



Monster: Alex Delaware 13

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A corpse is found in a car trunk. The victim was a twenty-five-year-old would-be actor called Richard Dada. He had been sawn in half. Eight months later, the body of Claire Argent, a psychologist at a hospital for the criminally insane, is discovered. She was mutilated in the same, horrific way. Detective Milo Sturgis is put on the case and, when the incoherent ramblings of a patient locked up in a mental hospital for the criminally insane begin to make terrifying sense, he calls on psychologist Alex Delaware to help him delve into the muddy waters of insanity. Can Alex and Milo unravel this dark web of family secrets, vengeance and manipulation in time to stop further killing?

Monster: Alex Delaware 13 Details

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Amanda says

Hey look, I read this out of order. Surprise!

I've had this book for over 17 years. I know this because the bookplate in the front has my old address. I had a strange feeling of *deja vu* when I read this but I also don't think I've read this before. Ardis Peake is a mad man and his killings were what sounded familiar.

Anywho, Dr. Delaware is back again helping solve a series of strange murders that, on the surface, don't really look related. But somehow, things tie back to Peake, locked up in Starkweather Hospital for the criminally insane and, boy, is he insane. Or, at the least, so medicated for insanity he's practically a vegetable. Until he escapes. **WHAT?** Yes.

The murder that got Delaware and Milo Sturgis to Starkweather was of Claire Argent, a psychologist at the hospital. As they start snooping around, or detecting, things start to become more confusing.

Is Peake a prophet?

Why was Claire so interested in Peake?

This was a pretty decent mystery that took me a bit to guess what was going on in the end. Clever.

Susan Poling says

This is the second time I've read this book. I picked it up at the ESL book sale and got to the second chapter before realizing I'd already read it. However, since I didn't remember the ending, I decided to read it again and found it very enjoyable...that is if you like rather gory subject matter. I always enjoy the Alex Delaware books. He and Milo make a great pair of investigator. I also like seeing what is happening in Alex's girlfriend, Robin, life. If you haven't read any of them, try one, you might enjoy it.

Ben Skyrme says

I picked this book up on the basis of the synopsis, having forgotten to take my book on holiday. Hadn't read any of Kellerman's books beforehand, but will definitely be seeking out more -especially in the Alex Delaware series. A clever thriller with several plot twists, I recommend this to anyone who likes detective thrillers.

Andrea says

Ok...a female psychologist in her thirties tires of her career in academia and chooses to work in a forensic

institution east of Los Angeles. About six months into her job she turns up dead. Seriously, this is the plot. I kid you not. Meanwhile I'm still reading and working.

Larry Bassett says

This is my first Jonathan Kellerman book. He has been on my TBR list for some time but I was slow to get to him because I am reading so many other series. I am in the midst of Andrew Vachss, Sara Paretsky, Loren Estleman, Michael Connolly, Scott Turow, Karin Slaughter, George Pelecanos and probably a few more that I am not remembering right now.

Monster is the thirteenth book in the twenty-eight book Alex Delaware series that began in 1981 and is still ongoing. I am starting in the middle with the first several books being hard to find. Number thirteen just happens to be the first I have of the series. Just by chance. No special reasoning.

Kellerman doesn't waste any time getting to his first social issue, leaving both the right and the left to lick their festering wounds.

It was a strange time to build a new hospital. State asylums for the retarded and the harmlessly psychotic were being closed down in rapid succession, courtesy of an odd, coldhearted alliance between right-wing misers who didn't want to spend the money and left-wing ignoramuses who believed psychotics were political prisoners and deserved to be liberated. A few later, a "homeless problem" would appear, shocking the deacons of thrift and the social engineers, but at the time, dismantling an entire inpatient system seemed a clever thing to do.

With Jonathan Kellerman you expect some psychiatric education via Alex Delaware, the narrator, and you get it, a lot of it.

But take away the violence and you didn't have serenity. What remained were what psychiatrists labeled the negative symptoms of psychosis: apathy, flat mood, deadened voice, blunted movement, impoverished thinking, language stripped of nuance and humor. An existence devoid of surprise and joy.

Sounds like a drugged life. Or maybe it is better called an existence. Plenty of theories from Alex based on his knowledge of psychology and psychiatry. He already had twelve books under his belt.

Excuse me if I bore you for a few minutes. Remember this is my first date with Alex so everything is new to me. You know how new relationships can be so exciting that way. So the book starts out being about two kind of grisly murders. One is a cold case and the other just happened. The murders are described just enough so you get the grisly message but little detail beyond that. They may or may not be related. Milo and Alex scope things out. There is a lot of talking and hardly any action. They visit a psychiatric hospital full of murderers who are tamed by illness and medication. Then they go to the home of the recently murdered woman. The house is literally practically empty with an empty living room with uncarpeted hardwood floors and a bedroom with a dresser and a mattress and box spring on the floor. Strange for a woman who makes a reasonable amount of money. Lots of talking as they wander through the house. Then Alex goes home and out to dinner with his wife and there is quite a bit of shop talk about the cases with the wife posing lots of possibilities that might explain what Alex has observed. He has been hinting at romance and she promises

him some action when they get home.

Can't hardly contain yourself, can you? Well, the interesting thing is that I am reading another book simultaneously, *Ship of Fools*. So the two books are stacked together on the coffee table. Every time I sit down to read I pick up this Kellerman mystery. So he must have grabbed my attention more than Katherine Anne Porter has! Should I be embarrassed?

Action happens finally. The first action is a flashback of the killing spree of the title character of the book. The second is a visit with this character in his room at the mental hospital for homicidal psychotics. That action consists of the apparently futile attempt to communicate with the "Monster" and the action is in facial and body movements. You will have to read it for yourself to see how this rates as action.

But just when I think that the action may go on for a while, the story goes back to talking to people, in person and on the phone. I do find the numerous psychological tidbits interesting if not action packed. This might be a friendly, informal Abnormal Psych 201 course if my "sieve for brain" could actually file away the bits for possible future use. I am going to pay attention to see if Alex is so erudite in his personal conversations when he is not on the job. I will watch to see how he talks with his wife in bed.

Even Milo can get worn out by all the talking.

He massaged his temples. "Okay, okay, enough talk, I need to do something. I put in calls to Miami and Pimm, Nevada, this morning. When we get back, I'll see if anyone called.

Milo doesn't want to spend so much time speculating with Alex and thinks of people calling him back as action. That is the truth about this book at the beginning. It is mostly talking and thinking. Making a phone call is action! I don't have much experience yet with mysteries so maybe they commonly start slowly with the author planting bulbs, building up details and clues, and then eventually it comes bursting into bloom.

You don't run into too many characters named Milo. So here we have a co-star with that name. I couldn't stop thinking about "The Adventures of Milo and Otis," the 1986 film that was turned into a book. Was Milo the dog or the cat? Now there was a story with action from beginning to end as I recall.

I am not allowed to tell you how this book ends. There are definitely some events that got my adrenalin pumping and it ends with a bang. And I guess it is fair to say that the hero lives to analyze another day. You know that because you have the next book in the series waiting for you to read. I am looking forward to reading more of Jonathan Kellerman. I am still trying to figure out how he is called a consultant when he follows the detective around like a shadow. It is true he is offering theories pretty much nonstop but he gets his hands dirty too. I wonder how he decides what is a billable hour?

I am going to resist the temptation to give *Monster* five stars. I have to read a few more Alex Delaware mysteries to decide if he really deserves that high praise. Besides, I am still feeling guilty that I am reading mysteries instead of literature. But giving it four stars is easy to do.

I am left with the inebriating question of how many celebratory single-malt scotches Milo can put away in a mere four pages. Maybe he heard that detectives in crime/mystery/thriller books are supposed to drink.

aPriL does feral sometimes says

In this Delaware mystery, number 13, a mentally ill 'monster' is killing people. Maybe. Alex Delaware, my favorite fictional psychologist and amateur detective superhero, is called in when bodies are found horribly mutilated, obviously the work of a deranged killer. Because Alex cares and has the time and credentials, he helps Milo Sturgis, one of my favorite fictional professional detectives, gain access to a hospital prison, where various types of mentally ill live. The evidence shows that an inmate there is probably the murderer, but how did he do it? He has been locked up for decades. Copycat? Or conspiracy? One thing is for sure. There is a monster out there.

This is not a book for the squeamish. The killer is insane and he kills people with sadistic delight. While author Jonathon Kellerman doesn't get graphic, he does describe injuries to men, women and a baby.

If, gentle reader, you want to really have fun reading this macabre series, start with When the Bough Breaks.

I'm getting my soapbox out, and now I am standing on it. . *Ahem.*

Some decades ago there were all kinds of places for the mentally ill. Tons of hospitals - all rated with various degrees of lockup severity, like prisons. Some were like expensive vacation spas, others were grim horrors where involuntary patients were chained and tormented much as criminals were in 19th century prisons. Medical care began to become more humane in the 1960's, newspapers printed exposés of what was occurring in the worst hospitals for the mentally ill, and free or low-cost public clinics opened up everywhere.

Then Ronald Reagan won the Presidential race in America. He closed it all down - all the public clinics and hospitals that had a mental health department, the good with the bad. The promise he made was that his administration would support private enterprise in opening up new and better clinics and hospitals for the mentally ill. Didn't happen.

Most of these folks who were released are sleeping under freeways and in alleys, pissing on the back doors of businesses.

In my large state, there are only two major state hospitals left, with the available beds cut back to half of what they used to have and the attendant nurses cut back even more, even though the number of criminally violent mentally ill has grown, along with the ordinary garden-variety mental patients. On the other hand, our building of prisons has exploded. It's estimated that 60-80% of the prison population has serious mental illness. I think I read that the United States has the largest prison population in the world. Now, the soldiers from the two Iraq wars and the Afghan War who have mental illness from their service are being given the shaft in getting mental health treatment. How much will you bet me that many of them will end living in the streets and prisons soon, if they aren't killing themselves in suicide? Yet, psychiatric drugs and types of treatment has never been more enlightened.

Why do we allow this? Is preventive mental treatment more expensive than building thousands of prisons and housing people for decades after their mental problems, untreated, are allowed to explode? The answer is no. But math has never been a strong point for the average taxpaying citizen.

Strawberry Fields says

This book a little hard for me got into at first. I struggled through about the first 100 or so pages, but I stuck with it because I knew from what I had gotten through that this book had the potential to be really good. The plot is a great story.

Once I got through that section of the book it really started moving. The story is compelling. I enjoyed it.

So, I give it a three, only because it was so hard at the beginning. I read these books out of order. This was actually the 13th in a series and I just picked it up randomly from the library so maybe that had something to do with it. I am going to read the first one in the series next.

Lisa says

Really good. in fact one of my favourites so far.

It kept me guessing and I really liked the characterizations. The story is gripping due to the difficulty in understanding how and why everything is happening.

Involving the death of an actor as well as a psychiatrist who apparently had no connection, the trail leads back to a historical slaughter and to a maximum security asylum.

I read it out of order, so cringe when I read the relations between Alex and Robin, but like the suspense of this twisted tale.

While i understand why it ends where it does, i can't help but wish a more complete and fair end were possible ...

JK doing what he does best :-)

Bhargavi Balachandran says

Monster is the third Kellerman novel I've read and with every book read, I like his writing even more. I picked up this book at a bargain at a second hand store as I don't normally buy my copies of thrillers and borrow them from libraries. Faintly reminiscent of The Silence of the Lambs and more of Hannibal Lecter, I found the book spine chilling and gripping. The pace is not really high-adrenaline inducing, but Alex Delaware and his LAPD buddy Milo chip away industriously at uncertainty to make sense of madness behind Monster's random babble. Narrated from Alex's point of view, Monster is 13th in the row of Alex Delaware books. I was surprised at Jonathan's style of writing - vivid descriptions and flowery words somehow don't normally get associated with crime writing, more so with a psychological thriller, but you'll find that in this book. What I find fascinating about books like these is the psychological profiling that unravels during the course of the investigations. The book gives you a sneak peak into the workings of an institution for mentally unstable criminal - Starkweather hospital in this case. It also made me wonder about the safety of the carers and the techs that man these facilities. Either they must be highly motivated or paid very well to take up a job that is fraught with so much risk.

Character-wise I can't choose between Milo or Alex and say who I liked better. I also liked the way how Kellerman lets us see a bit of Alex's personal life in between the investigations. The murders that take place are slightly disturbing and not for the faint-hearted and in most cases Kellerman describes the crime scene almost clinically, going over details of the onslaught on the victim. Almost 200 pages into the book, we get to know who the possible murderer might be and it's more a question of the duo locating him.

Overall, this might not be the best psychological thriller I've read till date, but it was good nevertheless. 4/5 for this book. I recommend it to people who like reading psychological thrillers.

Laura Thompson says

Sometimes you just need read a really good, twisty crime novel. This is a good one to pick up, if you do. I found it original and interesting. The only drawback to the book that I found was that the ending lags quite a bit. I'm sure that Kellerman thought he would up the suspense by describing every single rock and shrub and star and breeze during the final scenes, but it had the reverse effect on me and I just got profoundly bored. Despite that, I enjoyed the book as a whole.

Susan says

Wished I'd skipped this one

I did not find this Delaware story interesting. Too matter-of-fact. Interesting idea, but no motive for the murders left me wanting more. I know in life sometimes things work that way, but it doesn't have to in books.

Amber says

I found this book to be a creative individual story; however, I also thought that it was drug out longer than it needed to be. Jonathan Kellerman keeps his reader involved throughout the first half of the story, but in the second half I felt like he was filling pages and not making very much progress in the story line. I thought that he was repeating a lot, and spending too much time explaining how the characters felt about something and not enough with what actually was happening.

Even though I didn't particularly like the writing style, I found Monster to be the kind of book that keeps you up at night. There were several parts in the story when I found myself with the main character, Alex, and just as horrified as he was. With all the murder and violence in this book, it's hard not to feel engaged in the story at times.

I felt like the ending of this story didn't follow through with the rest of the story. Throughout the book, Milo and Alex are looking for a character, and at the end they find him, and kill him immediately. I was disappointed, and felt like Jonathan Kellerman should have introduced this character more and showed us this story from his point of a view. I feel like the main characters found this man solely on theory and no evidence. I was expecting more of an ending, and felt like it was abrupt.

All and all, I liked the story, but not the way it was presented. I think that it is worth reading, as others may like the writing style better than I do. The characters, other than the antagonist, were well developed and personal. I would rate this book as mediocre overall, and a bit of a disappointment to what the description on

the back would lead me to believe.

Renee says

Meh. I usually like Jonathan Kellerman books but I had a hard time getting into this one. I kept wanting it to end...and then it did.

jv poore says

Always a fan of Mr. Kellerman, *Monster* does not disappoint. I found this to be an intricately woven mystery with plenty of new and colorful characters to enrich the tantalizing plot; but not so many that a separate spreadsheet would be necessary to keep up. This story features the sweet and smart Alex Delaware and his pal, the mighty Milo. The story allows the reader to "solve" the mystery along with the characters, meaning the story-line stuck in my head like an annoying jingle. I HAD to know if I was right---or at least on the right track.

As stones are turned and clues are gathered, the plot (as they say) thickens. One seemingly random psychotic killing years ago was anything but. Mr. Kellerman, through Milo and Alex, take the reader on an adventure that has everything I want in a mystery novel: crazy folks (certifiably), crazy folks among us, long ago forgotten (or never acknowledged) family feuds, drugs and killing for fun (okay, okay, no sex or rock and roll).

The story is a thriller the whole way through, and the ending is just and satisfying without being ho-hum predictable. If you are looking for a good mystery, may I recommend *Monster*? Enjoy!

Kimberly Dull says

Overall, this was a good story. The plot is clever and interesting. But I feel that the book itself could have used a good edit (or a different editor).

First, the writing itself felt like Kellerman was more interested in reaching a word count instead of telling his story. I like descriptiveness as much as the next person, but it felt overboard much of the time. Exacting descriptions of what a person is wearing or exactly what roads are being taken and buildings are being passed during a drive gets old and takes me out of the story. I get it, he knows Los Angeles! The descriptions of his drives and arrivals at locations made me think of that SNL skit, "The Californians." Also, in one spot, the character of Alex is handing someone the same item TWICE in two paragraphs; something a close read should've caught. It was this mistake and the over-descriptiveness that made me think that maybe this book didn't get the edit it deserved.

I am also not sure how I feel about the first person telling of the story. I didn't hate it, but I felt maybe I would've felt more connected if I'd known what was going on in the head of his partner as well.

All of that said, I don't regret reading it. It's good idea/story with OK storytelling.

