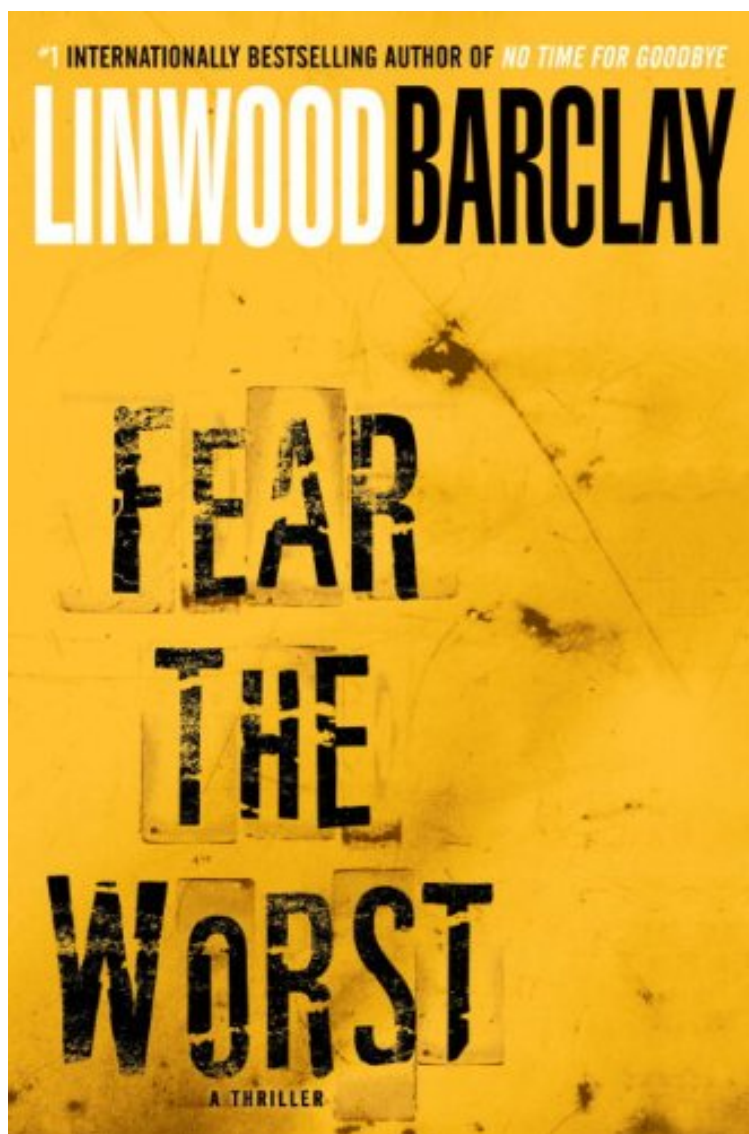


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Fear the Worst: A Thriller



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurTim Blake is an average guy. He sells cars. He has an ex-wife whos moved in with another man. Its not a life without hassles, but nothing will prepare him for when his daughter, Sydney, vanishes into thin air.At the hotel where she supposedly worked, no one has ever heard of her. Even her closest friends seem to be at a loss. As he retraces Sydneys steps, Tim discovers that the suburban Connecticut town he always thought of as idyllic is anything but. What he doesnt know is that his every move is being watched. There are others who want to find Sydney as much as Tim does. And the closer Tim comes to the truth, the closer he comes to every parents worst nightmareand the kind of evil only a parents love has a chance in hell of stopping.ExtraitPROLOGUEThe morning of the day I lost her, my daughter asked me to scramble her some eggs.Want bacon with it? I shouted up to the second floor, where she was

still getting ready for work. No, Sydney called down from the bathroom. Toast? I asked. No, she said. I heard a clapping noise. The hair straightener. That noise usually signaled she was nearing the end of her morning routine. Cheese in the eggs? No, she said. Then, A little? I went back into the kitchen, opened the fridge, and took out eggs, a block of cheddar, and orange juice. I put a filter into the coffeemaker, spooned in some coffee, poured in four cups of water, and hit the button. Syds mother Susanne, my ex, whod recently moved in with her boyfriend Bob on the other side of the river in Stratford, would probably say I was spoiling her, that our daughter was old enough at seventeen to be able to make her own breakfast. But it was such a treat to have her stay with me for the summer I didnt mind pampering her. Last year Id found her a job at the Honda dealership where I work, just this side of that same river here in Milford. While there were moments when we wanted to kill each other, overall it had been a pretty good experience sharing digs. This year, however, Sydney had opted not to work at the dealership. Living with me was enough. Having me keep an eye on her while she worked was something else again. Have you noticed, shed asked me last year, that every guy around here I talk to, even for a minute, you tell me something bad about him? Its good to be forewarned, Id said. What about Dwayne, in Service? shed said. His rag was too oily? Sign of bad character, Id said. And Andy? Youre joking, Id said. Way too old. Mid-twenties. So this year shed found a different job, but still here in Milford, so she could live with me from June through Labor Day. Shed gotten herself hired at the Just Inn Time, a hotel that catered to business travelers only looking to stay a night or two. Milfords a nice place, but its not exactly a tourist destination. The hotel had been a Days Inn or a Holiday Inn or a Comfort Inn in a previous life, but whichever conglomerate had owned it, theyd bailed, and an independent had come in. I wasnt surprised when Sydney told me theyd put her on the front desk. Youre bright, charming, courteous. Im also one of the few there who speaks English, shed countered, putting her proud father in his place. It was like pulling teeth, getting her to talk about the new job. Its just work, shed say. Three days into it I heard her arguing on the phone with her friend Patty Swain, saying she was going to look for something else, even if she was making good money, since no income tax was being taken out. This is off the books? I said when she got off the phone. Youre getting paid under the table? Sydney said, You always listen to my phone calls? So I backed off. Let her solve her own problems. I waited until I heard her coming down the stairs before I poured the two scrambled eggs, a few shavings of grated cheddar mixed in, into the buttered frying pan. It had occurred to me to do something I hadnt done for Sydney since she was a little girl. I took half of the eggshell Id just cracked and, using a soft pencil from the cutlery drawer, drew a face on it. A toothy grin, a half circle for a nose, and two menacing-looking eyes. I drew a line from the mouth to the back side of the shell, where I printed, Smile, damn it. She shuffled into the kitchen like a condemned prisoner and plopped into her chair, looking down into her lap, hair hanging down over her eyes, arms lifeless at her sides. She had a pair of oversized sunglasses I didnt recognize perched on her head. The eggs firmed up in seconds. I slipped them onto a plate and set them before her. Your Highness, I said, talking over the sounds of the Today show coming from the small television that hung beneath the cabinet. Sydney lifted her head slowly, looking first at the plate, but then her eyes caught the little Humpty Dumpty character staring at her from atop the saltshaker. Oh my God, she said, bringing up a hand and turning the shaker so she could read what was on the eggs back side. Smile yourself, she said, but there was something bordering on playful in her voice. New shades? I asked. Absently, like shed forgotten shed just put them there, she touched one of the arms, made a minor adjustment. Yeah, she said. I noticed the word Versace printed in very tiny letters on the glasses. Very nice, I said. Syd nodded tiredly. Out late? I asked. Not that late, she said. Midnights late, I said. She knew there was no point denying when she got in. I never got to sleep until I heard her come into our house on Hill Street and lock the door behind her. I guessed shed been out with Patty Swain, who was also seventeen, but gave off a vibe that she was a little more experienced than Syd with the kinds of things that kept fathers up at night. Id have been naive to think Patty Swain didnt already know about drinking, sex, and drugs. But Syd wasnt exactly an angel. Id caught her with pot once, and there was that time, a couple years back, when she was fifteen, when she came home from the Abercrombie Fitch store in Stamford with a new T-shirt, and couldnt explain to her mother why she had no receipt. Big fireworks over that one. Maybe thats why the sunglasses were niggling at me. What those set you back? I asked. Not that much, she said. Hows Patty? I asked, not so much to find out how she was as to confirm Syd had been with her. Theyd been friends only a year or so, but theyd spent so much time together it was as if their friendship went back to kindergarten. I liked Patty she had a directness that was refreshing but there were times I wished Syd hung out with her a little less. Shes cool, Syd said. On the TV, Matt Lauer was warning about possibly radioactive granite countertops. Every day, something new to worry about. Syd dug

into her eggs. Mmm, she said. She glanced up at the TV. Bob, she said. I looked. One of the ad spots from the local affiliate. A tall, balding man with a broad smile and perfect teeth standing in front of a sea of cars, arms outstretched, like Moses parting the Red Sea. Run, don't walk, into Bob's Motors! Don't have a trade? That's okay! Don't have a down payment? That's okay! Don't have a driver's license? Okay, that's a problem! But if you're looking for a car, and you're looking for a good deal, get on down to one of our three local hit the mute button. He is a bit of a douche, Syd said of the man her mother, my ex, lived with. But those commercials turn him into Superdouche. What are we having tonight? Breakfast was never complete without a discussion of what we might be eating at the end of the day. How about D.A.D.? Family code for dial a dinner. Before I could answer, she said, Pizza? I think I'll make something, I said. Syd made no attempt to hide her disappointment. Last summer, when Syd and I were both working at the same place and she was riding in with me, Susanne and I had agreed to get her a car for nipping around Milford and Stratford. I took in a seven-year-old Civic with low miles on a trade and snatched it up for a couple thousand before it hit our used-car lot. It had a bit of rust around the fender wells, but was otherwise roadworthy. No spoiler? Syd cracked when it was presented to her. Shut up, I said and handed her the keys. Only once since she'd gotten this new job had I dropped her off at work. The Civic was in for a rusted-out tailpipe. So I drove her up Route 1, what I still thought of as the Boston Post Road, the Just Inn Time looming in the distance, a bleak, gray, featureless block on the horizon, looking like an apartment complex in some Soviet satellite country. I was prepared to drive her to the door, but she had me drop her off at the sidewalk, near a bus stop. I'll be here at the end of the day, she said. Bob's commercial over, I put the sound back on. Al Roker was outside mingling with the Rockefeller Center crowd, most of them waving signs offering birthday greetings to relatives back home. I looked at my daughter, eating her breakfast. Part of being a father, at least for me, is being perpetually proud. I took in what a beautiful young woman Syd was turning into. Blonde hair down to her shoulders, a long graceful neck, porcelain skin, strong facial features. Her mother's roots go back to Norway, which accounts for her Nordic air. As if sensing my eyes on her, she said, You think I could be a model? A model? I glanced over. Don't sound so shocked, she said. I'm not, I said ... Revue de presse Praise for Too Close to Home: Barclays latest and best thriller. The Globe and Mail A terrifically fast-paced suspense story. The Washington Post Praise for No Time for Goodbye: A straight-faced page turner. Toronto Star An anxiety-inducing thriller. USA Today From the Hardcover edition.