



A Darkness Absolute

Kelley Armstrong

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The follow-up to #1 NYT bestseller Kelley Armstrong's acclaimed City of the Lost, Rockton town detective Casey Duncan makes a terrible—and dangerous—discovery in the woods outside of town.

When experienced homicide detective Casey Duncan first moved to the secret town of Rockton, she expected a safe haven for people like her, people running from their past misdeeds and past lives. She knew living in Rockton meant living off-the-grid completely: no cell phones, no Internet, no mail, very little electricity, and no way of getting in or out without the town council's approval. What she didn't expect is that Rockton comes with its own set of secrets and dangers.

Now, in A Darkness Absolute, Casey and her fellow Rockton sheriff's deputy Will chase a cabin-fevered resident into the woods, where they are stranded in a blizzard. Taking shelter in a cave, they discover a former resident who's been held captive for over a year. When the bodies of two other women turn up, Casey and her colleagues must find out if it's an outsider behind the killings or if the answer is more complicated than that...before another victim goes missing.

A Darkness Absolute Details

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Author : Kelley Armstrong

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From Reader Review A Darkness Absolute for online ebook

Brenda says

Two books in, and I am really, really enjoying this series!

The strength of these books is the characters. Sheriff Eric Dalton, Detective Casey Butler, and Deputy Will Anders carry the bulk of the plot and I'm getting to know them very well. There are secondary characters who have been in both books so far and whose histories are known to some degree, and other characters (strangers, really) who are known by first name only.

The romantic relationship between Eric and Casey is exceptionally well written. In this book, he's brought her a puppy and I just adored how the author described the antics of puppyhood! This is, however, not a romance book. There are events and crimes that require investigation, and that holds my interest throughout the book.

Rockton is a unique place. About 200 residents all have various and different reasons for being there. Some pay their way in; others are allowed in because they have certain skills. Everyone has a job they must do to support the community. Their time there is limited, so all must eventually leave, but they can also be kicked out before their time is up. Always in the background is the council that has set Rockton up and finds new people to move in. It makes for quite a variety of storylines, and I can see this series extending for numerous books. I hope it does!

Nikki says

4 stars ****rounded up**** (3.75)

A Darkness Absolute is the second book in Kelley Armstrong's Rockton series. Once again, we are back to the tiny, off-the-grid town of Rockton, following detective Casey Duncan/Butler and sheriff Eric Dalton through another murderous adventure in the foreboding forest that surrounds the mysterious town.

What's important to note: This is a series that needs to be read in order. As discussed with a couple of Traveling Sisters, it would be difficult to read this as a stand-alone novel. There were parts and pieces I would not have understood or "got" had I not read book one. So for anyone interested in exploring this series, I would highly recommend reading them in order.

What I enjoyed about book two: The introduction of new, intriguing characters, the mystery of women being held captive in a cave, and an interesting twist at the end. That said, I do think the book drags a bit in the second half. It picks up momentum again towards the end, but could have been shortened a bit.

What concerns me: Where do we go from here? I like the concept of Rockton, the small, middle-of-nowhere town where people go to escape their past. But given the isolated town and surroundings, I am worried there is only so much you can do with subject matter. I plan to read book three, and I am keeping my fingers crossed for something mind-blowing and new. We shall see!

My rating for book one was a 3.5, and my rating for book two is around a 3.75. I enjoyed book two a little more, and it was nice to see the characters a little more developed. Book one sets the scene, book two does a better job of taking a closer look at the characters and what lurks beyond the town limits.

This was another Traveling Sisters read, which are always so much fun. There were mixed feelings about this one, but that's what makes the discussions even better! I enjoyed reading with all of you, Sisters! For more, all reviews can be found on the following link: <https://twogirlslostinacouleereading...>

Susanne Strong says

2 Stars

Casey Duncan is a Detective in Rockton's Police Department. Rockton is that secret town that is off the map. That town in the Canadian Mountains that no one would ever be able to find or that anyone knows about unless invited to. No cell service and no internet. 200 people. Nice and quiet. You would think it would be a low crime area but you'd be wrong about that. Since her arrival four months ago, Casey has helped her boyfriend, Sheriff Eric Dalton, solve a crime or two.

Now Casey and Will Anders, their deputy find themselves stranded in a blizzard. What they find makes them feel downright cold inside and out. A woman, abused, emaciated, and traumatized, held hostage in a cave for over a year. While working to investigate, the team finds two more bodies and Casey and Dalton have to find out if a resident of Rockton is responsible or if an outsider is to blame and until they do, no one is safe.

"A Darkness Absolute" is a novel that had an entertaining premise – unfortunately for me, the novel fell short. It was overly long and seemed to go around in circles until getting to the end. While I liked the characters, and thought the writing was ok over all, it wasn't enough. I will however be continuing on with the series as I have an ARC of book 3 from NetGalley and the Publisher to read.

This was a traveling sister read. It included: Brenda, Kacey, Nikki, Marialyce, Holly & Berit.

All traveling sister group reviews can be found on Brenda and Norma's Amazing blog: <https://twogirlslostinacouleereading...>

Published on Goodreads and Amazon on 1.24.17.

Marialyce says

3.75 still chilling stars

Life is complicated so what better way to uncomplicate it than to move to an off the grid settlement in the Yukon? With the right amount of money and a sufficient reason, you too, could become a resident. Off the grid, off the map, and your sins could be forgotten. Trouble is the people who move there have lots of secrets and lots of reasons to commit crimes to cover up those sins.

In this installment of the Casey Duncan series, Casey and Will, the deputy make an attempt to find another murderer who abducts woman, secludes them in a cave, and does whatever he so desires with them. Romantically involved with Eric, the town sheriff, Casey, Eric, and Will struggle to find the person or persons responsible for the abductions and murders.

Creepy and insulated from the outside world, Rockton creates an air of mystery with a large sense of scariness in the woods, the cold, and the people who live there. Will Casey, Eric, and Will be able to find the perpetrator or will he or she continue with the ability to steal women from the town and hold them until death becomes a willing future?

Ms Armstrong creates just a goodly amount of suspense, scariness, and somewhat likeable characters to move her second in the series along. Wonder what this author has planned for book three? Perhaps it is time to move out of Rockton and search out those hostiles!

Thanks to my sisters for making this a "fun" read while we tried to figure out who was the bad guy/girl

Jilly says

Awesome fun! If you liked the first one, you will love this. If you haven't read the first one, you really should.

Carole (Carole's Random Life in Books) says

This review can also be found at Carole's Random Life.

I enjoyed this one a lot. It started with a bang and maintained a high level of excitement throughout the story. This is the second book in the Casey Duncan series and I do recommend reading them in order since the events of the first book do play a role in this installment. This book really kept me guessing right up until the very end. I had a lot of fun reading this story and found that I never wanted to put it down.

I love the setting of this story because it is so different than the average mystery. Rockton is such an interesting little town. The residents of Rockton are such interesting characters and each one really adds something to the story. I like the fact that everyone has their own story and it is usually different than what you would expect. The little group of misfits that call Rockton home have really come together to form a community and it adds a nice tone to the story.

Casey and Will find a woman being held captive in a hole inside a cave as they take shelter during a snowstorm. They are able to save the woman but the identity of her abductor remains a mystery. Saving the woman is just the start of a very involved case that will put Casey and others in danger before everything is over.

The characters in this book were great. Casey is very smart and has really committed herself to the town. She is really starting to believe that she belongs and wants to keep everyone safe. Dalton is dealing with his feelings towards Casey in addition to keeping the town's residents secure. Being in a relationship is rather new for Dalton and he is still trying to figure things out. I really like Casey and Dalton as a couple and I do appreciate the fact that their relationship does not overpower the mystery element of the story.

I would recommend this book to fans of mystery thrillers. This story contains a complex mystery that had me turning pages as fast as I could. There are quite a few twists and turns to keep things really interesting. I can't wait to read more of this exciting series.

I received an advance reader edition of this book from St. Martin's Press - Minotaur Books via NetGalley.

Initial Thoughts

I enjoyed this one. I like the cast of misfit characters and the strange little town they call home. The mystery kept me guessing until the end.

Mogsy (MMOGC) says

3.5 of 5 stars at The BiblioSanctum <https://bibliosanctum.com/2017/02/05/...>

Well, I still enjoyed this one, but it was nowhere near as good as the first book.

A Darkness Absolute is the follow-up to the brilliant *City of the Lost*, continuing Kelley Armstrong's new mystery suspense series starring an ex-homicide detective named Casey Duncan. Months have passed since Casey first came to Rockton, a secret community nestled in the remote wilds of the Yukon. People come to this town to escape their past lives, expecting a safe haven, but the reality is much more sinister. As we saw in the previous book, not everyone in Rockton is who they say they are.

Now our heroine is on the case again, partnered with her new boyfriend, Rockton's Sheriff Eric Dalton. Winter has arrived with a vengeance, driving some of the townspeople stir-crazy with cabin fever. One night while Dalton is away on a supply run, one of these listless residents decide to do a runner in the middle of a snow storm, leaving Casey and Deputy Will Anders with no choice but to follow in an attempt at search and rescue. While taking shelter in a nearby cave system, they are shocked when they discover a terrified and malnourished woman trapped in a hole. They are even more horrified when they find out her identity—a former Rockton resident named Nicole, who has been missing for more than a year. This whole time she had been held captive in these caves by an unknown assailant, being subjected to unspeakable acts of abuse.

The mystery deepens further when Casey returns to the cave system to look for clues about the perpetrator, but instead finds the remains of two other women. Rockton's worst fears are confirmed: there's another killer on the loose. It's not clear yet whether the one they're hunting for is a resident or an outsider, but now that Nicole has been rescued, Casey and Dalton must solve the case before the killer can target another victim.

City of the Lost was my first book by Kelley Armstrong, and I fell instantly in love—with the story, the characters, the setting...with ALL OF IT. It made me excited for the sequel, hoping for the same kind of magic, but unfortunately it just wasn't there. Don't get me wrong, because *A Darkness Absolute* still ended up being a good read, but compared to the first book, something definitely felt lacking.

So, what went wrong? It was likely a bunch of little issues compounded together, but if I had to point my finger at one thing, it was the story's predictability. I guessed the perp even before the halfway point, and so the rest was watching Casey, Dalton, and Will run around in circles following leads that I knew would go nowhere. Turns out, reading a book like this can feel really tedious. Worse, when looking at the plot from this point of view, the repeated failures only made Casey and her team seem more incompetent. I also thought the mystery lacked imagination, at least when compared to *City of the Lost*. Sure, Armstrong threw out some red herrings and a few other distractions to try and complicate things, but I was able to sniff them out from a mile away.

Obviously, your experience with this book may differ. After all, I probably stumbled upon the answers by pure chance, especially when I'm usually terrible at figuring out who the killer is in all these other whodunits. Taking out the mystery, there's still a lot to like about this novel, not least of which are the

characters and the exquisite atmosphere of the Yukon. A town like Rockton is the perfect setting for a psychological suspense mystery like this, where the isolation only heightens the tensions and the sense of foreboding. Add to that, every resident in town is an unknown factor, since no one likes to share anything about their past. There's also no fancy forensic equipment or technology in Rockton, so Casey and Dalton have to do their jobs the old-fashioned way. And speaking of them, I continue to enjoy their relationship. The author has dialed back on the romance big time, or at least struck a better balance so that the drama was spread out and not dumped on us all at once like in the first book.

A Darkness Absolute is also...well, dark. It can be difficult to read these books. People find themselves in Rockton for many reasons, but a lot of them end up there because they are the survivors of violence or abuse, and disappearing into the northern woods is their only chance of escape. We are exposed to a lot of their stories, many of which are troubling or unhappy. It only gets worse with a deranged killer on the loose, and many of the descriptions of what happened to Nicole and the other women can be downright disturbing and chilling.

Bottom line, A Darkness Absolute was a good, if sometimes frustrating, read. I personally found the story way too predictable for the book to be a satisfying mystery, but I still love the series' world and characters. I'm not about to give up on Casey Duncan, and I look forward to the next installment.

Jessica ❀ ⇒ Silverbow ⇒ ❀ Rabid Reads-no-more says

Reviewed by: Rabid Reads

4.5 stars

Last year I read CITY OF THE LOST more out of duty than expectation of loving it. Armstrong writes *several* of my favorite urban fantasy series and has been an auto-buy author for over a decade, but I had limited success with her last mystery series (NADIA STAFFORD), so I was prepared to feel pretty MEH about it . . .

In CITY OF THE LOST, we learned about Casey's inner darkness. In A DARKNESS ABSOLUTE, we watch as she begins to come to terms with it. Once again, she finds herself in a cave with Anders, completely devoid of light, and once again, it makes her introspective:

*Absolute dark and absolute clarity, reaching into the darkness inside me. But there seems to be nothing dark in Anders. I know better know. It took some time fore me to comes to terms with his past. And then more time to realize that the person I'd befriended wasn't a mask he wore in Rockton. **It's all him, the dark and the light.***

And if Anders can be both darkness and light, perhaps she can as well.

But there's more to this follow-up than self-discovery. There's also another creeptastic mystery to solve.
shudders

I'd thought Armstrong had hit the ceiling of creepy with her potentially cannibalistic mountain people, but she destroys her previous record when Casey finds the remains of two women shoved into a crevice of the

aforementioned cave . . . In addition to the still living woman . . . A woman who had disappeared from Rockton over a year ago . . . A woman thought to be dead, b/c a woman of her general description had been found WEARING HER CLOTHES after the spring thaw . . .

I won't detail the horrors Nicole Chavez endured while held captive in that cave, but there are few reasons a man would do such a thing, so if that type of scenario is unacceptable to you when picking out your next read, you have been warned.

That being said, Armstrong doesn't give too much detail either. She doesn't need to, so she doesn't, and I appreciated the deft handling of such a horrific reality.

B/c it is horrific. And an almost palpable dread seeps from the pages into the reader when Casey becomes the mystery man's new target. *shudders violently*

BUT.

(Thankfully) A DARKNESS ABSOLUTE isn't all horror and dread.

Eric and Casey provide blessed relief from the mounting tension as they stumble haplessly through the early dance steps of a new relationship, neither of them having much experience with such things. I compared Eric to Clay Danvers in my review of CITY OF THE LOST, and the comparison remains apt. In his entirely human way, he is as devoted to Casey as Clay is to Elena, and his fumbles are equally adorable.

A DARKNESS ABSOLUTE is the second installment of Kelley Armstrong's CASEY DUNCAN series, and it's the best book I've read . . . in ages. I'm not content to say, "this year," b/c it's too early for that to hold much weight, and it's a truly stellar book. Casey's experience may be one I can't personally relate to, but her struggles and doubts resonate in a *very* personal way, and the horrors of the mystery she must solve are tempered by the growing relationships with the residents of her new home. I cannot recommend this series more highly. Read it, read it NOW.

Veronica says

This was a satisfying follow up to last year's City of the Lost, which I reviewed here. It picks up four months after the events in the first book with Rockton Detective Casey Butler and Deputy Will Anders heading out into the Yukon wilderness to track down and bring back one of the town's AWOL citizens. What they end up finding is more than they bargained for.

I enjoyed getting back to Rockton and seeing how Casey is settling into her new life there as well as seeing how she's handling her new relationship with Sheriff Eric Dalton. We get to meet some more of Rockton's citizens, find out some backstory on ones we met in the last book, and discover that some of the old trouble makers are still around as well. The mystery had me changing my mind about my prime suspect/s several times before the end.

I was glad to read on the author's website that she is contracted for at least four books in the series because I definitely want to read more.

****Reread February 2018: Still loved it but Jennifer has got to go.****

Diane S ? says

Yukon territory, a vast frontier, the perfect place to hide a village, a place where people who are in danger in the outside world can escape. This is where Casey and her friend Diana, an abused wife, were allowed to come, their lives in danger, a place where they could be safe. But is anyplace absolutely safe? Run by a committee on the outside, a committee that is supposed to weed out those who are violent or a threat, but do they?

Second in this intriguing series, a place out of time, no cell phones, not investigative tools other than those that can be seen, no formal lab, yet crimes must be detected, solved. When a young woman, thought dead, is found held prisoner in a cave, Casey and Eric must investigate, attempt to find the person who is capable of this kind of maliciousness. There are settlements, those whom after the five years allowed, did not want to leave and set off on their own, formed their own settlements. Then there are the hostiles, little more than animals and of course there are the actual animals, jaguars, etc. A dangerous place, why everyone in the town is encouraged to not wander outside of it, unless accompanied.

The characters and their back stories, why they are here are slowly being revealed in each consecutive book. Interesting to say the least, but the best part of this series, what Armstrong does masterfully is the pacing, it is fast throughout, not a page where I was bored, wanting to prod the story on, there is literally no down time. Good stuff with this series.

ARC from Netgalley.

♥Rachel♥ says

4.5 Stars

I love the setting and premise of this series! If you're a fan of a well-plotted mystery with plenty of suspense, twists and turns, and multi-dimensional characters, (a detective without a self-destructive streak, thankfully!) the Casey Duncan series is for you.

Rockton is a refuge city for those on the run. A city off the grid and under the radar, perfect for any trying to escape a whole range of situations: a stalker, abusive partner, or punishment from a crime. Applicants are vetted for violence risk, meaning someone who poses a threat to others will not be admitted. Well, that's the theory, anyhow. In book one, **City of the Lost**, Casey and Eric found some exceptions that cost the town dearly. Are there more to be uncovered?

Casey is very smart and insightful, considering the motivations of everyone she deals with, helping her manage the residents in Rockton, as well as track down a particularly clever killer.

I was on edge so many times sensing danger, worrying that something terrible would happen to Casey! Kelley Armstrong did a wonderful job setting the stage for one nail-biting tale! The crime was disturbing, because it's so very similar to the horrifying things we hear in real life.

I love the romance between Eric and Casey! They're in the new stages, smitten, and at times vulnerable wondering just how much this relationship means to the other.

Just when I think Diana (view spoiler) Jen is just awful. She was in book one and things haven't changed. That's how she goes about getting a job?!

Just like the first book, the current mystery is solved, albeit in a chilling way, but I'd say the punishment fits the crime! I can't wait for the next mystery! If you haven't read the first book, **City of the Lost**, I'd highly recommend starting with that one first.

Therese Plummer, one of my all-time favorite narrators, is fantastic, as usual. She makes any book even better with her performance.

This review is also posted at The Readers Den.

Maureen Carden says

Rockton is a rumor. A maybe place if you are in trouble. If you are in deep trouble but lucky, you find it is more than a rumor, that it is a small town totally off the grid in the harsh environs of the Yukon. A town originally meant for someone fleeing an abusive spouse, a stalker, someone wrongly accused or convicted of a non-violent crime. Later Rockton changes, with maybe a hit man, murderer, or a sex offender; but always someone who pays very well inserted into town and past Sheriff Eric Dalton and his small department. But eventually Dalton will find out the true crime behind the false entry crime.

Eric is a dictator, answering only to the off-site council. He has to be to keep the residents safe. If you go into the forest you are put on wood chopping detail. If you go stir crazy and run, you are hunted down and returned. It's too dangerous in the forest. There are settlers, mostly former residents or their descendants who live off the grid and are neither friendly nor welcoming. Then there are the hostiles. Considered to be more animal than human, no one knows what they really are. But most of all the forest itself is dangerous. Not trying to kill you, just not caring about you.

While Eric has flown south on a supply run, one of the residents makes a run for it. Detective Casey Duncan and Deputy Will Anders decide to go after him. After a blizzard hits, they take shelter in a cave where they make the nightmarish yet welcome discovery of a young woman who has spent the last year as a prisoner in a hole in the cave. This woman had been termed a runner. After an extensive search and with convincing evidence of her death turning up, the woman had been declared dead.

The remains of found of two more women missing from years ago are found and Rockton is turned upside down with fear. Tentative contacts with wary settlers, harsh weather, and an outside ruling council hinder investigations. No one can face the idea of contact with a hostile. Except for a resident who would like one "to study".

Once again I was sucked into this lost town although I might not want to move to Rockton as I wish to do with Louise Penny's Three Pines. Armstrong has created a world that is both compelling and unsettling. The characters, including the minor characters are fascinating, each with their own story to hide. The romance between Eric and Casey is sweet, watching two loners navigate the perils of a true relationship. This is a stellar follow up to City of the Lost. It will be a long wait until the third book comes out.

Mlpmom (Book Reviewer) says

I was hooked on this series after reading the first book and was so eager to get my hands on this and start it right away. By the time I had finished the last page, I knew that I had come across a series that was every bit as unique and original and well written as they get.

Once again Armstrong has managed to write something that stands out and demands to be taken notice of. With characters that are every bit as dangerous and disarming and they are charming and endearing.

There is something so backwards yet fascinating about the town they live in. The rules they abide by and of course the people who are chosen to live there.

This series, in a word is addicting. I have a hard time putting it down each time I pick it up and was left feeling almost bereft when I was pulled away from it and had to wait hours before I could pick it up again.

I am was truly like an addict waiting for their next hit. Itching to open the pages again and immerse myself once again in the crazy town of Rockton and all that happens there.

With a romance that light enough to not over shadow the true heart and mystery of the story but present enough to warm your toes and melt your heart, this series really does have a bit of it all.

I am so sad I will have a long wait until the next book comes out, I wanted this story, these characters to last forever and will be on pins and needles waiting for the next one.

ARC copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Mackey says

A Darkness Absolute is the follow up thriller to City of the Lost by Kelley Armstrong. Both books are set in the fictional, off the grid village of Rockton in the middle of the Yukon, Canada. It's a refuge, a secret place for those people who desperately need a place to hide, a place of protection or for those who can buy their way in and avoid prosecution from the law. It's an interesting group of characters in this town. And it's an interesting group of three law enforcement officers, including the MC Casey Butler who is a former homicide detective with a past of her own.

In this second installment Casey is more comfortable in her role as Detective. There is less introduction to the people in the town, which I know was necessary in the first book but it was nice to move past that, and the mystery itself is the focal point of the story. I actually enjoyed this book more than the first. That is the sign of a well seasoned author and I appreciate that about Kelley Armstrong and her series.

It's not "heavy reading," but it is well written and if you enjoy a good mystery with action then you will like this series. I do think it's important to read the books in order. They are written in installments and you will be rather confused if you don't.

Berit??? says

4.25 chilly stars ????25

Another book and this series filled with chills and thrills!

This book was filled with chills and thrills, however there might've been more chill than thrill.... something about the isolation, the vastness, and the cold of the story really drew me in.... however, this was a Traveling Sister read and I was definitely in the minority... this time it was not the eye rolling romance that turned off the sisters, but the book did not draw them in, they were not connected with the characters, and the book was just straight up too long....Even though I'd have to admit this book was a bit on the long side and I wasn't terribly connected to the characters, there's just something about it that I found compelling....

Once again there is murder and mayhem going on in the isolated off the grid town of Rockton.... Casey and Eric are now an established couple with an adorable puppy.... after discovering a missing girl and some remains in a cave, it is up to them to find out who is taking and murdering these girls.... just Reading the scenes when they are in these caves gave me claustrophobia..... if I ever were sent to this town, I would so be voted off the island!

Now it looks as though this town where people come to get away from danger, is even more dangerous than the danger.... I found the back stories of some of these eccentric characters really interesting.... and even though the draw to a book for me is usually characters, I just think something about the atmosphere of this book was appealing to me.... really trying to put my finger on what made this book better for me than others... I think it also could have perhaps been the fact I listened on audio and the narrator really did a fabulous job.... so major props go to Therese Plummer for adding so much enjoyment to this book....

I'd recommend this book if you enjoyed the first, but with the understanding it is a bit long....

As I mentioned this was a Traveling Sisters read and as always it was a pleasure reading with you girls!?
