



The Crooked Staircase

Dean Koontz

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Jane Hawk--who dazzled readers in *The Silent Corner* and *The Whispering Room*--faces the fight of her life, against the threat of a lifetime in this electrifying new thriller by #1 *New York Times* bestselling suspense master Dean Koontz.

"I could be dead tomorrow. Or something worse than dead."

Jane Hawk knows she may be living on borrowed time. But as long as she's breathing, she'll never cease her one-woman war against the terrifying conspiracy that threatens the freedom--and free will--of millions. Battling the strange epidemic of murder-suicides that claimed Jane's husband, and is escalating across the country, has made the rogue FBI agent a wanted fugitive, relentlessly hunted not only by the government but by the secret cabal behind the plot. Deploying every resource their malign nexus of power and technology commands, Jane's enemies are determined to see her dead . . . or make her wish she was.

Jane's ruthless pursuers can't stop her from drawing a bead on her prey: a cunning man with connections in high places, a twisted soul of unspeakable depths with an army of professional killers on call. Propelled by her righteous fury and implacable insistence on justice, Jane will make her way from southern California to the snow-swept slopes of Lake Tahoe to confront head-on the lethal forces arrayed against her. But nothing can prepare her for the chilling truth that awaits when she descends the crooked staircase to the dark and dreadful place where her long nightmare was born.

PRAISE FOR DEAN KOONTZ'S JANE HAWK NOVELS

"Gripping . . . The paranoia and mystery increase as the story unfolds. . . . Koontz has created such a wonderful character in Jane Hawk that . . . readers will clamor for more. . . . Koontz rocks it again."--**Associated Press**

"Vintage Dean Koontz: paranoia-fueled suspense . . . sleek and highly realized action, developed characters, and more twists and turns than any two ordinary novels combined . . . as relevant to current events as it is audacious . . . amongst Dean Koontz's finest contemporary work."--**Mystery Scene**

"Perhaps Koontz's leanest, meanest thriller, [*The Silent Corner*] introduces a smart, appealing heroine who can outthink as well as outshoot the baddest of bad dudes."--**Kirkus Reviews (starred review)**

The Crooked Staircase Details

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From Reader Review The Crooked Staircase for online ebook

Julie says

The Crooked Staircase by Dean Koontz is a 2018 Bantam publication.

Our vigilante superhero Jane Hawk is back. With each chapter of the series, Jane's adversaries become more difficult to conquer, more diabolical, and evil.

This is one of the biggest challenges to date. The Techno-Arcadians- and the mastermind- Booth Hendrickson are whom Jane has zeroed in on. On this stop she must deal with Booth's brother, Simon- a truly charming chap, who picks a female target, romances them, then proceeds to rip their world apart, just for kicks and giggles.

Jane is out to prove her husband did not commit suicide, to restore his good name, and to keep her son safe, but the deeper she dives into these murky waters, she realizes that the mind control program threatens the entire world as we know it.

With the government on her tail as well as the Arcadians, Jane must always be one step ahead- and she manages to do so with aplomb.

This is one of the most chilling installments in the series. The Crooked Staircase, once it is broken down and explained is horrifying!!

There are a few sub-plots at play here as well, and Jane's son is in more vulnerable than he's been since this adventure started, adding even more tension to the atmosphere.

With thrillers like this one several things must be explored. First, is it plausible? Well, truthfully, I'm not a conspiracy nut- but I like them in fictional books. But, what drew me to this series in the first place was that I honestly don't doubt the possibility that mind control is something that governments have attempted, and with the climate we are in currently, I don't know if I could discount the theory that rich, powerful, tech savvy men who seek to control the world would really try something like this. Do I have to suspend belief? Of course. It's fiction, and there are plenty of aspects to the story that could only happen in books, could only come from the imagination of an author whose made a career out of dreaming up fantastical tales. Still, there is enough truth here to plant a few uneasy thoughts in my mind.

This book has the best storyline to date, but the book has some issues- all of them are purely personal pet peeves. Short chapters tend to create the illusion of reading a lengthy book, such as this one, at a faster clip. However, I loathe them and find them distracting and annoying.

I also hated the ending. I know there is another installment coming, but it's not just the cliffhanger aspect- which I really, really, really despise, but the way the book just stopped. There really isn't an 'ending' to it at all. This is annoying to the extreme, but because this series has more positives than negatives I will let it pass, but I hope it doesn't become a habit.

Overall, despite a few personal misgivings, this is a stellar installment in the series and I'm waiting with bated breath for the next book in the series!!

4 stars

Jim says

This is the third book in the Jane Hawk series and while still good was probably my least favorite. There seemed to be multiple stories going on at the same time. At the start of the book we had Jane's story of course but the chapters alternated with the story of twins who are the targets of the Techno-Arcadians. I kept expecting there would eventually be some kind of connection. Jane and the twins would meet. Something. Anything. That never happened. Eventually this totally separate story came to an end. After the twins the novel seemed to alternate chapters between Jane and the bad guy duo of Jergens and Dubose who are chasing her. Again ... two separate concurrent stories.

One of the more interesting aspects in this latest book is the changes in Jane. In her pursuit of the Techno-Arcadians she makes a certain decision and the reader is left questioning whether she is that different from them? Of course she is the heroine of this series and is seeking justice for her husband, for other victims, to protect all of us from the utopian vision of the Techno-Arcadians. But if she does something is it okay for her and wrong for the Techno-Arcadians? It seemed as though there was too much violence in this story. More than in the previous books. More than was necessary for the story.

The other gripe I have with this book was the ending. I was reading this story expecting more and the next thing I knew I was reading an excerpt of the next book in the series ... *The Forbidden Door*. Overall I liked this book and the series and I plan to read the next book but it I think Dean Koontz could have done a better job with how he ended this book.

Kacey - Traveling Sister says

???????

Book three of the Jane Hawk series and this is my favorite of the three so far! I'd considered walking away from the series after the last book *The Whispering Room* and now I'm so glad I stayed with it.

Jane, America's most wanted fugitive OR America's new-age hero. Jane is relentless in her pursuit to find those responsible for the nanotechnology with the potential to enslave the world to those in power. One of the first casualties...her own husband, and she's sworn vengeance to hunt down those in charge.

To truly get the most out of this series you really should start with book one *The Silent Corner*. It provides Jane's background as well as the uprising of the powerful *Arcadians*, who will stop at nothing to take over the world for their own perverse pleasures.

It's a long book (over 500 pages) but with very short chapters you move along quickly. I was drawn in right away and was on the edge of my seat all the way through. Dean Koontz took this series to the next level and I'm already looking forward to the next release!

Thank you to NetGalley, Random House Publishing Group - Ballantine and Dean Koontz for an ARC to

read in exchange for an honest review

Matthew says

Thanks once more to Bantam Books/Random house for this ARC (sorry I am getting to it a little late!). Also, I can never thank Dustin Crazy little brown owl - moderator of Koontzland - the definitive Koontz Goodreads group - enough for hosting another book giveaway!

You want suspense, you got suspense!

If you are in book three, the techno-terrorists probably have you in their grasp.

You are definitely being pursued - the paranoia is real . . . listen to it . . . you will obey.

Oh, but wait, Jane Hawk is on the case - yeah, you're gonna be just fine!

Play Manchurian with me.

Yes, all right . . .

Karen says

Wow! I pretty much inhaled this 3rd installment in the Jane Hawk novels.

I've been a huge fan of Dean Koontz ever since I read Watchers decades ago. One of the things I love most about his books is that no matter how inherently evil his villains are, there is always someone that is good and honorable and full of love. His books are always filled with light and dark, hope and hopelessness... But usually, light, hope, and love conquers.

Jane Hawk is not his usual protagonist, and is not always full of light, but the love she has for her 5 year old son, and for her friends, makes everything that she has to do to try to combat the evil Techno Arcadians worth it. She unerringly finds the pure hearted for help when needed.

In The Crooked Staircase, ex-FBI agent Jane Hawk continues her quest to protect her son while trying to stop the heinous evil threatening to change the world. This 3rd book was my favorite so far and I could barely put it down.

Although it ended quite abruptly with a cliffhanger, I still loved it. Jane is a serious kickass heroine and I can't get enough! The Forbidden Door can't get here soon enough!

Thanks to NetGalley and Bantam Publishing for an advanced copy!

Monnie says

I have three things to say about the books in this series, of which this is the third: First, I loved every single minute of reading them all. Second, they're good enough to keep you looking forward to the next one - perhaps even more so because the endings aren't quite endings at all. And third, if you want to get the most out of them, start at the beginning (with *The Silent Corner* and *The Whispering Room*).

That doesn't mean the books can't stand on their own, because they do. But I also know that I enjoyed Books 2 and 3 a lot more because I read what came before (and I'd say that's more true of this one; had I not read the second, I'd have felt a bit lost throughout the first several chapters).

The series features Jane Hawk, a disgraced standout FBI agent who's now on the Bureau's Most Wanted list and on the lam. She's certain her husband Nick's suicide (in a previous book) was murder - committed by an ultra-dangerous and secretive group of powers-that-be called the Arcadians who use nanotechnology to infiltrate the minds of their victims and control their words and actions. Those victims, it seems, are chosen based on a computer model that identifies people who are most likely to get in the way of the group's ideology - and that certainly included her highly principled husband. While trying to stay out of the group's crosshairs, Jane is now searching for an especially violent member who has threatened her young son, Travis - forcing her to stash the boy with friends at a place where he won't be found (or so she fervently hopes).

Also featured prominently here are fraternal twins and writers Tanujat and Sanjay, who apparently have landed a place on that hit list. Chapters switch from what's happening in their world as they slowly realize somebody's out to get them to what's happening in Jane's - ditto, except in her case, there's nothing slow about the realization.

Her chase is, as might be expected, fraught with identity changes, close calls and dead bodies, but eventually she gets what she wanted (or thought she did). That, in turn, leads her to a frightening encounter with - you guessed it - a crooked staircase that, no matter whether she's going up or down, is filled with almost unimaginable horrors. Put another way, there's never a dull moment in this book; and once again, I thank the publisher, via NetGalley, for the opportunity to read an advance review copy.

Oh yes, about that non-ending: What follows it is a preview of the next book, *The Forbidden Door*. When authors do this, I never - but never - bother to read them. But something - maybe the totally abrupt stop of this one - made me take the plunge, and I urge you to do the same. Even though it too ends with a cliffhanger, it eases the pain of the first one a bit and is a little less in-your-face.

Mary Beth *Traveling Sister* says

4.5 stars!

Jane Hawk is still on a search to find out the reason why her husband was killed and who did it. His death was set up to believe that he committed suicide, but Jane knows better. She is hiding, for her life depends on it, as she is hunted by some government agents who have a way to find their enemy. Jane used her intelligence to outsmart the enemy. She is a ex F.B.I. Agent and is a wanted fugitive. Jane's enemies are determined to see her dead or make her wish she was.

Her son has been hiding out with friends, so that he will remain safe.

Jane uncovers a conspiracy in the highest echelon of the government, a group who call themselves, the Arcadians. The Archadians are pure evil. They use a drug and inflicts it into people and they then have total mind control of them. They do it to those that they feel are a threat to society.

Nothing can prepare Jane for the chilling truth that awaits when she descends the crooked staircase to the dark and dreadful place where her long nightmare was born.

This book was super action packed. It is the third book in the series. I think that you should definitely start with the first book. I loved this one the best. This book is so intense. I literally couldn't put it down. When you read this make sure that you have plenty of time because I feel that you will not want to put it down. This one is my favorite of all of Dean Koontz books. He has finally came back with a winner. This book is very dark and terrifying.

This series is a thriller series. Once I started it, it captivated me till the very end. Lots and lots of riveting suspense. It is a fast paced read, with lots of twists and turns.

The characters were done so well and there were lots of disturbing ones. I love Jane Hawk's character. She is an ass kicking heroine and doesn't seem to be afraid as anything and really trusts her instincts. I was so fearful of her safety. The characters and events are realistic. I loved the dynamics of the characters.

I did not like the ending. I was so excited and my heart was pumping to find out what was going to happen next only to find a cliff hanger ending.

I loved the writing style. This is a long book, but the chapters are really short, which makes it a very fast paced read and didn't take long to finish. This book is fantastic!! I highly recommend it for thriller fans.

I want to thank Netgalley, Random House and Dean Koontz for the copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Phrynne says

I am going to be honest here and admit to a degree of disappointment in this book. It was very long, very wordy (although Koontz often is) and it had far too much going on.

Reading it made me feel the author had so much to say that he just scribbled it all down without any editing. There were side stories that did not need to be there at all (the twins) and there were long unnecessary dialogues (Jergens and Dubose). Worst of all was the character of Jane who has sunk to the level of the people she is chasing. I would like her to win by being smart not by doing gross things to people.

I am still giving it three stars because many parts of the book were really good. It just needed a good editor and a red pen. The ending is a colossal cliff hanger so I will be back for book 4

Marialyce says

4 kept me going stars

Jane Hawk is a remarkable capable woman who in this third book in the series is still tracking a nefarious group called the Arcadians. Their goal is to control the population, eliminate what they think to be the troublemakers, and create a society of peace(well peace according to them) with them in the lead position. They do this by using a drug which uses nanotechnology to eventually control one's brain which is triggered by a group of words. The Arcadians decide who will be injected and who will die. Mind control is their goal and they do not care who dies in their attempt at domination. Jane's husband was one of their victims and his "suicide" death was their mind control at work.

Most of this secret Arcadian group have deep workings with government groups like the FBI, CIA, NSA, and others. They have many powerful people within their ranks and their workings are secret and covered up. They take away one's free will without the person realizing what has been done to them. This is a scary prospect one that might not be so far fetched in the atmosphere we live in today.

This is the third outing for Dean Koontz with the Jane Hawk series. Having not read a novel by Mr Koontz, I was in for quite a surprise in the direction this series has gone. I have not read the previous novels but after reading this one, I will certainly be pursuing the others. This was a long novel, but had just the right amount of suspense and nail biting episodes to keep one going. The ending was well done as the next book in this series is on approach. This is a fine book for those who like a bit of science mixed in with conspiracies, and the government. I, for one, will be back for the next installment to watch how Jane not only protects her young son, but also battles the evil forces at work in the Arcadian organization.

Thank you to Dean Koontz, Random House Publishing, and NetGalley for an advanced copy of this very exciting novel.

Publishing May 8, 2018

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

I was lucky enough to read a copy of THE SILENT CORNER, the first book in the Jane Hawk series just before I read this book. Since THE CROOKED STAIRCASE is book three have I only missed THE WHISPERING ROOM. However, I felt reading this book alone worked fine, despite that. I was very glad that I at least had read book one because I felt that I would have been a bit lost without the knowledge from that book. And, that's my advice to readers, start from the beginning.

READ THE REST OF THE REVIEW OVER AT FRESH FICTION!

Yodamom says

Fast, violent, deadly, with intense suspense.

I think an ultimate fear is losing control of our own minds, or choices. This book dives into that fear and drags it into that dark place, then it adds rape, torture, sex slavery, and running for your life. It is intense.

Jane the main character, rams through her targets, try to find her husband's killer, and save her son from an unspeakably horrific threat. The bad guys are so ruthless, my stomach churned during several scenes. Jane is an incredible character, smart, and twisted enough to do what needs to be done.

Why only 3 stars ? Several reasons. One, it was too dark, there was so little hope and too much taken away. It left me with a hopeless feeling, I didn't want to continue many times. Oh, to feel such despair it hurts. The threat to the child, was too much for me. I will not continue the series for fear of where Mr. Koontz will go with that. I can't go there, can't fear for that happening. Then there was the fact that this book had two separate time lines going on switching back and forth with each short chapter. I found that really disruptive. Finally the ending, it just stopped, like mid breath just stopped-cliffhanger extreme.

I think it did what it was meant to do. It shocked, upset and drove adrenaline rushing through my body. It just wasn't my idea of an entertaining read.

Dee Arr says

While I have enjoyed Dean Koontz books in the past, I am sorry to say that was not the case for "The Crooked Staircase."

Mr. Koontz has crafted a good story, and there are plenty of thriller elements to it. I realize the author was trying to generate tension by having the chapters rotate from character to character. Sometimes this worked, but the constant flipping felt artificial after a while, and the tension that could have been built became ho-hum as I felt more whipsawed back and forth rather than caught up in the separate storylines. This was especially emphasized when a chapter took less than a minute to read, and the powerful lines that might have worked with longer chapters became lost in the massive pile of chapter endings.

Losing interest may have caused me to have the time to notice other things that bothered me. The description of weapons –using the full catalog name and part of the description, right down to magazine capacity – sounded more like it was copied from the manufacturer. No sense in alerting us to how many bullets the gun can shoot if it never has a bearing on the story. I did think the author did a good job of involving the reader with his characters so that we cared whether or not something bad happened to them.

The bad cop duo of Jergens and Dubose was interesting in the beginning, but the constant banter began to repeat and by the end fell into a pit of banality. I felt that the choice of the ultra-evil villain stretched my usually flexible limits of credibility, and to realize that the entire series is built upon this person was a disappointment for me.

However, what really turned me off was the cliffhanger-like ending. Creating a successful series that goes on and on has been done (the 14-book Wheel of Time series begun by Robert Jordan comes to mind), but there needs to be a semi-conclusion, not a weak ending that leaves me incredulous when I turn the page to find an ad for the next book. I guess I will never find out what happens to Jane Hawk, because my interest died with the book three non-ending. Two stars.

Maureen Carden says

The Crooked Staircase, the third book in the Jane Hawk series is a powerful read.

Jane continues her fight against the Techno-Arcadians; the cabal mostly consisting of politicians, agents of

secret/ law enforcement agencies, rich business people and techno inventors. They are evidently the worst word in the English language: elitists. Although Koontz is careful to point out that not every Ivy Leaguer, government employee, politician, wealthy business person, innovator, or member of the mainstream press are malevolent elitists, his message is easy to read and seems to cater to the current political climate.

However, this particular group of evil elitists, the Techno-Arcadians, is looking to take over the world and form some sort of utopia; a really nasty type of utopia that seems to only benefit them. One way they are doing this is by destroying people with nanotechnology. These are people picked by a computer algorithm as possible future opponents; basically defined as people who can think and reason for themselves. Read the previous books; you owe it to yourself.

These villains are among the worst I've come across in many years of reading; and this from an author who excels in presenting some pretty scary villains. The two Techno-Arcadian hunters on the ground to find Jane or her little boy, Travis, are especially depraved.

Jane is still the loner on the run. A few months ago she was a loving wife, a mother and a respected FBI agent. The murder of her husband Nick by the Techno-Arcadians enraged Jane and put her into berserker mode. Her son Travis is in hiding and she has a star role on the list of Most Wanted for crimes running from murder to treason. However she has plans for some powerful payback. Man plans, God laughs, something Jane has forgotten. Something the villains may have forgotten too.

The story is written in alternating, short chapters with differing POVs. Not fun, but effective to read the mindset of the severely deranged.

It aggravates me that I enjoy Koontz's books so much. His writing as usual is lyrical, and can be pure bone chilling. His descriptions can give James Lee Burke a run for his money; whether it is an area of Orange County or an escape across California wildernesses. My aggravation comes from his definition of elitists. Fair warning, this book is dark, unrelentingly dark. Jane is forced to confront how far she will go to protect her son and in her quest to bring down the Techno -Arcadians. She will kill in self-defense, but will she cross other lines that seem worse? Koontz has come up with outcomes that actually are worse than death.

The Crooked Staircase crosses genres, easily jumping from thriller to science fiction to techno thriller. I wanted to sit there with pen and paper taking notes on all the information given on the ways I can be tracked, hacked, or eavesdropped on, making *The Crooked Staircase* chilling in ways other than just as a dystopic story.

As to the title, I'll let y'all discover that one on your own. I do advise constructing a couch pillow fort.

Thank you to NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Tiffany PSquared says

"Jane stood in the dark, and the dark stood in her, the latter being the darkness of both her past actions and lethal potential."

OK, be honest, did Dean Koontz have a clandestine meeting with George R. R. Martin (Game of Thrones) before he wrote *The Crooked Staircase*? Because he definitely broke readers' hearts and left a bitter taste in my mouth with this book.

In this 3rd book in the Jane Hawk series, former FBI agent Jane is bent on climbing the Who's Who ladder within the Arcadian Society to exact some revenge for the death of husband and the ruination of her career and peace. With her son safe in hiding, Jane makes major moves to settle some scores and get closer to cutting off the proverbial head of the beast.

In this series, Koontz capitalizes on our fear of losing control of our true identities and succumbing to

another's whims and agendas. He is a master storyteller, and he conveys as much of the story by what he leaves out as he does by what he includes. And although this installment is action-packed, fairly little ground was gained.

The bad guys are truly brutal. The protagonist is still amazingly resourceful, but she seems to be stretched a little thin. Plus, readers may start to cringe now every time she asks any of her friends for help of any kind. The body count rises in heartbreaking ways right along with the intensity. Lovers of fast-paced action will especially appreciate the final two sections of this novel.

I'm a Koontz fan, but I had to take off a few stars because of my extreme distaste for the brutal violence (triggers include rape, torture, and child abuse) and for the all-too-convenient way the bad guys were able to track down every single one of their targets regardless of the paltry clues they had to go on. Even in today's high-tech society, I found that incredibly inconceivable. And finally for the abrupt ending that felt less like a cliffhanger and instead like the book was just unfinished.

Fans of this series will rush on to read Book 4, *The Forbidden Door*, and hopefully, they will be rewarded with an ending (if it ends) that is completely satisfying.

**Many thanks to NetGalley, the author, and Bantam Books for the opportunity to read and review this book.

Lisa says

Unrelenting tension and an unyielding female protagonist are the highlights of this well-plotted novel.

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SUMMARY

An epidemic of murder-suicides is sweeping the nation. It claimed Jane Hawk's husband and many others and it is escalating rapidly. Jane, an FBI agent, has gone rogue against a horrific conspiracy that threatens the freedom and free-will of millions. As a wanted fugitive she relentlessly hunts for the secret organization behind the plot. Jane's enemies, both the government and those involved in the conspiracy will stop at nothing to see her dead. But Jane has a plot of her own. She has her sights set on one of the twisted leaders in the conspiracy. How far will she go to protect her young son Travis, and discover the truth behind the technology that is creating a new world order.

"There is not much news in the news anymore. The lies they tell don't leave a lot of time for the facts about anything."

REVIEW

Jane Hawk is waging a one woman war against the most powerful conspiracy ever. She is phenomenally brave and determined, and readers like me, who are looking for strong female protagonists, will be in awe. The conspiracy is so scary you have to put it down at times and tell yourself "it's only a book, it's not real." The unrelenting tension, interspersed with occasional spots of humor, was one of the things I liked most about the story. I also like many of the characters in the book, particularly the "good guys." Cornell's character was fascinating, as was Jessie and Gavin. Five-year-old Travis was adorable and he will wiggle his

way into your heart.

THE CROOKED STAIRCASE is the first Koontz book that I have picked up in several years and find that I have jumped right in the middle of a series. What was I thinking...it's the third one in the series, no less. The others books, The Silent Corner and The Whispering Room, surely have a wealth of information to provide, but having not read them did not prevent me from understanding and enjoying the intensity of this one. With a major cliffhanger at the end, you know there will be more books to come. This one had just a bit to much of a cliffhanger for me, just meant to hook you into buying the next book. If you like thrillers, series and a strong female protagonist this is definitely the book for you. I listened to the Audible version of the book and loved the narration.

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Narrated Elizabeth Rodgers

“None of us ever has more than this moment. Tomorrow becomes today, today becomes yesterday. The best I can do for my boy is give him enough todays that he can make a past for himself that will have had some meaning in it.”
