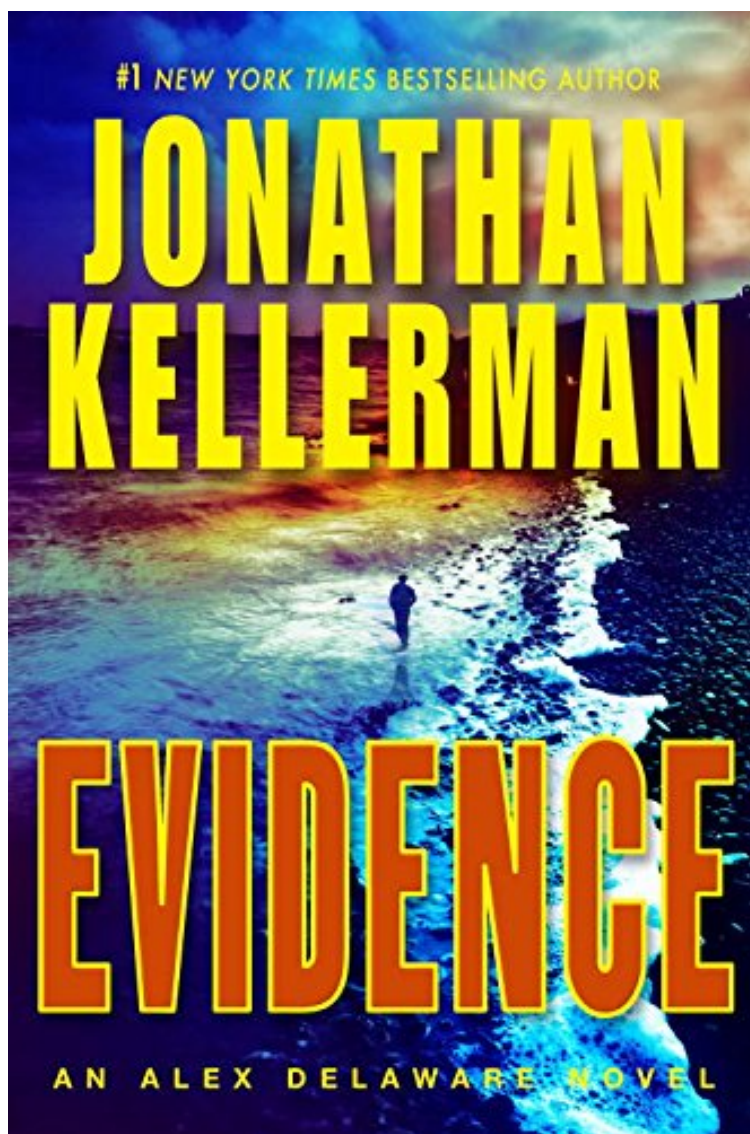


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Evidence: An Alex Delaware Novel



Par Jonathan Kellerman
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurBONUS: This edition contains an excerpt from Jonathan Kellerman's Victims.In a half-built mansion in Los Angeles, a watchman stumbles onto the bodies of a young couplemurdered and left in a gruesome postmortem embrace. Veteran homicide cop Milo Sturgis is shocked at the sight: a twisted crime that only Milo and psychologist Alex Delaware can hope to solve. While the female victims identity remains in question, her companion is IDd as eco-friendly architect Desmond Backer, notorious for his power to seduce women. The deeper Milo and Alex dig for clues, the longer the list of suspects grows. But when the investigation veers suddenly in a startling direction, its the investigators who may wind up on the wrong end of a cornered predators final fury.ExtraitChapter OneI tell the truth. They lie.I'm strong. They're weak.I'm good.They're bad.This was a zero job but Doyle was getting paid.Why anyone would shell out fifteen bucks

an hour, three hours a day, five times a week, to check out the empty shell of a rich-idiot monster-house was something he'd never get. The look-see took fifteen minutes. If he walked slow. Rest of the time, Doyle sat around, ate his lunch, listened to Cheap Trick on his Walkman. Thinking about being a real cop if his knee hadn't screwed up. The company said go there, he went. Disability all run out, he swallowed part-time, no benefits. Paying to launder his own uniform. One time he heard a couple of the other guys talking behind his back. Gimp's lucky to get anything. Like it was his fault. His blood level had been .05, which wasn't even close to illegal. That tree had jumped out of nowhere. Gimp made Doyle go all hot in the face and the chest but he kept his mouth shut like he always did. One day . . . He parked the Taurus on the patch of dirt just outside the chainlink, tucked his shirt tighter. Seven a.m., quiet except for the stupid crows squawking. Rich-idiot neighborhood but the sky was a crappy milky gray just like in Burbank where Doyle's apartment was. Nothing moving on Borodi Lane. As usual. The few times Doyle saw anyone it was maids and gardeners. Rich idiots paying to live here but never living here, one monster-mansion after another, blocked by big trees and high gates. No sidewalks, either. What was that all about? Every once in a while, some tucked-tight blonde in Rodeo Drive sweats would come jogging down the middle of the road looking miserable. Never before ten, that type slept late, had breakfast in bed, massages, whatever. Laying around in satin sheets, getting waited on by maids and butlers before building up the energy to shake those skinny butts and long legs. Bouncing along in the middle of the road, some Rolls-Royce comes speeding down and kaboom. Wouldn't that be something? Doyle collected his camouflage-patterned lunch box from the trunk, made his way toward the three-story plywood shell. The third being that idiot castle thing-the turret. Unfinished skeleton of a house that would've been as big as a . . . as a . . . Disneyland castle. Fantasyland. Doyle had done some pacing, figured twenty thousand square feet, minimum. Two-acre lot, maybe two and a half. Framed up and skinned with plywood, for some reason, he could never find out why, everything stopped and now the heap was all gray, warping, striped with rusty nail-drips. Crappy gray sky leaking in through rotting rafters. On hot days, Doyle tucked himself into a corner for shade. Out behind in the bulldozed brown dirt was an old Andy Gump accidentally left behind, chemicals still in the john. The door didn't close good and sometimes Doyle found coyote scat inside, sometimes mouse droppings. When he felt like it, he just whizzed into the dirt. Someone paying all that money to build Fantasyland, then just stopping. Go figure. He'd brought a good lunch today, roast beef sandwich from Arby's, too bad there was nothing to heat the gravy with. Opening the box, he sniffed. Not bad. He moved toward the chain-link swing gate . . . what the-Stupid thing was pulled as wide as the chain allowed, which was about two, two and a half feet. Easy for anyone but a fat idiot to squeeze through. The chain had always been too long to really draw the gate tight, making the lock useless, but Doyle was careful to twist it up, make it look secure when he left each day. Some idiot had monkeyed with it. He'd told the company about the chain, got ignored. What was the point of hiring a professional when you didn't listen to his advice? Sidling through the gap, he rearranged the chain nice and tight. Leaving his lunch box atop raw-concrete steps, he began his routine. Standing in the middle of the first floor, saying, "Hel-lo," and listening to his voice echo. He'd done that first day on the job, liked the echo, kinda like honking in a tunnel. Now it was a habit. Didn't take long to see everything was okay on the first floor. Space was huge, big as a . . . as a . . . some rooms framed up but mostly pretty open so you had clear views everywhere. Like peeking through the skeleton bones of some dinosaur. In the middle of what would've been the entry hall was a humongous, swooping, double staircase. Just plywood, no railings, Doyle had to be careful, all he needed was a fall, screw up some other body part. Here we go, pain with every step. Stairs creaked like a mother but felt structurally okay. You could just could imagine what it would be like with marble on it. Like a . . . big castle staircase. Nineteen steps, each one killed. The second floor was just as empty as the first, big surprise. Stopping to rub his knee and take in the western treetop view, he continued toward the rear, stopped again, kneaded some more but it didn't do much good. Continuing to the back, he reached the smaller staircase, thirteen steps but real curvy, a killer, tucked behind a narrow wall, you had to know where to find it. Whoever had paid for all this was some rich idiot who didn't appreciate what he had. If Doyle had a hundredth-a two-hundredth of something like this, he'd thank God every day. He'd asked the company who the owner was. They said, "Don't pry." Climbing the curvy staircase, every step crunching his knee, the pain riding up to his hip, he began counting out the thirteen stairs like he always did, trying to take his mind off the burning in his leg. When he called out "Nine," he saw it. Oh Jesus. Heart thumping, mouth suddenly dry as tissue paper, he backed down two steps, reached along the right side of his gear belt. Touching air. Now he was the idiot, there'd been no gun for a long time, not since he stopped guarding jewelry stores downtown. Company gave him a flashlight, period, and it was in the

trunk of the Taurus. He forced himself to look. Two of them. No one else, one good thing about the turret, it was round, mostly open to the sky, nowhere to hide. Doyle kept looking, felt his guts heave. The way they were lying, him on top of her, her legs up, one hooked around his back, it was pretty clear what they'd been doing. Before . . . Doyle felt short of breath, like someone was choking him. Struggling to regain his air, he finally succeeded. Reached for his phone. Right in his pocket. At least something was going okay. From the Hardcover edition. *Revue de presse* 'The expected unexpected twists are embedded in a tale of real texture: every character, no matter how minor is given a life of their own - and the cat-and-mouse interviews led by Sturgis as he tries to nail a suspect are nothing less than superb' (Evening Standard) 'It's always a pleasure to read Kellerman, who injects his fast-paced psychological thrillers with enough humour and authentic glimpses of LA life to leaven his often grisly themes' (Daily Mail)