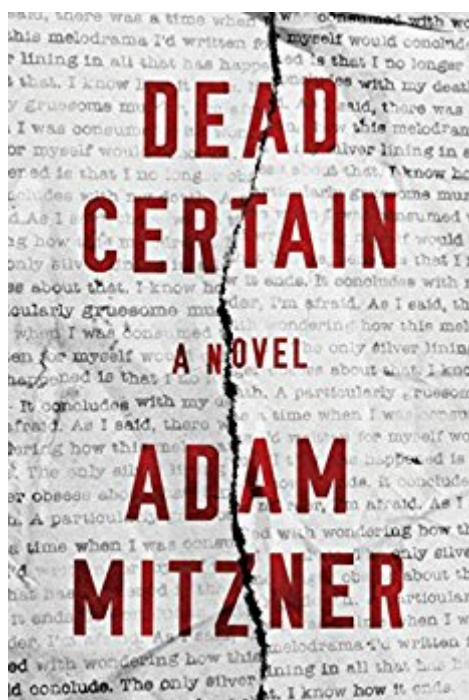


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Dead Certain: A Novel



Synopsis

An Charts Most Read and Most Sold book. Ella Broden is living a double life. By day, Ella works as a buttoned-up attorney on some of the city's most grueling cases. By night, she pursues her passion for singing in the darkest clubs of Manhattan. No one knows her secret, not even Charlotte, the younger sister she practically raised. But it seems she's not the only one in the family with something to hide. When Charlotte announces she's sold her first novel, Ella couldn't be more thrilled until she gets a call that her sister's gone missing. Ella starts investigating with the help of Detective Gabriel Velasquez, an old flame in the NYPD, and what she finds is shocking. If art imitates life, then her sister's novel may contain details of her real-life affairs. And any one of her lovers could be involved in her disappearance. Desperate to bring Charlotte home, Ella works through her list of suspects, matching fictitious characters with flesh-and-blood men. But will it be too late to save the sister she only thought she knew?

Book Information

File Size: 2856 KB

Print Length: 350 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 1477822593

Publisher: Thomas & Mercer (June 1, 2017)

Publication Date: June 1, 2017

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B01M8PI4IG

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #861 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #12 in Books > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers & Suspense > Legal #24 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Thrillers > Legal #36 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Mystery, Thriller & Suspense > Suspense > Psychological

Customer Reviews

The Kindle First program combines two things I love, getting stuff for free, and getting stuff before everybody else... Oh and reading, I guess reading is cool too. Haha but seriously the first of the month always gets me excited for the new selections. I don't even need the e-mail reminder, I anxiously await them. I've been disappointed by the selections before but this month... UGH! It all comes down to personal preference but none of the books this month were ones I would even consider purchasing. I almost wanted to skip this month but there have been other months when I begrudgingly chose a book I wasn't that interested in that ended up surprising me. Unfortunately that was not the case this month. I feel really bad crapping on anyone else's creative efforts, I've certainly never managed to write a novel myself and I'm sure the author spent many more hours working on it than I spent reading it, but I want my 4 hours back. I'm trying to figure out a way to explain why I didn't like it without spoiling anything plot wise but it's virtually impossible. I'll do my best. The book begins from the perspective you would expect from the description, the main character Ella Broden. There are definitely moments when you can tell it's a man trying to write from a woman's perspective and it feels awkward to me but this really did not bother me too much. I was mildly enjoying it for maybe an hour or so. The characters were well set up and it seemed like the kind of mystery/thriller story I tend to enjoy. The story then alternates chapters between this perspective and her sister's unfinished novel. I wish I had warning that several chapters are basically a Fifty Shades-ish "romance" novel. That is not what I'm into at all, and the sex scenes really add nothing to the story. As much as I dislike romance novels, the chapters were short at least so I pressed on. It's about 2/3 of the way through the story that the narrator without warning switches again and for me, this part ruined the book. No way to describe further without major spoilers. I absolutely hated the rest of the story. There are a couple of twists that I saw coming from a mile away, really annoyingly obvious actually. Once the initial "mystery" part is solved there is still over a quarter of the book left that I really didn't even want to finish reading. That is very unlike me, I finish things I start. Well, books at least. I stopped a few times but ultimately decided I've already gotten this far... let's see where it goes. I'm so disappointed with what actually happened in the end. Very unsatisfying and seems like the author just kind of gave up. If I could unread this one I would. My only consolation is I just looked at the Kindle First picks again and I still have zero interest in any of the others so at least I didn't miss out on anything.

I picked up *Dead Certain* by Adam Mizner, partially because some of the pearl-clutching negative reviews on about how pornographic it is, how the writing was terrible, and how it was contrived and

confusing. Since I'm a writer, I like to read across the spectrum to get an idea of what works and what doesn't. I'm glad I decided to read this book, since it explained why it received largely positive reviews instead of negative. This is not a typical murder mystery, more of a whodunnit than whydunnit, which comes with pros and cons. I think this novel lends itself more to a character study than a mystery or thriller. The point of view character, Ella, is a district attorney who recently crossed enemy lines to work at her father's prestigious criminal defense firm. Her true passion, however, is singing. Her little sister, Charlotte, is studying for her MFA in writing and has received news that her novel-in-progress is going to be published. Right after Charlotte shares this exciting news with her older sister, she mysteriously goes missing. The structure of the book can lend to some confusion; it functions somewhat as a frame story, beginning with Ella's point of view and interspersed with segments from the novel Charlotte had written. As we come to find out, Charlotte draws largely from her life to fuel her fiction, and since she goes missing early on, the excerpts of her novel serve as her point of view. Halfway through the book, the narrative shifts again to include a third POV that of the killer. Since these points of view are first-person, the shifting can prove to be a little off-putting and as the switching becomes more frequent, it can pull the reader out of the story for a moment to become oriented as to which character we are now following. I feel, personally, that it may have served the narrative better to portray Ella and the killer's points of view from the third person, but I suspect the author might have felt that the first person accounts paralleled Charlotte's novel better, so I understand why he chose to use first-person across the board. Since the book favors characters over the mystery, I felt that they were well fleshed out and interesting. We get a lot of insight into Ella, who is a seemingly strong woman but carries a lot of self-doubt and regret for the choices she has made in her life. Charlotte isn't quite as fleshed out. Like the protagonist in her novel, we find out that Charlotte has been having an affair with three different men, and while that serves for some interesting conflict, we never really learn why Charlotte made the choices she did, or why she carried on with all three men. I feel like the use of her novel could have served to flesh out her own psychology a little bit more. Once the killer is revealed and we get his point of view, I found that there was a lack of any facet of him that was particularly sinister or interesting. His reveal was surprising, but I don't know if dedicating as much of the book to his point of view was worth it. His point of view just wasn't as interesting as Ella or Charlotte's. Like others, I also had suspected who the killer was relatively quickly, although I was pleasantly surprised to find I was correct. I have never been a fan of mystery books

who throw in showdown with a random killer into the last few pages; I would much rather have the opportunity to guess who the killer is based on the characters and suspects that have been introduced. As I mentioned, I feel like this story was much more about the lives of all the characters wrapped up in this horrible event and what led them to make the choices they did, and less about the mystery itself. The author relied on a lot of contrived devices to draw the killer and Ella together, ones that, as I mentioned, weren't really fleshed out in his side of the story. Ella also jumped to several conclusions throughout the story, such as assuming her sister was dead after she had been missing for about a day (it just seemed like a sudden jump for her to make, even if the reader knew it was the case). She seems to heavily rely on Charlotte's unpublished manuscript to drive the investigation, even though she knows Charlotte often makes changes to her stories to hide who the characters are based on. For example, Charlotte is a writer and her boyfriend is an actor, while in the book, she is an actress and her boyfriend is a painter. However, Ella immediately assumes since the fictional lovers are a college student and a banker, their real-life counterparts would be as well. Ella is the one that seems up to mostly come up with new information and leads based purely on Charlotte's novel and never experiences any pushback from investigators. At one point, Ella confronts one of the suspects and pulls a knife on him before running away. For a respected, established lawyer, she doesn't seem to meet any resistance at any point of some of her irrational behavior. That said, one thing that was strong in this book was the fact that the author clearly knows the legal and law enforcement system. Mr Mizner is a lawyer, and it was kind of refreshing to have a more accurate outlook on the investigations taking place in the story. While there is some sex in the book, I didn't find it obscene or unnecessary. There are only a few sex scenes and while they are a bit provocative, they aren't pornographic. I guess if you are terrified of female sexuality you might want to avoid this book, but since the basis of the investigation is wrapped up in Charlotte's (terrible) relationship choices, it wasn't unwarranted. Ella is also involved in a bit of a love triangle which I felt was a little more out of place. While, from the perspective of a human being, I can understand why she would reach out for companionship during that time, I would have liked a little more insight into why she chose the company she did, as opposed to seeking out the support of established friends or female friends, although their absence in the book seems to imply she doesn't have any. One of her potential beaux could have also served to have been present more to better explain their relationship, both past and present, and its progression. All and all, I really enjoyed this book. It was an easy read, which I don't think should be insulting. I read it in two

sittings and found myself invested in Ella, her father, and in finding out what happened to Charlotte. I personally wish the author would have spent less time fleshing out the lackluster killer and put more into fleshing out Ella and other characters, and giving us a better array of interesting protagonists. I would have liked to have met other friends of Ella's, or seen the police officer on Charlotte's case be more involved, and I would have liked to have been strung along a little longer on who the killer might be and had the reveal take place later in the book. From a mystery or thriller standpoint, this book was okay. But when it comes to the characters, I felt like, for its faults, the author created two interesting, dynamic characters, and I found myself experiencing Ella's grief along with her. The book is not just about the relationship between sisters but also about the secrets we keep from each other, no matter how close we are to another person, and the writer ties in that theme very well throughout the book. I would recommend this book to anyone looking for a quick read who wants a story with a lot of character and a little mystery.

This was a freebie from Prime so I wasn't expecting much. I was pleasantly surprised. I read it in one sitting. I did figure out who the killer was before it was revealed but that didn't diminish my enjoyment of the book.

I really liked the action of this book. I felt involved from the very beginning. I found the multiple names for the same characters somewhat confusing but it was well done and required by the story line. I loved seeing the action through more than one character's eyes. I also like that Gore is minimized. It is more of an intellectual mystery.

The good: this story grabbed me and kept me interested through the first half to maybe two thirds, and it ended strongly. The writing is pretty good, gets you into the characters emotions well. The somewhat weaker: It is hard to say this without creating spoilers, but there was a point in the book where something that has been foreshadowed was confirmed and I lost much of my unrest in the story, almost didn't finish it. To me it felt as though the main issue in the story was resolved and the rest was just details. That may just be me, but it was a very strong reaction. The second problem: I figured out who done it way too early. I've had that issue quite a bit lately, so again it may just be me. I can say that the book ended well and kept me entertained most of the time. It's worth a read, with a few caveats.

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