



The Skin Collector

Jeffery Deaver

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A new type of serial killer is stalking the streets of New York – one more devious and disturbing than ever before.

They call this butcher The Skin Collector: a tattooist with a chamber of torture hidden deep underground. But instead of using ink to create each masterpiece, the artist uses a lethal poison which will render targets dead before they can even entertain the prospect of escape . . .

Drafted in to investigate, NYPD detective Lincoln Rhyme and his associate Amelia Sachs have little to go on but a series of cryptic messages left etched into the skin of the deceased. As the pair struggle to discover the meaning behind the designs, they are led down a treacherous and twisting path where nothing is as it seems. And with the clock rapidly ticking before the killer strikes again, they must untangle the twisted web of clues before more victims – or they themselves – are next.

The Skin Collector Details

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Author : Jeffery Deaver

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From Reader Review The Skin Collector for online ebook

Elizabeth says

THE SKIN COLLECTOR

The killer's methods are terrifying. He stalks the basements and underground passageways of New York City. He tattoos his victims' flesh with cryptic messages, using a tattoo gun loaded with poison, resulting in an agonizing, painful death.

When a connection is made to the Bone Collector-the serial killer who terrorized New York more than a decade ago-Lincoln Rhyme and Amelia Sachs are immediately drawn into the case.

Rhyme, Sachs, and the NYPD must race against time to answer the many questions the investigation uncovers: Whom will the killer attack next? What is the message behind the victims' tattoos? Does the killer's own inking--a fanged centipede sporting a woman's face--hold any significance? And what is his ultimate mission?

As time runs out, Rhyme discovers that the past has returned to haunt him in the most troubling way imaginable

my rating: 5 stars

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what did I think of it:

surprised me that the main character was and is a quadriplegic, there's nothing wrong with that, it's just I've never read a book with the main character like that before and I've never pick up any of this series until now, which is why it kind of surprised me, but I have to say that still like Lincoln's character, love how he never let's anything stop him from doing what he loves. loved how the story was writing and that it kept me pulled in to it, loved how you think one thing was happening and then something else comes along. will be picking up more of this series.

KA says

Not as good as some of his previous books, though I can't really pinpoint why. I kept waiting to be wowed by it, but I never was, even at the end. The how's and why's felt generic and somewhat forced. Not a bad read - even Deaver's worst are page-turners - but not my favorite of his.

Bill says

I am surprised the book is receiving some fairly glowing reviews. I have read all of the Lincoln Rhyme books--most of which are quite original and entertaining--but this one provides not a single new wrinkle, characters or relationships that have grown in the series, and a plot so reminiscent of The Bone Collector that I became bored quite quickly. I'm trying to determine if the author has lost his mojo or I just find his formulaic writing not to my liking any more. I'm guessing here but I bet the next Lincoln Rhyme book will

be titled The Teeth Collector or the Blood Collector. I'll hold off on reading Deaver's next few offerings in the hopes that the author can return with an original plot and some creativity among the good and bad guys.

Henry Hyman says

A good read but with one glaring insane statement.

A good read but with one glaring insane statement.

MOST TERRORIST ATTACKS ARE WHITE, CARD CARRYING CHRISTIAN CITIZENS? While there are many misguided groups out in the US, they are NOTHING compared to the Islamists we face. The deaths caused by these disturbed parties PALES in comparison with the 3000+ slaughtered on 9/11, and the unknown number still to come. I will NEVER read another Deaver book. Left wing propaganda disguised in a good read.

Anne (Booklady) Molinarolo says

NYC has a new butcher hunting for human prey. Unlike *The Bone Collector*, Billy Haven is only interested in *Skin*. He's not interested in flesh. Near SoHo, he takes his victims underground to tunnels and strokes and pinches their flesh before turning his lethal tattoo gun on.

Rather than using ink, he uses deadly poisons. The messages are cryptic. Rhyme and Sachs don't have much trace evidence to lead them to the identity of *the Skin Collector*. He's studied *the Bone Collector* well. And Billy has studied Lincoln Rhyme and his team, too. Like *The Bone Collector*, Haven will strike the team if they interfere with *The Modification*.

We readers know whom *The Skin Collector* is from the very first pages of the novel. Rhyme doesn't. And, I'm not really a fan of open mysteries - that reason is a star down grade for me. But I was blown away at his motive! Oh the twists!

And there is another sub-plot going on about another of Rhyme's nemeses and the novel ends with a cryptic phone call cliff-hanger. I can't wait to read the next Lincoln Rhyme book!

Joann says

The son of a bitch did it *again*. Deaver messes with your head in the most exquisite ways. His specialty is *misdirection*, followed by a plot twist that stuns and makes perfect sense both at the same time. And even when you know it's his gimmick, and you think you're all skeptical and are avoiding his traps, HE STILL GETS YOU!

And this one is a double whammy with some especially satisfying plot twists. It's been promoted as "the long-awaited sequel to The Bone Collector, but I didn't find it a true sequel so much as inspired by that book...kind of like the killer in the story.

Fantastic, fantastic read.

Monnie says

Ah, the joy! Ah, the discovery of a book that's enjoyable at the beginning, the middle, and the end! And ah, the thrill of the chase!

Yes, folks, Jeffery Deaver has done it again: Created an interesting (exciting, even!) book - the latest in his series featuring quadriplegic criminalist Lincoln Rhyme and his friends, including the beautiful and talented Amelia Sachs. This one is even more special, it seems, because it involves a new killer who's apparently being inspired by the case that introduced Rhyme - *The Bone Collector*.

This time, though, it's skin - not bones - that's the attraction for what is presumed to be a serial killer. His method of killing is bizarre; he tattoos his victims with mysterious "messages" - using ink that's laced with some kind of deadly poison. Message to me: Definitely not a fun way to go!

As the case evolves, it becomes clear there's more to the story than death by design - and that, in turn, creates some serious situations for Rhyme, Sachs, their police cohorts and even the citizens of New York City. Can the team determine the real motive - and find the killer - before thousands are killed? And what are the ties, if any, to a former (deceased) nemesis?

If I had a complaint, it's that Rhyme's methodology and deductions (which he swears are based on evidence, not intuitions) are a bit too right on the money to be believable; the leap from Point A to Point B tends to be a chasm no human - even one as talented as Rhyme - possibly could jump.

But hey, it's all in good fun - and the result is another great novel from one of my favorite authors.

Andrew Smith says

A follow-up to the first Lincoln Rhyme story (*The Bone Collector*), in time honoured style it follows the tetchy forensic criminologist and his team as they chase down another bizarre murderer - this time one who tattoos his victims with poison. Some humour, lots of twists and regular recaps of the evidence captured so far.

Yes, the format might be getting a bit tired but I do tend to take the view that if it ain't broke don't fix it. And ok, there are some unlikely deductions made by Rhyme and maybe too many twists for some - though if you're a regular follower of this series that'll be no surprise - and just when you think it's over you realise there's another 100 pages left...

I've probably been a little generous in the marking but I feel that's warranted when it comes to Deaver. He's an inventive and entertaining crime fiction writer - one of the best, in my view.

Luanne Ollivier says

Jeffery Deaver's last book featuring Lincoln Rhyme, *Kill Room*, left me slightly underwhelmed. There was a lot of political comment in the book that I found myself glossing over. Deaver also took quadriplegic Rhyme away from his New York City townhouse to a crime scene in the Bahamas, but it just didn't work for me. It seemed forced and almost gimmicky. It was an okay read, but not a standout in the series for me.

However, Deaver's latest book, *The Skin Collector* (#11) takes us back to what Lincoln Rhyme does best - and the type of story I like best - solving cases based on the evidence and minutiae gathered at a crime scene by his team. And Lincoln's superlative powers of deduction.

The Skin Collector opens with a wonderfully creepy scene that introduces us to the perpetrator, Billy. It's one of those chilling prologues that promises a great read. And it delivered. Billy is a tattoo artist who delights in finding pristine skin for inking his cryptic messages. And his choice of ink is deadly. Billy Haven is clever - he's studied Rhyme's methods and leaves little if anything behind at his scenes. Yes, plural - Billy has a plan and it looks like he's taking inspiration from Lincoln's first case - *The Bone Collector*.

Deaver employs the history of New York and its tunnel and underground passages to great effect in *The Skin Collector*. I ended up checking out many of his references online - it's pretty fascinating history.

I thought I had predicted where the plot was going to go about three quarters of the way through the book. But I was pleasantly proven wrong! Deaver inserts a twist, then a turn, then another twist - and I think there may have been another turn. There was one plot element that I found tawdry and icky and somewhat unnecessary involving Billy's aunt. But on the whole, it was an inventive storyline. Part of it is taken from current new stories, making it plausible and relative. The ending finished on a nice little aha, leaving the door open for further entries in a parallel story line. (Yes, I'm being deliberately obtuse)

Familiar characters return - I'm growing quite fond of Ron Pulaski - and some interesting supporting players were introduced. I hope we see more of tattoo artist TT Gordon. 'Foster' daughter Pam can move away though. I find her attitude tiresome. Amelia is still razor sharp, but seems to have mellowed since solidifying her relationship with Linc.

The Skin Collector was a return to the Lincoln Rhyme I enjoy. It's a good crime read, one to tuck in the beach bag this summer.

Harry says

Book Review:

I'll start by saying that I've read some very good books by Jefferey Deaver: and those books are part of this series. I've handed out a few 5 star reviews for them and you should read them. And I can immediately conclude that thought by saying Jeffery Deaver has also written some bad books. This is one of them. If you look at the chronology of his writing career you'll find that long ago he wrote novels that in my opinion are mediocre. Then something happened. Deaver came out with his Lincoln Rhyme series, an instant success, starting with the *Bone Collector*, a major motion picture, and concluding in this latest installment: *The Skin Collector*.

And therein lies the rub. Could Deaver and his publishers not have come up with a more creative title for the book? Was it really necessary to steal it from his first? And that's just the beginning of my bitchin' session...

After *The Kill Room* which also failed in regards to the rest of the series, I am thinking this series is now

dead. All the steam has gone out of the Lincoln Rhyme series, almost as if in tandem with the passing of my favorite villain, the Watchmaker (Rhyme reflects morosely on his passing in this novel). Perhaps someone can tell me if his Kathryn Dance novels have suffered the same fate since Deaver took a holiday from Rhyme between 2010 and 2013 to begin that series. And this instant mediocrity literally happened between #9 and #10 in the Rhyme series. Perhaps it's just writers fatigue with a series. I've seen it happen before (Connely has to be careful too, in this regard).

Deaver, unfortunately kept on writing the Rhyme series. Like the pre-Rhyme novels, the characters are now flatly drawn - we saw this happen in *The Kill Room* and we see it in *The Skin Collector* - the plot is a hopeless mess where for over three-quarters of the novel Deaver takes us along a poorly inked timeline, only to suddenly drop the entire plot structure and introduce a brand new plot hastily put together to save face and force a badly concocted surprise on the readers. Characterization and the associated psychology of the characters make no sense at all and isn't believable (No one collects skin! And perhaps Deaver should read some of his Scandinavian colleagues' work for a better insight into the psychology of humans involved in crime - as a matter of lost inspiration). And as my friend Yelena points out: "[the] narrative had contrived and forced set-ups; page after page of exposition." Well, you get the picture.

As a painter, I have had it happen that 3/4 of the way through a painting I can't make it work. It's a luminous moment for an artist, knowing he's gone down the wrong path for a work of art. I get a little pissed. And then scrape all the paint off the canvass and go sulk in a corner somewhere wondering if I have enough money left to buy new oil paints.

I think I'm done with Jeffery Deaver.

Series Review:

I'm going to take a slightly different tack with this series review for the Lincoln Rhyme series. It is best explained as a personal journey where I've had to wade through some bad stuff, and some good stuff. It was also a journey hindered by both the publishers and the author.

Jeffery Deaver

It started with the film *The Bone Collector*. That's how I learned about Deaver and his Lincoln Rhyme series. And since I'd already seen the movie, I didn't bother with the first novel in the series because when you're talking thriller/mystery half the fun is gone if you know the outcome. In any case, it was a personal decision to skip it: I jumped immediately into *The Coffin Dancer* and I was intrigued.

Jeffery Deaver is the one author with that uncanny ability to develop plot twists and very complex characters that leave you stunned to the end. If you've seen the movie, trust me, the books are far more ingenious and developed as compared to what we were presented with on the silver screen. Reading his novels I am reminded to never commit a crime. The science has gotten too good. After reading the exploits of one serial killer, I moved on to the next one: *The Empty Chair*. Love, betrayal, distrust, animosity, coupled with dedication, science and a vengeance for justice moved this one along quite nicely (it pits Sachs vs. Rhyme).

Having assimilated two novels so far in this series (I'm pretty sure the Bone Collector is as good, though I didn't read it), I began to see Deaver as this master at creating interesting and very unique villains (a bone collector, an insect boy...really?) His writing was astute, it took its time developing the serial characters that

appear from book to book, and Deaver displayed an uncanny ability as to plot. I moved onto the next one *The Ghost*, and the next one after that; the enigmatic conjurer in *The Vanished Man*. So far so good. I'm pretty much gobbling up the novels at this point. You know the drill, munching on snacks, late night hours in bed, early mornings with a cigarette and coffee, during short breaks at work, in the car while in stopped traffic. Most who know me, know me to be a serial reader. I like really, really long stories that span multiple books. I like to hang out with the characters from book to book. They're like family. It didn't take me long to get to where I needed to be.

That's when I met the Watchmaker, perhaps Deaver's finest villain yet (IMO). Did I say I was devouring these books at this point? Yah, there's a point to that which I'll make shortly. I'd read *The Twelfth Card* and came up for air before attempting *The Cold Moon* in which the Watchmaker is featured. I mean, folks, when I got into that book, I was rooting for the Watchmaker! (As devious as Rhymes, if not more so!).

Then *The Broken Window* came out and I began showing up a little late at work. Folks, if you think data mining and information gathering is a benign business, then follow along with Deaver as he shows you what havoc is created when data mining falls into the wrong hands. Scary. Or, have you read the news about what might happen if our electrical power grid is hacked? I'm sure Deaver read the articles. Let the author take you there in *The Burning Wire*.

And right about then, something happens in Deaver's life. Not sure what it is. Wait, I do, he goes off on a tangent with the Kathryn Dance series...but no further Rhyme novel appeared until 2013: his *The Kill Room*. You can read my take on that one here. In this period, I too decided to see if he'd published stand-alones. I mean, they had to be good if the Rhyme series were any indication, right? And certainly a few of them (*The Devil's Teardrop* was highly acclaimed) I'd heard were good.

I read a few of them...can't name them because they were that forgettable. It was as if I was reading a different author all together. Flat characters, ok dialogue, I mean...a couple of them I had to put out of their misery. Sad, sad. I just couldn't understand it. So, with a little digging I found out these were pre-Rhyme much older novels that had been republished by the publishers (I'm sure they were counting on sales on the back of the Rhyme novels' success). Nice shiny new covers, new art work and sucking up to the Rhyme series and the publication dates seemed to indicate they were recently written. My bad. I stopped reading Deaver.

Then *The Kill Room* came out. At the time, the latest in the series. I couldn't resist. I knew it'd be good. All the other Rhyme novels were great so why not this one? And again, Deaver threw me for a loop. It was as if that younger less-accomplished author had come back from the dead. I gave the book a 3 rating, but perhaps I was being generous. Gone was the dynamic tension and empathy I had for the main characters...my family. Flat characterization, a dubious plot, a hurried ending, and the villain was just..."off".

I tried my luck one more time and you can read that reaction above, at the top of this review. To potential readers of this series, don't let my journey dissuade you from reading some really great mystery/thriller novels. This is a great series up to the point mentioned; but a series that has, unfortunately, now fizzled.

Marianne says

The Skin Collector is the eleventh book in the Lincoln Rhyme series by American author, Jeffery Deaver. Criminalist Lincoln Rhyme and his NYPD associates, Amelia Sachs, Ron Pulaski and Mel Cooper are called in to investigate the case of a serial poisoner whose intentional clues left on victims' bodies are baffling, to say the least. As well, news of the death of his latest nemesis, The Watchmaker, sees Lincoln sending

Pulaski on a rather dubious undercover mission.

Deaver gives the reader plenty of information about poisons, about tattooing and about New York's underground tunnels. As always, there is an abundance of twists and red herrings. Rhyme's own lab does seem to manage to get results rather instantly, and occasionally, the lack of communication between various sections of the services seems incredible. Nonetheless, there are a few exciting climaxes.

While the crime scene investigation sections and the examination of trace evidence bits are, as always, interesting, even gripping, the bizarre perpetrators are starting to wear the believability fabric just a bit thin: a man who kills his victims by tattooing them, not with ink, but with exotic poisons (a different one for each victim): all this in New York's underground tunnels. Really? A reader's suspension of disbelief will surely only go so far..... Not Deaver's best.

Mark says

A long overdue return to the writing of Jeffrey Deaver's Lincoln Rhyme and his crew. This sequel to the Bone collector where it all started is well written and like everything Deaver wrote there will be twists when you least expect them and even the end proves to be a different beastie than expected.

The story starts with the demise of the serial killer / contract killer "the Watchman" and a loonie who attacks a woman and leaves her death with a tattoo that is done on her which in essence did poison her to death.

We get the cat and mouse game between Rhyme and his team and the serial killer. The writer does give us insight in the killer writing his experiences in the various chapters confronting the chapters about the work done by the police. It does give an fascinating dialogue between both sides and yet Deaver manages to keep delivering the various surprises/twists in this tale of murder and mayhem.

Deaver proves to be a master story teller and that his skills in the eleventh Rhyme novel still not leave with a stale taste after this book. As I was used to before Deaver dis write a page turner that I really enjoyed.

Great reading entertainment.

Bonnie says

My rating: 2.5 of 5 stars

A woman is discovered dead in an underground passage after being tattooed by poison with only a partial message "The Second". Is this the second victim or is it only a partial message meaning that more deaths are in the works? The killer, known as Billy Haven, is seemingly killing at random and is constantly two steps ahead of the brilliant NYPD detective Lincoln Rhyme. It's discovered that the killer has not only been researching Rhyme and Saches and their past cases together but one case, in particular, receives the most attention; the one where it all began: The Bone Collector. The two killers modus operandi seem entirely different and the detective is left grasping at straws in an attempt to collect clues for one of his most difficult cases to date.

I do so hate to criticize a lifelong favorite of mine but we all have our off days, right? I've been reading the tales of Lincoln Rhyme and Amelia Sachs for well over a decade but this mystery was completely lacking in more ways than one. I found the killer tattooing people with poison to be definitely crazy and creepy and it kept me guessing for sure but there was a second storyline that was actually ongoing from a previous installment in the series where the man that Rhyme caught had just recently died in prison. It was completely unnecessary and forced setups that we all could have done without. The tattoo killer mystery keeps you completely in the dark for the majority of the story only to give you an 'ending', but oh wait! Just kidding. Forgot that pesky second storyline... okay, let's just combine the two stories even though neither seems to have a single bit to do with one another. And then we'll have the requisite bad guy at the end tell all to make it all seem super legit. I had a similar reaction to another longtime favorite of mine I read last year and it makes me wonder if I've simply read too many of these authors works and at this point I've become bored with their tried and true formulas or if they've just lost their spunk.

Are there more installments to come? No doubt after that ending. Will I be picking it up? I'm a sucker for continuing a series after this damn long. I'd love to see Deaver get back to his roots where the bad guys were sick and twisted and the mysteries weren't so bizarre and outlandish that they ended up falling apart at the end. The Coffin Dancer, The Empty Chair, and The Stone Monkey are the best of this series and I'd love to see more installments along those lines.

Gail Strickland says

Despite all the five star reviews of others, this one, to me, wasn't one of Deaver's best efforts. Maybe The October List left a bad taste, but the characters here seem one dimensional and the set-ups forced. To much was made of a connection to The Bone Collector that had nothing much to do with the main story line and seemed simply a way to set up a future book. Deaver can almost always come up with a nasty bad guy and doesn't disappoint there, but Lincoln and Amelia are beginning to get on my last nerve.

Carole Morden says

I like Lincoln Rhyme novels and enjoyed some of this book. I think Mr. Deaver is a bit tired of writing though as this seemed like eating the 11th cinnamon roll out of a dozen. The first couple are delicious. The next few are good, but by the end of the batch, they are getting stale. Normally he surprises me with twists and turns, this time everything was cliché. There were no surprises, no classic Deaver twists. Or if they were classic, I've read too many and they are all the same.

Sheila O'Flanagan says

I like Jeffrey Deaver's books but this one had no real tension and the plot just seemed to meander along. I never felt that either Rhyme or Sachs were in real danger and the subplot about the Watchmaker didn't make a whole lot of sense to me either. Lots of great books by him but this wouldn't have been a favourite.

Luke Scott says

As a longtime fan of Jeffrey Deaver, I find having to write this review quite troubling. Mr. Deaver has long been one of the best writers for detective stories with Lincoln Rhyme and Katherine Dance (to say nothing of his early works with the handwriting analyst and others), but over the past few years, Mr. Deaver has developed a recurring theme I find distasteful and beneath him. (spoiler alert) The Skin Collector, which features a serial killer using tattoos and other modifications to kill his victims, veers off topic about three-quarters in as the villain is revealed to be more than a serial killer--a hate-filled Midwestern Caucasian Christian. While there is no doubt a number of religious fanatics out there, Mr. Deaver has went to this well a number of times in recent books, and it's getting more than a little ridiculous. To foster the idea that Christians are the most likely people to attack New York City (and of course these are Christians from the flyover states) is sad. To do this in one book is understandable as there are some wackos hiding themselves within Christianity, but multiple books? Mr. Deaver, please cease with this blatant attack on people who love their country and their neighbors. We are not all crazy loons--in fact, the loons are the exception. To continue using Christians as villains is beneath your phenomenal writing talents.

Gail Cooke says

Jeffrey Deaver fans are rejoicing as the acclaimed author has brought us a sequel to his best known and voraciously read thriller The Bone Collector. In that novel we were introduced to Lincoln Rhyme, our country's best known forensic detective. He's clever, intuitive, and persistent when it comes to solving the most puzzling of crimes. Rhyme's mettle is tested in The Skin Collector.

There's a killer on the loose in NYC, well, not literally on the loose because he prowls the underground passages in Soho, just south of Greenwich Village. These tunnels crisscross the neighborhood - at one time used for transporting goods they're abandoned now and perfect for the use of a mad killer, Billy Haven.

Billy doesn't violate his victims, flesh is of no interest to him; "...it was skin that Billy loved." To test it he would pinch a girl's skin between his thumb and forefinger, admiring the small peak of skin that is raised and then allowed to flatten back. The sight of this would make him smile. But, of course, this was before he tattooed his victim's flesh with mysterious messages using a tattoo gun filled with poison. Death came slowly and painfully.

Eventually a connection is made between Billy and the Bone Collector, the infamous serial killer of a decade ago. Thus, Lincoln Rhyme and Amelia Sachs are drawn into the case. What follows is one shocker following another as Rhyme and the NYPD work against time to try to figure out where the killer will find his next victim and what in the world the seemingly indecipherable tattoos mean.

Readers won't doubt that they're in the hands of a multi award winning thriller writer, a master of the genre after just a few pages of The Skin Collector.

Enjoy!

- Gail Cooke

Cheryl Whitty says

It's always a pleasure to read a new Jeffrey Deaver. The only problem is you have to finish, and then you enter a period of mourning.

This is a classic Lincoln Rhyme thriller, it keeps you guessing to the end.

Barbara says

A serial killer is plaguing New York City. He creeps through the disused underground infrastructure of Manhattan which (unknown to most people) connects with the basements of various retail shops, restaurants, hospitals, office buildings, etc. Once the murderer snags a victim he tattoos him/her with poison ink, resulting in an excruciatingly painful death. The tattoos contain numbers and seem to be conveying a message, but the meaning is inscrutable.

On the killer's trail is famous quadriplegic crime scene investigator (CSI) Lincoln Rhyme and his team. Rhyme's assistant, NYPD detective Amelia Sachs, trawls through crime scenes collecting evidence, which is analyzed in Rhyme's state of the art forensic laboratory. Rhyme believes this new serial killer has been inspired by a deceased serial killer, called 'The Bone Collector'.

Meanwhile, another murderer Rhyme helped apprehend, called 'The Watchmaker', has recently died in prison. Hoping to uncover 'The Watchmaker's' associates, Rhyme sends rookie cop Ron Pulaski, undercover, to see who picks up the cremation remains. At the funeral parlor the inexperienced rookie bumbles around a bit, but manages to meet a person of interest.

Wanting to learn as much as possible about tattooing Rhyme interviews an expert and gets a quick education in 'body modification', which helps the CSI profile the killer. This and other clues allow Rhyme's team to track the perp and to foil some attacks, but the killer always manages to get away. The murderer - who seems to be preternaturally clever and capable - is infuriated by this interference and targets Rhyme and his crew.

While this is going on Amelia has an additional worry. Nineteen-year-old Pamela, a girl with a horrible childhood that Amelia took under her wing, wants to quit college and travel the world with her boyfriend Sean. Arguments over this drive a wedge between the women and distract Amelia.

The story is told in alternating sections, from the point of view of the killer and the point of view of Rhyme and his associates. The reader learns that the killer, named Billy Haven, is following instructions in a detailed manifesto and that his ultimate objective is bigger than than just killing people with poison tattoos.

The story is skillfully told, with twists I didn't anticipate. On the down side, the complexity of the scheme that drives the plot REALLY REALLY strains credulity.

I have a couple more quibbles with the Lincoln Rhyme series as a whole. First, in every book the serial killer goes after the CSI and his associates, which seems unlikely to happen in real life. (Just as an aside, this also bothers me about Patricia Cornwell's 'Dr. Kay Scarpetta' series, where the serial killer always targets the medical examiner and her family/friends.)

Second, the Rhyme books have an 'incestuous' feel since we hear about the same serial killers time after time. Though this story is about Billy Haven (the tattooer), we also read a lot about 'The Bone Collector' and the 'The Watchmaker'. I kind of wish Jeffrey Deaver would let these guys rest in peace .

Reservations aside, the book is an exciting page turner with a wide array of interesting characters. Reading previous books in the series would be preferable, but the book works okay as a standalone. Recommended for mystery fans, especially people who enjoy the Lincoln Rhyme series.

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