



Dark Deception

Nancy Mehl

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New Edge-of-Your-Seat Read from an Established Romantic Suspense Author

Kate O'Brien has been leading a quiet life in small-town Shelter Cove, Arkansas, for the past four years when her past suddenly comes roaring back to life. Four years ago, she and her twin sister were attacked by an elusive serial killer. Only Kate survived, and it was her drawing of the attacker--along with some last-minute evidence--that convicted the suspect.

She's been in witness protection ever since, but new evidence suggests the convicted man isn't the murderer and she's been subpoenaed to testify in the new trial. Nervous about the risk, she'll only agree if the same marshal who protected her during the original trial escorts her to St. Louis.

Deputy U.S. Marshal Tony DeLuca accepts the assignment to bring Kate to the trial, remembering how her strength impressed him. While in Shelter Cove, however, he gets a call from his chief, advising them to stay in Shelter Cove until a new development in the case can be straightened out. But when Kate's safety is threatened, Tony must race against the clock to keep her alive and put this ugly case to rest before anyone else gets killed.

Dark Deception Details

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From Reader Review *Dark Deception* for online ebook

E.E. Kennedy says

When Kelly and Kate O'Brien were viciously attacked by Alan Gerard, only one of the teenaged twin sisters—Kate—survived. It took all her strength and courage to testify against Gerard, who has killed a number of young girls. Now, new evidence points to a different suspect and Gerard decides to recant his confession. Apparently, only Kate's eyewitness testimony stands between a serial killer and exoneration.

Called to return to St Louis to testify in a second trial, Kate depends heavily on the encouragement of Deputy U.S. Marshal Tony DeLuca, who shepherded her through the first one. When this new trial ends with an appalling turn of events, Kate—in witness protection as Emily Lockhart—hopes she can remain safe in the community that has been her home for the past four years.

But a complex network of evil, twisted individuals are responsible for the bloodshed and the shadowy mastermind has other plans for Kate. Tony DeLuca readily takes on the assignment of keeping this courageous young woman safe, but who can be trusted in the tiny fishing resort town of Shelter Cove, Arkansas? And what is the secret that Tony is keeping from Kate?

Author Nancy Mehl exhibits remarkable understanding of the workings of law enforcement as the manhunt for the infamous Blue-Eyed Killer spreads across several Midwestern states. This is the second book in The Defenders of Justice series from Bethany House and as a mystery writer myself, I couldn't help but admire the fast action and the convoluted twists and turns in this thrill ride of a plot.

Kate and DeLuca are engaging, three-dimensional characters and the story gives the reader one shocking surprise after another. For the sake of the enjoyment of other readers, I've been careful not to give away too much! Just know: if you like nail-biting action, you will thoroughly enjoy *Dark Deception*. (In the interest of full disclosure, I was given a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.)

Vera Godley says

The author, Nancy Mehl, writes books of mystery or suspension with a touches of romantic interest. Often set in a small town where a strong conservative religious community abides, her stories have heretofore been quite receptive to the Christian fiction reading audience.

In the new Defenders of Justice series, we are given stories set in the average city or town and populated by characters that take the reader into emotional journeys beyond the pale. Book two exposes the raw depravity of the criminal that is the serial killer.

Dark Deception truly lives up to the title that graces the cover of the book. The story has a darkness that permeates and that embraces several planes of life. There is deception that is incomprehensible and which creates a case that proves difficult or near impossible to be solved by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies.

I am not fond of stories that delve into the mentally warped mind and actions of a serial killer, the emotional storm that pervades the lives of survivors, or the twisted connections lives take from youth into adulthood as

a result of cruelty imposed on their childhood. While not a favorite, Dark Deception is most certainly a good read and within the bounds of acceptable Christian fiction. If readers enjoy having their mind rather immersed in the element of society that is portrayed in Dark Deception, this is definitely one to read. If readers simply want to brush shoulders a bit with suspense or mystery, then perhaps they would want something a bit milder. I did enjoy Nancy Mehl's writing and the character development was really good. I particularly enjoyed Detective Leon and his wife. I liked Tony DeLuca and his penchant for sticking to Kate's situation and going the extra mile. I look forward to more from the pen of Nancy Mehl.

DISCLOSURE: I received a complimentary copy from Bethany House a division of Baker House Publishing to facilitate this review. Opinions are my own and freely given.

Rachael says

If you want a twisty suspense designed to keep you off-kilter, this is it. Sure, if you read enough mystery/suspense, it's easy to pick up on clues so that the book is not completely one surprise after another, but it's definitely complex enough that I have trouble believing anyone could peg the entire mystery. Complex can often mean confusing, but the author does a good job of rehashing things in an orderly manner in the end so that it all makes sense.

The romance is definitely secondary to the suspense plot--just a tad to sweeten the story. I actually really enjoyed the secondary points of view this time (normally I prefer just the main characters, especially if the book is a romance, but as I said, the romance is far from the focus of the book). It reminds me of a cop show, where other members of the team are working their different angles to fill in the details and aid the characters at the center of the action. On that subject, this book would make a great thriller movie.

Thank you Bethany House and NetGalley for providing a free e-book. I was not required to write a positive review, and all opinions are my own.

Madison says

Unfortunately, I was quite disappointed with this novel. Dark Deception didn't live up to the same standards as book one in the series, which combined romance with lots of suspense and good mystery solving. While Dark Deception combined the same three components, I was frustrated by this story that I thought predictable and lacking in romantic development.

Kate O'Brien survived a brutal attack that killed her sister. Kate's testimony helped put a serial killer in jail. Now, new evidence suggest that Kate might have been wrong and her attacker has been released. U.S. Marshal Tony DeLuca is tasked with returning to Kate and convincing her to stand as a witness once again. But when Kate is kidnapped, Tony will have to uncover the truth about the Blue-Eyed Killer once and for all if he is to save her life.

Dark deception promised so much - a romance set against endless tension, and a really interesting mystery about the identify of a serial killer. Unfortunately, instead I found this novel to be really flat and uninteresting. There wasn't a lot of romance in the story. The book relies on the characters' feelings that developed during their time together the first time Kate was a witness. Now they have reconnected, but I

didn't think there was enough to explain why their relationship or emotions developed further. Yes, they both experience some tough situations, but their connection didn't grab me (I'd argue there wasn't much of a connection at all). However, I did really like the conversation they had about grief and loss. It's a hard conversation and it touched on some really important topics like suicide and how that leads to more grief and loss. I thought that was the best thing in the story.

The whole book is based around building suspense. Unfortunately, I guessed who the bad guys were and why, pretty quickly, so the big twist wasn't much of a twist for me. The thing that really ruined both the suspense and mystery was the incompetence of everyone, especially Tony. Can I just say, if I needed protection I wouldn't want my life in the hands of these people. Tony was forever disregarding orders and standard procedures, saying he was all about following his instincts but ignoring his gut feelings, being totally unaware of his surroundings, judgemental of people, or just generally being really annoying. And he wasn't the only one. Like the guy who says, oh by the way here is some really important information someone told me to give to you that will solve the case, but I forgot. Whoops. No wonder the boss of these guys is so angry all the time! The only person who did any decent detective work was small-town policeman Leon. I really liked Leon and I enjoyed his sections in the story - they saved me from not finishing this book at all. The ending was also disappointing, I thought. The reader is given a conclusion, but it comes right at the very last second and, once again, is down more to chance than good detective work.

Overall, I was sadly disappointed in this book. Hopefully other readers will enjoy it, but it wasn't the right book for me.

The publishers provided an advanced readers copy of this book for reviewing purposes. All opinions are my own.

Find more reviews, reading age guides, content advisory, and recommendations on my blog [Madison's Library](#).

Patricia Bradley says

Nancy Mehl did a superb job of keeping me in suspense until the very end. Kate was such a strong character even though she didn't always realize it, but I as the reader could definitely see her strength. And Tony. He is truly swoon-worthy and he has trouble keeping Kate in the I-need-to-keep-her-safe part of his brain. She kept creeping into his I-could-love-this-woman thoughts.

And when evidence surfaces that the man she identified as the Blue-Eyed Killer is not BEK, her world turns upside down. The mystery was great and there were some great twists in the story that I can't tell you about, but trust me, you will not easily guess the killer. I'm looking forward to the next book in the series!

Laura says

My thoughts: DARK DECEPTION is Ms. Mehl's latest, and the second in the Defenders of Justice series. I didn't enjoy this book as much as I did the first, though

the action and suspense were still top notch and engaging. Kate is a hurting woman, hidden in the witness protection program, or so she thinks. When her sister's killer is released from prison, he denies he did it and that the real killer is dead. But some one is still out there and her life is in danger.

I did like Tony, he was real, but also hurting, like Kate. He was also confused. Torn between attraction to Kate, the truth, and direct orders, plus under attack from an unknown assailant, he didn't know where to turn.

If you like romantic suspense, pick up a copy of DARK DECEPTION. You'll be kept up late reading until the end...

There are a lot of unanswered questions causing this reader to wonder what's in store in Ms. Mehl's next book.

I received a free copy of this book. All opinions are my own. 3.5 stars.

Donita Corman says

I read this book in under 5 hours. From the first page to the last it had me hooked. Kate is in witness protection after her twin is murdered and she is left for dead beside her. Tony Deluca was assigned to bring her back to testify against the suspected killer. He here are many twists and turns in this story. I felt like I was right there with them.

Michelle says

The author Nancy Mehl has done a fantastic job with Dark Deception, Book 2 of Defenders of Justice. It was a fast past read that kept me on my toes and kept me guessing. The surprise ending was great and oh so unexpected. The main character Kate O'Brien is an inspiration to all victims of violent crimes. Nancy Mehl books offer encouragement, engage you and inspire you to be a better you. I give Dark Defenders 5 stars and anxiously await book 3.

Carrie Schmidt (Reading is My SuperPower) says

Wow! What an intense ride! A serial killer on the loose plus a US Marshal charged to protect the only survivor equals masterfully written tension and suspense. Add in a quiet small town nestled in a mountain lake cove? The stuff of thrillers.

I love Kate's character! Her gracious heart is evident, and so is her will to survive. As the novel progresses – while you're gnawing your nails to the quick and frantically turning pages – we see her will to live emerge as well. Tony is a swoonworthy hero in his own right, but the connection between him and Kate is electric. Even as a friendship, the way his eyes center her when she's feeling vulnerable – so sweet.

Nancy Mehl has done a phenomenal job in this book (and its predecessor) of creating settings and characters

that heighten the tension and contribute to the helpless feeling that the reader experiences as we experience the plot vicariously through the characters. As with Fatal Frost, this story is multi-layered and dimensional. In fact, once you discover one layer, you've unearthed about ten more to take its place!

Bottom Line: Dark Deception is a thrilling roller coaster ride of emotion and suspense. While the romance in this particular novel is light, it is there and adds an even deeper – and more tender – layer to the already high tension. Readers will be on the edges of their favorite reading chairs from start to finish, the twists and turns of the mountain road mirroring the twists and turns of the riveting plot. The faith element to the book is authentic and sincere, as well as relevant, without being preachy. A few familiar faces from the first book return in Dark Deception, but it can be read as a standalone as well!

(I voluntarily reviewed a complimentary copy of this book)

see my review at [Reading Is My SuperPower](#)

Maureen Timerman says

Once you turn that first page you will begin a ride with your heart in your throat, from beginning to end. "Who's on first" came to mind as the list of characters unfolds and then changes, evil personified, and they find one another.

The terror begins when Kelly O'Brien is murdered in front of her sister Kate, who is also left for dead, but Kate is a survivor. She has forged through two trials and now a third looms, can she do it again?

She has been under witness protection and hiding in Shelter Cove Arkansas, a picturesque village in the mountains. Now U. S. Marshall Tony Deluca has taken on the job of trying to persuade her to return to testify, but he has personal feelings for Kate, but he is a lot older than her, and ethics takes a place here, but he does need to protect her.

Once one shoe drops be prepared for them to keep falling right to the very last page, one action paced read and you will never see most of it coming. This story is so good, you are going to have a hard time believing it isn't real, or is it.

I received this book through Net Galley and the Publisher Bethany House, and was not required to give a positive review.

Denise Hershberger says

I really liked Kate in this book. I also really liked how she was so strong even though she didn't always feel very strong. Her ordeal was quite terrible but she overcame so much

This was a very complex story with so many characters and so many possible villains. It was actually really hard to keep everyone straight. But that also kept me on my toes the entire time. It was nearly impossible to try to figure out whodunit.

One of my favorite parts was toward the beginning when Tony was there for Kate in near to her darkest hours. I loved the importance of eye contact in this story.

This book didn't have quite as much romance as I was hoping for but it did have plenty of suspense and

action.

I received a copy of this book through NetGalley and the publisher. All opinions are my own.

Kav says

A nail-biting thriller that kept me riveted (and checking my windows and doors to make sure they were locked!) The intricate plot includes some fascinating police procedurals that had me puzzling over clues right along with law enforcement. Mehl masterfully pulls all the pieces together at a tantalizing pace -- not too fast, not too slow. There's plenty of time to ponder and figure things out while looking askance at something a character says or jumping out of your skin when the hero or heroine gets that edgy feeling. I was on tenterhooks the whole read!

Kate's personal journey really made an impact on me. She has been through something so horrendous it's hard to grasp and she's done an admirable job of getting on with her life - battling the darkness by holding it at bay. It isn't until she reconnects with Tony that she discovers burying the past isn't the same as getting through it. What results is an astounding faith journey that brings her peace at last.

A compelling addition to the Defenders of Justice series. This is Book Two in the series but reads easily as a standalone. Looking forward to the release of Blind Betrayal next spring.

Just Commonly says

"Playing dead was harder than she ever could have imaged." (7)

An intense and gripping ride when readers pick up Dark Deception by Nancy Mehl. Not only in terms of suspense, there are plenty, but also the internal emotional struggle one faced after a traumatic event. That first page will already put you at the edge of your seat as the dangerous and frightful scene plays out in your mind. As we read on, I can't even imagine what our main character, Kate had gone through. It really tugs our heartstrings and feel the pain for the lost of her sister, the terror of the whole ordeal, as well as the depressed guilt of surviving.

"Even if you can't see the scars, no one gets through life unscathed . . . suicide doesn't just destroy you - it demolishes those around you. Those who love you." (85/90)

The author's presented a possibility of a difficult subject in the storyline, but did it with grace and dignity - not diminishing the desolation of what it means for those suffering as well as the love ones. I love how stories can encourage and inspire, but not be preachy. I love how it allows readers to feel for these character, and find the tenderness of life's challenges, allowing for development.

". . . acknowledging the damage in my soul wasn't weakness. it was strength. Strength faces the truth. . . and seeks real healing." (93)

A well defined package of a suspense thriller, Dark Deception hits all the marks, including bringing in familiar faces from the first book in the series. Even with the familiar faces, each book acts as a stand-alone

and will not need to be read together. Readers will definitely not be disappointed.

This review first appeared on Just Commonly blog.

Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book from the author/publisher. I was not required to write a positive review, and have not been compensated for this. This is my honest opinion.

Wolf (Alpha) says

I really enjoyed this book. I hate how Kate is attacked and almost killed. I like how Tony is assigned to transfer Kate and how he helps her through everything. I hate how the Blue Eyed Killer continues with his killing. I like how the man in charge of the killer leaves Kate alone and tries to protect her. I give this book a five star rating.

Diana says

Brilliant storyteller, Nancy Mehl, has once again crafted a dramatic, spine-tingling suspense—guaranteed to keep you holding on to the edge of your seat with bated breath! My emotions ran the gamut as I took a chilling roller coaster ride into the mastermind behind numerous serial killings and his intended victim, Kate O'Brien. Kate has been living a quiet life in small-town, Shelter Cove, under an assumed name, after a horrendous attack four years prior by a notorious serial killer took the life of her twin sister. Kate appears strong and whole, but much to her chagrin, handsome Deputy U.S. Marshall Tony DeLuca draws attention to the fact that she is in denial about that horrific night and needs inner healing. Tony has his own denial issues when it comes to his feelings about Kate, and protecting her is definitely in the forefront. He accepts an assignment to escort her back to St. Louis, but a new development in the case forces them to stay in Shelter Cove. However, has something sinister taken hold in sleepy little Shelter Cove...and will Tony be able stop any more killings before it is too late?

As I breathlessly turned the last electrifying page of this novel (which I finished in only 24 hours - by the way), I looked at the baseball game that was on tv and my first thought was, "Wow. Nancy Mehl has sure hit this one out of the ballpark!" The plot was so intricately detailed, I don't know how she even kept it straight! Just when I thought I had figured out who-dun-it, there was another twist to confuse my already battered brain! Mehl's expertise at writing suspense has certainly amped up a notch or two and Dark Deception just may be my favorite book of hers thus far. A heart-pounding, suspenseful read with a whisper of romance, and an inspirational thread of hope and healing throughout, Dark Deception is certainly one novel you don't want to miss!
