



Cappelen Damm 2015
160 pages
Original title: *Før de henter oss*
ISBN: 9788202491482

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Cappelen Damm Agency
NO-0055 Oslo
Tel: +47 21 61 65 00
foreignrights@cappelendamm.no
www.cappelendammagency.no

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Peter Franziskus Strassegger

Before they come to fetch us

It is always a sign of quality when the second book is better than the first, but this is particularly impressive when it is better than a Vesaa's Prize winning debut novel. In Peter Strassegger's new novel we meet Alma, who is married to Oscar. She is old, and he is much older. They live in a ruined and neglected landscape where the rich earth has been washed away by rain and flood. In these almost post-apocalyptic conditions the pair of them go home and wait to be fetched. It is unclear who will come to fetch them or where they will take them. Every time they think they see a car at one of the neighbours they scurry slow-footedly up the stairs to put on their Sunday best. They have clear ideas about how they are to be fetched, and they hope it will be done correctly. Alma is the spokesperson, and through her eyes we see the scorched, ash-grey landscape with only a couple of occupied houses, where the only accessible shop is a filling station which is about to be demolished. In flashbacks and in the present time we also meet Elisa, the neighbour who spends her days sitting out on the veranda of her grand house. She has a place there for Alma if she wants to come to visit, but otherwise the door is bolted. In case anybody should be in doubt, this is a very special novel, and like Strassegger's first book it is refreshingly un-Norwegian.

Peter Franziskus Strassegger

Peter Franziskus Strassegger (1984-) was born in Austria but has lived in Norway since he was 12 years old. He was awarded the Tarjei Vesaa's debut award for his novel *Stasia*. He has since published several novels, *Casualty of War* is his latest one.



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