

Deadly Laws: A Bryson Coventry Thriller

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An ominous voice on law student Kayla Beck's cell phone offers her a horrible choice: If Kayla doesn't try to rescue a kidnapped woman, the chained woman will starve to death — or take another way out with the razor blade provided by her abductor.

Any attempt by Kayla to bring in the police will have disastrous results, warns the man; she is on her own. "You're her only hope," the grim voice concludes. "She has no one else. Only you."

Kayla's decision sets her along a dark and dangerous path; brutal criminals she had only read about in her law school books suddenly become very real, and extremely threatening. For example, in her attempt to discover the identity of the killer behind the chained woman's abduction, Kayla is caught after breaking into the creepy home of a Tarzan-like misogynist, with disastrous results.

Although she doesn't know it, Kayla has allies, including a Denver police detective who is working on stopping the trail of bodies left by the "Razor Blade Killer." Detective Bryson Coventry and an FBI profiler, Dr. Leanne Sanders, have teamed up to track down the killer, whose identity remains unclear to the reader as the plot unfolds; true to the genre, though, the author leaves cryptic clues along the way.

The author is an attorney who has written four previous crime novels featuring homicide detective Coventry, which can be read in any order: *Night Laws*, *Shadow Laws*, *Fatal Laws* and *Bangkok Laws*. He writes in a crisp and clean style, using short and powerful sentences which convey the brutality of an evil man at the center of the spider's web in which the characters are enmeshed. Though lengthy, the book can be read swiftly due to its smooth pacing and tight plot development.

One slight disappointment with the story involves the ending as it leaves several questions unanswered. Also, a "plot twist" revealed by one of the main characters, which seeks to explain the details surrounding the fateful phone call to Kayla, rings slightly contrived. These quibbles, however, do not detract from the author's clever and engrossing mystery tale involving gorgeous women, lustful men and scintillating suspense.

ALAN J. COUTURE (November 12, 2007)

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