intelligent novel, Karen Joy Fowler brings to life a most unusual family. Wonderful Fern, wonderful Rosemary! Through them we feel what it means to be a human animal.”—Andrea Barrett, author of *Servants of the Map* and *Ship Fever*

“Karen Joy Fowler has written the book she's always had in her to write. With all the quiet strangeness of her amazing *Sarah Canary*, and all the breezy wit and skill of her beloved *Jane Austen Book Club*, and a new, urgent gravity, she has told the story of an American family. An unusual family—but aren't all families unusual? A very American, an only-in-America family—and yet an everywhere family, whose children, parents, siblings, love one another very much, and damage one another badly. Does the love survive the damage? Will human beings survive the damage they do to the world they love so much? This is a strong, deep, sweet novel.”—Ursula K. Le Guin, author of *Lavinia*, *The Unreal and the Real*, and the Earthsea Cycle

“*We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* is a dark cautionary tale hanging out, incognito-style, in what at first seems a traditional family narrative. It is anything but. This novel is deliciously jaunty in tone and disturbing in material. Karen Joy Fowler tells the story of how one animal—the animal of man—can simultaneously destroy and expand our notion of what is possible.”—Alice Sebold, *New York Times*-bestselling author of *The Lovely Bones* and *The Almost Moon*

“You know how people say something is incredible or unbelievable when they mean it's excellent? Well, Karen Joy Fowler's new book is *excellent*: utterly believable and completely credible - a funny, moving, entertaining novel that is also an important and unblinking review of a shameful chapter in the history of science.”—Dr. Mary Doria Russell, biological anthropologist and author of *The Sparrow* and *Doc*

“It’s been years since I’ve felt so passionate about a book. When I finished at 3 a.m., I wept, then I woke up the next morning, reread the ending, and cried all over again.”—Ruth Ozeki, author of *My Year of Meats* and *A Tale for the Time Being*

“This unforgettable novel is a dark and beautiful journey into the heart of a family, an exploration of the meanings of memory, a study of what it means to be ‘human.’ In the end the book doesn't just break your heart; it takes your heart and won't give it back.”—Dan Chaon, author of *Await Your Reply* and *Stay Awake*

“A funny, stingingly smart, and heartbreaking book. Among other things, it's about love, family, loss, and secrets; the acquisition and the loss of language. It's also about two sisters, Rosemary and Fern, who are unlike any other sisters you've ever met before.”—Kelly Link, author of *Stranger Things Happen* and *Pretty Monsters*

About the Author

Karen Joy Fowler, a PEN/Faulkner and California Book Award winner, is the author of six novels (two of them *New York Times* bestsellers) and four short story collections. She has been a Dublin IMPAC nominee, and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2014. She lives in Santa Cruz, California.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Elizabeth Frizzell:

This We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves: A Novel (Pen/Faulkner Award - Fiction) book is not really ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you get by reading this book is information inside this publication incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper an individual read a lot of information you will get. This kind of We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves: A Novel (Pen/Faulkner Award - Fiction) without we recognize teach the one who reading through it become critical in pondering and analyzing. Don't become worry We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves: A Novel (Pen/Faulkner Award - Fiction) can bring if you are and not make your handbag space or bookshelves' turn out to be full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even telephone. This We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves: A Novel (Pen/Faulkner Award - Fiction) having great arrangement in word and layout, so you will not feel uninterested in reading.

Cynthia Johnson:

Now a day individuals who Living in the era where everything reachable by talk with the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not involve people to be aware of each info they get. How a lot more to be smart in acquiring any information nowadays? Of course the reply is reading a book. Examining a book can help folks out of this uncertainty Information especially this We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves: A Novel (Pen/Faulkner Award - Fiction) book because book offers you rich facts and knowledge. Of course the information in this book hundred per cent guarantees there is no doubt in it you know.

Steven Hackett:

Is it you actually who having spare time in that case spend it whole day simply by watching television programs or just laying on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves: A Novel (Pen/Faulkner Award - Fiction) can be the answer, oh how comes? A fresh book you know. You are thus out of date, spending your extra time by reading in this fresh era is common not a nerd activity. So what these ebooks have than the others?

Keith Reese:

What is your hobby? Have you heard which question when you got pupils? We believe that that question was given by teacher to the students. Many kinds of hobby, Every person has different hobby. And also you

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