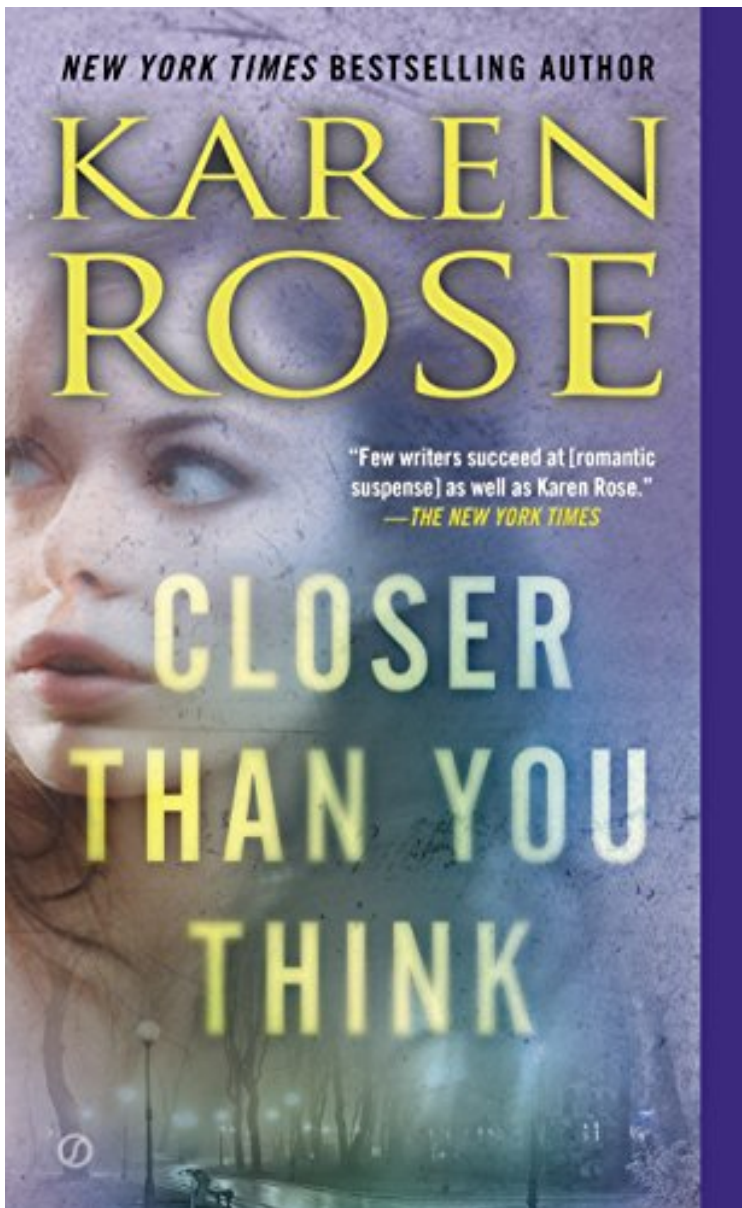


[Mobile ebook] File size: 49.Mb

Closer Than You Think



Par Karen Rose
**Download PDF | ePub | DOC | audiobook | ebooks*

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #159426 dans eBooksPubli le: 2015-02-03Sorti le: 2015-02-03Format: Ebook Kindle

[Mobile ebook] Closer Than You Think

Par Karen Rose : Closer Than You Think before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Closer Than You Think:

Download

Read Online

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA woman on the run must confront her dark past at her familys home in Cincinnati in this thrilling novel of romantic suspense from New York Times bestselling author Karen Rose. Psychologist Faith Corcoran is desperate to escape the stalker whos made her life a nightmare for the past year desperate enough to run to the one place that has been her nightmare far longer. Her recent inheritance of her grandmothers old house in Cincinnati offers sanctuary in which she can start her life anew, but requires that she face the dark memories that still resonate to this day. But she has no idea how close to home her fears still are... Two college girls have gone missing in the area, and FBI Special Agent Deacon Novak is called to

work on the case. When his inquiry unexpectedly leads him to Faith, he finds a beautiful and brave woman he cant help but fall for. Soon theyll discover that this seemingly simple investigation is anything but. Reaching back decades into Faiths own past, it will shatter everything she believes to be true and will give terrifying new meaning to flesh and blood.

Oh God. Corinne fought the sudden wave of nausea, contracting her body into the fetal position. Wine. Too much wine. This is the worst hangover ever. But... Wait. No. Cant be. A sliver of clarity returning, she shook her head, swallowing a moan when the room tilted. Havent had a drink in two years. The flu. Dammit. Shed had the damn flu shot. She lifted her hands to rub her eyes, but Tied. Realization rushed in. She gave her arms a panicked jerk, shooting pain up through her shoulders. Her hands were tied. Behind her back. The room wasnt dark. Im blindfolded. She lurched to one side, heard the clank of a chain before her movement was abruptly checked. Terror crashed through her, filling her mind. Tied. Chained. Blindfolded. A scream rose in her throat but came out a rusty croak. Her throat was dry as dust, her lips cracked. Not a hangover. Drugged. I was drugged. How? When? Who would have? Who could have? What had they done to her? She drew a breath, tried to calm herself. Breathed deeply. Think, Corinne. Think hard. The musty odor of the room burned her nose, making her sneeze violently, sending her head spinning again. She clenched her teeth. Rode the nausea through. She listened, but there was nothing. She heard nothing. No wind. No music. No voices. Okay. Okay. This sucks. This really sucks. Calm down. Think. Think. She forced her arms to relax, felt the chain go slack. She moved her fingers, her toes. Straightened her spine, careful not to make any more sudden movements. She was on a bed. A mattress. With a sheet. And a pillow. Slowly she rubbed her cheek over the pillow. Rough. The room was musty, but the pillow smelled clean. A sudden creak had Corinne freezing. The door opened, letting in a cold draft. And the smell of lemons. And the beginning of a shrill scream, muffled by the quick closing of the door. Who was screaming? Who is here? And then Corinne remembered. Last night. Walking back to the dorm. From the library. With Arianna. Theyd walked together because it was late. Oh God. Ari is here, too. Shes screaming. Somebody has her and theyre hurting her. Theyre hurting her. Theyll hurt me next. Youre awake. It was a girls voice, shocking Corinne out of her panic. The girl sounded young. Not a little girl. Not an adult. A teenager, maybe. She sounded... hesitant. Ive been worried about you, the girl added. Corinne could hear the girls feet shuffle against the floor. Count her steps. One, two... four, five... eight, nine, ten. Ten steps to the door. Who are you? Corinne whispered, her throat so dry it burned. Why? The mattress shifted. Just a little. The girl was small. Cool hands cupped Corinnes face. You had a fever, the girl said. Its better now. Are you thirsty? Corinne nodded. Please. Water. Of course, the girl said agreeably. A cup was placed against Corinnes lips. A metal cup. Not glass. Glass could be broken, used as a weapon, but that wasnt going to happen here. The water trickled down Corinnes throat, and she gulped greedily. More. Later, the girl said, gently laying her head back on the pillow. Youve been very sick. Who are you? Uncover my eyes. I cant. Im sorry. The girl actually sounded sorry. Why not? Corinne asked, trying to keep the panic from filling her voice. I just cant. Im allowed to take care of you. Im not allowed to take off your blindfold. Panic won, and Corinne lunged, rattling her chains. Who the hell are you? The mattress abruptly shifted as the girl jumped off the bed. Nobody, she whispered. Im nobody. Footsteps shuffled, the girl moving away. Ill come back later with some soup. Wait. Please. Please dont go. Where am I? A slight hesitation before the resigned answer. Home. No. This is not my home. I live in the dorm. Kings College. I dont know about your college. This is... home. My home. And yours. For now. For now? Oh God. But where are we? I dont know. Said simply. Truthfully. Can you help me get away? No. No. The girls tone became adamant with fear. I cant. But she wanted to. Corinne could hear it in her voice. Or she wanted so badly to hear it that she told herself it was there. Either way, she needed this girl on her side. All right, Corinne said softly. Can you tell me your name? Another long hesitation. I have to go. The door opened. Aris screams filled the air. Please. Whats happening to my friend? Her name is Arianna. Whats happening to her? The girls answer was quiet, spoken with a dull finality that had fresh terror clawing its way up Corinnes throat. Hes teaching her. Teaching her what? What she needs to know, the girl said. Im very sorry. The door closed. Corinne waited a few seconds. Hello? Are you there? Please. But the girl was gone and Corinne was alone in the dark.

CHAPTER ONE
Mt. Carmel, Ohio Sunday, November 2, 5:45 p.m. Its only a house. Dr. Faith Corcoran gripped her steering wheel, willing herself to look at the house in question as she slowed her Jeep to a crawl. Just four walls and some floors. She drove past, eyes stubbornly pointed forward. She didnt need to see. She knew exactly what it looked like. She knew that it was three stories of gray brick and hewn stone. That it had fifty-two windows and a square central tower that pointed straight to heaven. She knew that the foyer floor was Italian marble, that the wide staircase had an elegantly curved banister made out of mahogany, and that the chandelier in the

dining room could sparkle like a million diamonds. She knew the house top to bottom. And she also knew that it wasn't the four walls and floors that she really feared, but what lay beneath them. Twelve steps and a basement. She did a U-turn and stopped the Jeep in front of the house. Her heart was beating faster, she thought clinically. That's a normal physiological response. It's just stress. It will pass. As the words slipped out, she wondered who she was trying to convince. The dread had been steadily building with every mile she'd driven the past two days. By the time she crossed the river into Cincinnati, it had become a physical pain in her chest. Thirty minutes later, she was close to hyperventilating, which was both ridiculous and unacceptable. For God's sake, grow the hell up, she snapped, killing the engine and yanking her keys from the ignition. She leapt from the Jeep, angry when her knees wobbled. Angry that, after all this time, the thought of the house could make her feel like she was nine years old. You are not nine. You are a thirty-two-year-old adult who has survived multiple attempts on your life. You are not afraid of an old house. Drawing strength from her anger, Faith lifted her eyes, looking at the place directly for the first time in twenty-three years. It looked... Not that different, she thought, drawing an easier breath. It's old and massive. Oppressive. It was more than a little run-down, yet still imposing. It looked old because it was old. The house had stood on O'Bannon land for more than a hundred and fifty years, a testament to a way of life long gone. The three stories of brick and stone loomed large and dark, the tower demanding that all visitors look up. Faith obeyed, of course. As a child, she'd never been able to resist the tower. That hadn't changed. Nor had the tower. It maintained its solitary dignity, even with its windows boarded up. All fifty-two windows were boarded up, in fact, because the O'Bannon house had been abandoned twenty-three years ago. And it showed. The brick stood, weathered but intact, but the gingerbread woodwork she'd once loved was faded and cracked. The porch sagged, the glass of the front door covered with decades of grime. Gingerly, she picked her way across the patchy grass to the front gate. The fence was wrought iron. Old-fashioned. Built to last, like the house itself. The hinges were rusty, but the gate swung open. The sidewalk was cracked, allowing weeds to flourish. Faith took a moment to calm her racing heart before testing the first step up to the porch. No, not the porch. The veranda. Her grandmother had always called it the veranda because it wrapped around the entire house. They used to sit out there and sip lemonade, she and Gran. And Mama, too. Before, of course.

Afterward... there was no lemonade. There was no anything. For a long time, there was absolutely nothing. Faith swallowed hard against the acrid taste that filled her mouth, but the memory of her mother remained. Don't think about her. Think about Gran and how she loved this old place. She'd be so sad to see it like this. But, of course, Gran never would see it again, because she was dead. Which is why I'm here. The house and all it contained now belonged to Faith. Whether she wanted it or not. You don't have to live here, she told herself. Just sell the property and go... Go where? Not back to Miami, that was for damn sure. You're just running away. Well, yeah. Duh. Of course she'd run away. Any sensible person would run if she'd been stalked for the past year by a homicidal ex-con who'd nearly killed her once before. Some had said that she shouldn't be surprised she'd been stalked, that by doing therapy with scum-of-the-earth sex offenders, she'd put herself in harm's way. Some even had said she cared more about the criminals than the victims. Those people were wrong. None of them knew what she'd done to keep the offenders from hurting anyone else. What she'd risked. Peter Combs had attacked her four years ago because he'd believed that her snitching to his probation officer about missed therapy sessions had sent his reoffending ass to prison. Faith shuddered to think of what he would have done had he known the truth back then, that her role in his reincarceration had been far more than marking him absent. But given the cat-and-mouse game he'd played with her in the year following his release, the fact that his stalking had escalated to attempted murder four times now... Maybe he did know. Maybe he'd figured it out. Slipping her hand into the pocket of her jacket, Faith's fingers brushed the cold barrel of the Walther PK380 she hadn't left her Miami apartment without in almost four years.

Miami PD hadn't been any help at all, so she'd taken her safety into her own hands. She was sensible. Prepared. But still scared. I'm so tired of being afraid. Suddenly aware that she'd dropped her gaze to her feet, she defiantly lifted her chin to look up at the house. Yeah, she'd run, all right. She'd run to the one place she feared almost as much as the place she'd left behind. Which sounded about as crazy now as it had when she'd fled Miami two days ago. But it had been her only choice. No one else will die because of me. She'd packed the Jeep with as many of her possessions as she could make fit and left everything else behind, including her career as a mental-health therapist and the name under which she'd built it. A legal name change, sealed by the court for confidentiality, had ensured that Faith Frye was no more. Faith Corcoran was a clean slate. She was starting fresh. No one she'd left behind in Miami knew or would know about this house. No one knew her grandmother had died, so no one could tell Peter Combs. He would never think to look for her here. She even

had a new job a sensible job in the HR department of a bank in downtown Cincinnati. She would have coworkers who wore conservative suits and stared at spreadsheets. She would make an actual living wage and receive benefits for the very first time. But the most valuable benefit would be the bank's security, just in case her efforts to lose Faith Frye hadn't been quite good enough. Lightly, she touched her throat. Although the wound had healed long ago, the scar remained, a permanent illustration of what the man who hunted her was capable of doing. But at least she'd lived. Gordon hadn't been so fortunate. Guilt and grief welled up in equal measures, choking her. I'm so sorry, Gordon. Her former boss had had the bad luck to be standing next to her when the bullets started to fly. Bullets meant for her. Now his wife was a widow, his children fatherless. She couldn't bring Gordon back. But she could do everything in her power to make sure it never happened again. If Combs couldn't find her, he couldn't hurt her or anyone else. Her grandmother's passing had presented her with a place to run to when she'd needed it most. The house was a gift. That it was also her oldest nightmare couldn't stop her from accepting it. Forcing her feet to move, she marched up the remaining two steps to the front door, dug the key from her pocket, and went to open the door. But the key wouldn't open the lock. After the third try, it finally sank in that the key didn't fit. Her grandmother's attorney had given her the wrong key. She couldn't have gone inside if she'd wanted to. Not today, anyway. The relief that geysered up inside her made her a little ashamed. You're a coward, Faith. It was just a delay of one day, she reasoned. Tomorrow she would get the right key, but for the moment her inability to enter bolstered her courage. Peeking through the dirty glass on the front door, she saw a room full of furniture, draped in sheets. Her grandmother had taken only a few favorite pieces when she'd left the house for a townhouse in the city twenty-three years ago. The rest she'd left to Faith. The thought of unveiling the furnishings elicited the first spark of excitement Faith had felt in a long time. Many of the items were museum-quality, or so her mother had told her on many occasions. This will all be mine someday, Faith, and when I die it'll be yours, so pay attention. This is your legacy and it's high time you learned to appreciate it. The memory of her mother's voice doused her excitement. She could recall the fear that had filled her at her mother's words as if it were yesterday. But I don't want my legacy, she'd replied. Not if it makes you die, Mama. An affectionate tug on her pigtail. Silly girl, I'm not going anywhere for years and years. You'll be Gran's age before this place is yours. And in her eight-year-old eyes, Gran was already ancient. Then I have lots of time to learn about my legacy, don't I? She'd hidden her relief with a roll of her eyes, she remembered. She'd also remembered being far more interested in the golden retriever that belonged to the cook's son than in the silver teapot in her mother's hands. Can I go outside and play? Pleaseeease? An exasperated sigh had escaped her mother's lips. Fine. Just don't get dirty. Your father will be back soon with the car and we'll head home. But next time we're here, young lady... Her mother had shaken her finger at her with a smile. We do teapots, 101. But the next time Faith had come to this house there had been no talk of teapots or anything else that was happy. Her mother was gone, leaving her life irrevocably changed. Faith ruthlessly shoved the memory from her mind. Dwelling on the past would make her crazy. She had enough problems in the present without dredging up old hurts. Except... this was a hurt that needed dredging. And then purging. She hadn't been back to this place since that last horrible day. Never told her mother how angry she was. She'd never told anyone. She'd covered up her rage and hurt and fear and moved forward. Or so she'd told herself, but here she was, twenty-three years later. Still hurting. Still angry. And still afraid. Time to deal, Faith. Do it now. Resolute, she walked around the house before she could change her mind, not realizing that she was holding her breath until it came rushing out. There it was, off in the corner of the backyard. A respectable distance from the house, as Gran had always said. Someone had kept it tidy all these years, pulling the weeds, cutting the grass around the wrought-iron fence, fashioned in the same style as the one bordering the front. The historical society, Faith remembered. Gran's attorney had told her that the local historical society paid for the upkeep because the OBannon cemetery was a historic landmark. Her family was buried here, all the way back to Zeke OBannon, who'd died at the Battle of Shiloh in 1862. She knew who rested here, remembered all of their stories, because, unlike silver teapots, she'd found their stories riveting. They'd been real people, lived real lives. Like a faithful dog, she'd followed her mother whenever she visited the graves, helping her pull weeds, hanging on her every word as she talked about their ancestors. Faith pushed at the gate, frowning when it refused to budge. A glance down revealed the issue's padlock. Her grandmother's attorney hadn't given her any other keys, so she walked around the fence until she came to the most recent headstone, carved in black marble. It was a double stone, the inscription on the left weathered over twenty-three years. Tobias William OBannon. Faith remembered her grandfather as a stern, severe man who'd attended Mass every single day of his life. Probably to confess losing his temper, she thought wryly. He'd had a wicked one. The inscription on

the other side of the black marble was crisp and new. Barbara Agnes Corcoran OBannion. Beloved wife, mother, grandmother. Philanthropist. Most of that was true. Gran had been a strong supporter of a number of charities. And Tobias had loved her in his own way. I loved her. Enough, in fact, to have taken her name. Most of her children had loved her. Faith's mother's younger brother Jordan had taken care of Gran uncomplainingly until she'd drawn her last breath. Faith's mother had been devoted to Gran, although Faith wasn't sure how much of her devotion had been love. And the jury was out on Jeremy, her grandmother's only other living child. He was... estranged. Faith's grandmother had been quietly laid to rest next to her grandfather in a very private service with only her priest and Faith's uncle Jordan in attendance, in accordance with her grandmother's wishes. Faith thought it was likely due to the fact that Tobias's funeral had become a bitter battleground that had shattered the OBannion family. And her own little family as well, she thought as she moved past the next five headstones, all children of Barbara and Tobias who had not survived into adulthood. She stopped at the sixth headstone. Its design was identical to that of her grandparents, the inscription as weathered as Tobias's. Not surprising since they'd been bought and carved at the same time. One side, her father's, was mercifully blank. The other bore a terrible lie. MARGARET OBANNION

SULLIVAN BELOVED WIFE AND MOTHER Hello, Mother, Faith murmured. It's been a while. A high-pitched scream floated across the air as if in response. Startled, Faith did a three-sixty, looking for the source, but saw nothing. No one had followed her, of that she'd made certain. There was nothing like being stalked to teach a woman to be careful. No one was here. It was just Faith, the house, and the fifty acres of fallow farmland that was all that remained of the OBannion family holdings. She patted the pocket of her jacket, calmed by the presence of her gun. It was a dog howling, she said firmly. That's all. Or it could simply have been her mind playing tricks, echoing the scream from her nightmares. Twelve steps and a basement. Sometimes she woke from the nightmare to find herself screaming for real which had scared the hell out of her ex-husband, a fact that gave Faith a level of satisfaction that was admittedly immature. Officer Charlie Frye deserved a hell of a lot more than a start in the night for what he'd done. Her mother had done so much worse to her dad. Dad deserved a hell of a lot better than what you did to him. So did I. I still do. She hesitated, then spat the words out. I have hated you for twenty-three years. I lied for you. I lied to Dad so that he'd never know what you did. So if you meant to hurt him, you failed. If you meant to hurt me, then congratulations. You hit the bulls-eye. It suddenly occurred to her that her best revenge might be to live as her mother had always expected to as mistress of the manor. It was almost enough to make Faith smile, but the memory of her father's devastation made her angry all over again. The thought of her father brought to mind the promise she'd made. Reluctantly, she snapped a photo of Margaret's headstone with her phone and texted it to her dad. He'd made a pilgrimage to her grave every few years, but a recent stroke had him housebound. Faith had promised him the photo so he'd know for sure that her grave was okay. Got here safely, she typed. All is well. Mamas grave is Her finger paused as she searched for the right words, rejecting all the wrong ones that would be sure to hurt her father, who still believed the inscription to be true. Well cared for was honest, she decided, so she typed it. Will call from the hotel. She didn't dare call now. Standing here, looking at her mother's headstone... She wouldn't be able to keep the bitterness from her voice.

Swallowing hard, she hit SEND, then she turned back to her Jeep with a sigh. If she couldn't get into the house, there was nothing more to be accomplished here today. She'd hit the Walmart near her hotel to buy some cleaning supplies and turn in early. She had a busy day tomorrow. *Revue de presse* Praise for *Closer Than You Think* A chilling, enthralling read that succeeds on every level. Kirkus's The mesmerizing Deacon and vulnerable Faith are complex, compelling characters who draw readers into Rose's latest thriller. Her enthralling storytelling style and intricately layered plot combined with palpable tension and a powerful attraction between Deacon and Faith keeps readers hooked. A sinister villain takes the thrills to another level. RT Book's More Praise for Karen Rose and her novels The queen of romantic suspense Crime and Publishing An excellent example of how far-reaching and varied romance can be. The plot is complex, the characterization sound and the boundaries of the genre pushed...tremendously sexy. The New York Times Karen Rose delivers the kind of high-wire suspense that keeps you riveted. Lisa Gardner, #1 New York Times bestselling author From the first rousing chapter to the last...intense, complex, and unforgettable. James Patterson, #1 New York Times bestselling author Rose writes blistering, high-octane suspense that never lets up. Karen Robards, New York Times bestselling author Takes off like a house afire. There's action and chills galore in this non-stop thriller. Tess Gerritsen, New York Times bestselling author