



Open Secret

Deryn Collier

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After the abrupt end to his military career Bern has settled into an uneasy peace in his new life in Kootenay Landing—a peace he knows can't last. Out for a fall hike, he discovers Dr. Juniper Sinclair, the town's lone doctor, attempting to revive small-time drug dealer Seymour Melnychuk, who has been shot in the forehead. In a seemingly unrelated incident, Gary Dowd abandons his van while crossing the US border. Gary is a local father of two, an accountant, and a steady, predictable guy. He's also been best friends with Seymour Melnychuk since elementary school.

Bern knows the two disturbing events must be related and works with police constable Maddie Schilling to uncover the hidden ties that connect the two cases. Why was Dr Sinclair already on the scene? Why is there no exit wound on Seymour's body? Why did Gary Dowd disappear while trying to cross the border? Who truly controls the hills and forests around Kootenay Landing? Amidst the chaos of the case, Bern's military background comes back to haunt him, forcing him to confront the secrets of his own past that he has long sought to keep buried.

As Bern and Schilling close in on the killer, each is drawn into the case personally and the stakes are higher than anyone can imagine. Everyone has something to hide, and no one in Kootenay Landing seems willing to talk. But Bern Fortin is well aware that no secret can remain buried forever—not even his own.

Open Secret Details

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From Reader Review Open Secret for online ebook

Tanya Kyi says

I may never get over the thrill of reading something set in my home town. Or, in this case, in the fictional town of Kootenay Landing, which bears a striking resemblance to my hometown of Creston, BC. It's so much fun to picture where a character is walking, or imagine the exact view from a hiking trail.

Deryn Collier's OPEN SECRET is her second novel featuring Bern Fortin, coroner with swag. The book weaves together the lives of a mismatched batch of Kootenay Landing residents, all connected by a disappearance, a grow-op, and a murder. We begin to understand more of Bern's history and we get to know an array of unique secondary characters. I would have read an entire book about any member of the supporting cast.

Back to reading about one's hometown, though. My favourite line of the book is this one: "There was an intake of breath, a barely perceptible pause, when the man walked in, as though the crowd had collectively spotted him, assessed him as an outsider, decided to ignore him, then carried on."

This is a classic small town moment — the micro-pause upon entering a restaurant or bar, while all pre-existing customers check to see whether they know you. It's generally a benign, even friendly, pause, but it's noticeable. And if you happen to take your Asian husband to a cafe in Three Mile, Idaho, where apparently no Asian man has gone before, the pause stretches to five or ten seconds and can be rather disconcerting.

Kudos to Deryn Collier for creating a riveting read and capturing the quirks of small-town life.

Susan says

I was initially attracted to this book because of the setting, a part of British Columbia that I am fairly familiar with. The author did a great job as transporting me to the Kootenays. I love a good mystery and this one did not disappoint. In fact I was completely surprised by how absorbed I became in the story. I actually found myself reading it while cooking dinner because I didn't want to put it down! It is most definitely a dark and sad story involving child abuse and drugs. Despite the content I didn't find it overly depressing although it wasn't a ray of sunshine either! What really stood out for me were the interesting and flawed characters. Love them or hate them, they were all real people to me. The writing was so good that it just unobtrusively carried me along, getting me to the end without me even noticing the length. I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads. Thank you!

Lynn says

I was happy when I received this book as a goodreads win. I enjoy books that take place in Canada.

Deryn Collier did an excellent job of intertwining the characters and giving them depth by adding chapters about their earlier lives. She took 3 or 4 different stories and made them come together into one story.

There are only a couple of things I'm confused about. I was under the impression that the story with the reported would cause a terrible fall out yet it seems that parades and lunches were handed out instead. Also the character of Ruben seemed to be in there just to play the part of a thief with no idea of where he came from or where he went. He was like the odd man out in the story line.

I look forward to reading the 1st Bern book and maybe some of my confusion will be alleviated in the next Bern book. I will definitely recommend this book to others.

Keep up the good work.

Cheers

Nicole Laverdure says

Mystery suspense 4.5 stars

I have just finished reading OPEN SECRET written by Deryn Collier. If you have read her first book on this series, you will discover that Bern Fortin is an ex-Canadian Forces commander who was cut short of his military career to take a job as the coroner for a small mountain town in the heart of BC. In OPEN SECRET, we find that he's trying to cope with his past. Bern's just needs a quiet life, but the memories are still haunting him. Will he be able to cope with his past? What will happen to him? I enjoyed very much this thriller filled with suspense and intrigues. A real page turner! It kept me captivated because I wanted to know what would happen next. This is the first book that I read by Deryn Collier. This story was well written and with believable characters. I recommend this book if you like crime suspense fiction. The plot was well developed! This book was given to me by Simon & Schuster through a Goodreads giveaway. Expected publication: April 8th 2014 by Simon & Schuster Canada

Barth Siemens says

Upon receiving notification that I had won this book as part of the First Reads program, I ran out and picked up Confined Space, which is the first novel in the Bern Fortin series. That was a good book and I hoped the next book would live up to my expectations. No worries there, because Deryn Collier surpassed my hopes. At this point, she is well on the way to being added to my short list of authors for whom I read new novels within a couple months of release -- currently only Chris Bohjalian and Joseph Boyden.

What can I say that won't reveal the secrets too early? First, there is an underlying story about why Bern Fortin left military service under a bit of a cloud. We learn enough about this main character to completely pique my curiosity (see my earlier comment about reading new releases).

Second, the primary story is told through several streams that converge at the climax. Contrary to many new authors, she delicately maintains the flow in her writing and resolves enough of each thread to keep the story moving.

Third, I love (love, love, love) how the complementary streams are advanced at the end of each chapter with a letter or a short glimpse.

Please, more!

Jennifer Rayment says

The Good Stuff

Bern is a truly fascinating character. Author does an excellent job of creating a character who is obviously still dealing with PTSD

Interesting to get a little bit more about Bern's backgrounds

Storyline was fascinating and had me hooked

Some of the story broke my heart as the characters felt all too real

Author has a gift for recreating a small BC town - again the setting feels authentic and the characters are realistic with many flaws - so basically like those in any community

Need to find out more about Bern's past and those of the rest of the town

An intelligent thriller - you really need to pay attention to all the little details

The Not So Good Stuff

Story jumped around a lot from the past to present and it often felt a little disjointed

Not enough details

Favorite Quotes/Passages

"Word was that his mother was now in a wheelchair and his father was serving a twenty-year sentence in the US for pot trafficking. Americans took their marijuana seriously."

"Bern locked eyes with the younger man and marveled that even the Canadian army could not reach inside some men and stamp out their will."

"The silent partners in this tragedy were the gangs at work behind the scenes. The master puppeteers. Their fingerprints were everywhere, they were to blame for everything, and yet they remained invisible. Perhaps he could find them while there was still something of a soldier left in him."

3.75/5 Dewey's

I received this from Simon and Schuster in exchange for an honest review

If you are interested in meeting Deryn Collier - she will be at the Calgary Public Library on March 18th along with Andrew Pyper and Nick Cutter (Craig Davidson) For more info

Tony says

Deryn Collier - The Louise Penny Of The West

I had the great good fortune to receive an advance reader's copy of *Open Secret* by Nelson, BC writer Deryn Collier. This is Deryn's second book, and it has confirmed what I already suspected – this lady is the Louise Penny of the West.

Open Secret was a delightful read. Deryn's stories take place in a sleepy, smoky mountain town peopled with a whole collection of characters who wouldn't fit anywhere else. Bern Fortin, a Rwanda-damaged soldier turned town coroner, has a hunter's eye and some serious baggage. He is dedicated to speaking for those who can no longer speak for themselves, and in this story he's kept busy.

Deryn brings to life an isolated village just left of anywhere, where evil comes as a shock and nothing gets in the way of the morning coffee. The story takes you in deep, and a week after finishing the novel I'm still wondering what happened next in the characters' lives. Just like Louise Penny, who has done wonders for backwoods Quebec in world literature, and is sweeping every writing award in the English world with her work. With these two novels under her belt, Deryn is on her way.

I am a convicted thriller fan, and *Open Secret* doesn't have the blood-curdling, run for your life pace of that genre. One or two minor subplots don't quite get explained. But this isn't a thriller, it's a mystery, and it's also part of a series. I am sure there will be answers, and more questions. I'm definitely waiting.

Open Secret hits the shelves in April, so I am told. If you like a deep dive into a compelling mystery and some uniquely BC characters, pick it up. Then come back here and tell me what you think!

Elaine Bougie says

Characters felt flat and events staged. This is my first novel by Deryn Collier and I was initially very interested in the events of the past, because of working in the part of government responsible for child protection where these fictional events take place. Found the frequent changes of viewpoint at the beginning a distraction and things became a little more cohesive by the end but there was never any successful suspension of disbelief and I remained constantly aware I was reading someone's creation. I often found myself questioning the author's intent and her choices in writing.

Dorothy McIntosh says

Bern Fortin is one of the more memorable crime fiction characters to come on the scene in recent years. There are shades of Jack Reacher in that readers feel the weight of the past carried around on Fortin's shoulders. While the mystery as it unfolds is compelling what really gripped me most about the novel was the love story - sensitively handled and very evocative.

***May says

I received this as a Goodreads Giveaways.

Not your typical Michael Connelly material. Many intricate parts and when everything came together at the end, it was unexpected. I enjoyed it very much, especially when this is set in the backdrop of BC.

Barbara McVeigh says

Like other reviewers, I was reminded of Louise Penny's Inspector Gamache series. This book was a fine companion on the beach. I am wondering if some story lines will be filled out as the series continues.

Michelle says

I won this through Goodreads, and I read the first book in the series first, because I'm just OCD that way. :) My biggest disappointment with 'Open Secret' is that the character I got most attached to from the first book, Evie, isn't in this book at all, not even in Bern's thoughts. She's just gone like she never existed, which is really too bad.

My second biggest disappointment is just how incredibly dark this one is. I mean, murder mysteries always have an element of darkness, but this is just so dark that I really didn't enjoy the read. It should come with trigger warnings for child abuse and drug use. That does say a lot for the quality of the writing though.

I'll read the third one when it comes out though, just hoping that Evie will come back...

Things I do like about the series are the setting (I live in Alberta, and I'm from Vancouver Island originally), and the very unique main character (my dad is retired from the Canadian Air Force - he got out around the time that Bern was embroiling himself in a questionable affaire) with a garden that I seriously envy. If you like your murders less than cozy, but not CSI-level, you'll probably like this one.

Joyce says

I began reading this book with enthusiasm saved from the first book - familiar towns, descriptive writing, good start on a mysterious death, and then about half-way through everything waned. Too many things going on, too many story lines and not enough about the main character. And after all of that, at the end, there were still loose ends.

Ilonka says

In Open Secret Deryn Collier has brought together a complex cast of characters with complex stories and one common denominator. Set in fictional Kootenay Landing, a small BC town that is as much character as place, the secrets are peeled away, layer by layer, culminating in a collision of values reflecting those faced

in society today.

It seems only right that we also get a glimpse into the secrets that haunt Bern Fortin, the soldier-turned-coroner who first appeared in *Confined Space*, Collier's debut novel. I hope we see more of this unusual hero.

Philip says

OK! Although I enjoyed this story I don't think I liked it as much as book 1 "Confined Spaces". Perhaps there were just a few too many plot lines running at all times that didn't really seem in any way connected and in reality at least the one with Ruben was not and did nothing to advance the main plot at all and was kind of just left dangling. Another thing that bothered me was all the jumping around in time and places with all the flashbacks which, even though they are labelled, caused me some confusion and interrupted the flow of the main story. I am not a great fan of the use of flashbacks and shifting POVs and even with the titles here I don't think Ms Collier pulled it off quite as well as Iona Whishaw did in "A Killer In King's Landing". Why is it that I seem to have, recently, run into a whole string of books utilizing this flashback and POV shift style that I don't like too much? I was surprised that the big Troy Thompson newspaper exposure caused such a mild reaction and I still don't think Bern's Rwanda experience was bad enough to cause him so much anxiety. Bern is a fine character but I still think Mrs. K is one of the best characters in these books and I was disappointed that she didn't have a larger role in this story. This is a good read that I recommend but it is almost mandatory that the books be read in order. I will definitely read another instalment if there is one.
