



The Beast

Faye Kellerman

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The professional and the personal intersect in treacherous ways in this compelling and eerie installment in Faye Kellerman's thrilling New York Times bestselling Decker/Lazarus series

Throughout his years with the LAPD, Peter Decker has handled a number of tough cases and strange killers. But few of his previous assignments compare to his latest case--the most bizarre of his storied career.

When Hobart Penny is found dead in his apartment, the cops think that his pet cat--an adult female tiger--attacked the reclusive elderly billionaire. But it soon becomes clear that the beast that killed the eccentric inventor is all too human. Digging into the victim's life, Decker and his colleagues, Detectives Marge Dunn and Scott Oliver, discover that Penny was an exceptionally peculiar man with exotic tastes, including kinky sex with call girls.

Following a trail of clues that leads from a wildlife sanctuary in the San Bernardino Mountains to the wild nightlife of Las Vegas, the LAPD detectives are left juggling too many suspects and too few answers. To break open a case involving the two most primal instincts--sex and murder--Decker wrestles with a difficult choice. Should he turn to a man with expert knowledge of both, Chris Donatti, the dangerous man who also happens to be the father of Decker's foster son, Gabriel Whitman, a boy not without his own problems?

As their work and intimate worlds collide, Decker and his wife, Rina, find themselves facing tough questions. It just might be that family crises and work-related responsibilities prove too much for Decker's career. A confluence of ordeals can stress even the most intact of families. And when all these shocking truths comes out, exactly how well will Decker and Rina cope, and survive?

The Beast Details

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From Reader Review The Beast for online ebook

Bob says

Decker is called into the death of 80ish Hobart Penny. When they arrive at his apartment they find a full grown female tiger which puts a hold on the investigation until animal control can come and remove it. They find that Mr. Penny has been bludgeoned and shot in the back and the apartment is a disaster area. Thus begins a strange case filled with deadly creatures, a wildlife sanctuary and a murdered wealthy recluse with strange habits and activities. Decker and Lazarus are also dealing with their foster son Gabriel Whitman who is going through the throes of young love and the animus of his girl's mother. A good read all in all and this book introduces the change in Decker's life as he contemplates the move to New York and a new life in a small college town police department.

Monnie says

Opening a new Peter Decker/Rina Lazarus book always is accompanied by a bit of excitement - I've read them all (this is the 21st), and while some have been better than others, I've enjoyed every single one. This one, IMHO, is one of the best.

Any disappointment, if you can call it that, is that it seems Rina's role has diminished over time (as I mentioned in my review of last year's *Gun Games*. In the past, she's been more directly involved in her husband's murder investigations, and there's been more interaction between the two of them. Now, her life has taken a back seat, mostly serving as the chief family cook and mediator between Peter, an LAPD detective, and the high-strung musical prodigy they've taken in at least for the short haul.

Besides that, I've always enjoyed learning more about Orthodox Judaism (Peter came to that party when he married Rina many years ago, and in many books thereafter, explanations were common). But here, except for a mention or two of Peter's need to be home by sundown on Friday to observe Shabbat, the subject is virtually nonexistent. Then too, there's the matter of more than a couple of grammatical errors that should have been caught - but that's more on the head of copy editors than the author (and something, unfortunately, that's become quite common in all books I've read over the past few years).

As for the story, it involves a particularly gory murder of an old, and extremely eccentric and exceedingly wealthy recluse who keeps an adult tiger in his apartment and apparently enjoys kinky sex with ladies of the evening. Early on, Peter and his LAPD colleagues learn that the tiger's roar is much worse than her bite - and the chase is on to find the real killer. That leads the crew from a remote wildlife sanctuary to Las Vegas casinos and includes a consult with Dr. Alex Delaware, the lead character in books by Kellerman's husband, Jonathan.

Meanwhile, that teenage child prodigy is having problems all his own, creating tension at home. Everything comes together to present a dilemma (and possible major life change) for Peter and Rina which, I assume, will provide fodder for the next book.

I'll be waiting!

Fenny says

Each and every book in this series is a perfect stand-alone. I do think, however, that my reading pleasure is enhanced by knowing part of the history of the main characters, even if there are allusions to events and books that I have not yet read. But knowing the people involved in the story is like meeting old friends – and catching up with old friends is always fun! Especially when old friends from another series – Dr. Alex Delaware and detective Milo Sturgis – written by Faye's husband Jonathan Kellerman, evidently have met up with Lieutenant Decker and his entourage – it feels like a perfect match made in heaven. Now to find the book where the actual introductions were made! :-)

It is not only a thriller, but also a story about more or less real people, the banter between colleagues turned friends, family life, parenthood and raising children, and other normal daily life routines that make this book appealing to read. Especially in a series as you can follow the lives of the main characters as a real-life soap series.

The angle of the wild life sanctuary is an interesting one – as well as the idea and realities of keeping wild animals as pets. However, as to be expected, the real beast is often one of human nature, as this story also attest to. The question is: which human?

Faye has delivered another very well putt together story, with some unexpected twists and turns I have come to expect of her. I keep turning the pages, because it is a consistent quality of story telling with characters I can relate to and identify with, who draw me into their life stories so much so that I really want to know what happens to them next. The new characters make me curious to find out why they do what they do and how they are involved. It is authentic detective- soap-drama story telling in one! Highly recommended!

Una Tiers says

Way too explicit in the beginning, no matter how intriguing. The ending was way too flat.

Barbara says

Eighty-nine year old eccentric, Hobart Penny, is found dead in the apartment he shares with a full grown Bengal tiger. Penny has been bludgeoned and shot, but clues are hard to find since the apartment has been torn up and befouled by the frustrated, hungry tiger.

When LAPD detective Peter Decker and his colleagues Marge Dunn and Scott Oliver investigate the homicide they find that Penny - who was not a nice guy - harbored a slew of dangerous pets, including venomous snakes, deadly spiders, poisonous fish, and more. Suspects include Penny's ex-wife and children, call girls that visited Penny regularly, the manager of an animal refuge, and anyone else in regular contact with the old man.

A side story involves the foster son of Peter and his wife Rina, 17-year old piano prodigy Gabriel Whitman.

Gabriel courts trouble by meeting up with Yasmine, the girl he loves whose parents have forbidden her to see him.

A good part of the book is devoted to describing the ins and outs of keeping exotic animals: what they eat, what kind of supplements and medications they need, treating their wounds, and so on. To me the plot was not riveting and the character interactions were relatively mundane. In previous books we saw a lot going on with Peter and Rina's biological children, which added interest to the stories. This isn't a terrible story if you're in the mood for a mystery but Faye Kellerman has written much better books.

You can follow my reviews at <http://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot.com/>

Anna says

What happened to Decker?

I used to love the series. He was a cool guy, an Orthodox Jew detective with an interesting wife, and he used to investigate crimes with odd circumstances, fantastic characters, and a good team - all while giving some glimpses of the exotic Jewish life and habits to his readers.

As the series went on, he grew and his family members and team grew. The characters of the people investigated in the books also grew to be more interesting and wilder.

But now it suddenly feels like you might feel in your life when your friends are on their 30s - what happened? They now have a 9 to 5 office job, mortgages, children... where did all the fun go? No one's laughing any more.

When did Decker become a lieutenant pencil pusher (I know - several books ago)... who yet tries to do all the detective work himself? When did his wife Rina become a wall flower for the books, when all her influence and actions are focused on cooking meat, listening to piano, and planning vacations with Peter? Did they all just suddenly grow... wait, I mean, quit growing? When Peter and Rina are boring, long for moving to the East coast to be around their grandkids (Cindy's twins - never mind the "problem kid" is never even mentioned in the books any more, and the other kid is over 30 and married, no kids and no mentions in the book... and Hannah's disappeared too). To have a bit of younger presence, the Deckers still have Gabe as an adopted or foster kid, the musical genius kid from Peter's pet mafioso friend Chris Donatti. And hence page after page of teenage drama with Gabe and his Persian princess.

So we have a graying lieutenant doing detective work (instead of what he should do), and he still has his core team of Marge and Oliver that hasn't changed since the beginning. Hey, time to add some new blood to the team perhaps? Add a new team member or a few - which should have happened about 10-15 books ago already.

In this one they investigate the murder of a 89 year old rich loner who had a full-grown tiger in his condo (I don't see how that would actually work. I did work in a zoo for a while ages ago). Add more venomous animals, odd children of the rich man, an animal sanctuary... there was just something missing. Quite a bit of it - the series was fantastic, and I don't want to lower my standards for the latest books in the series.

Brina says

Every once in a while it is comforting to take a break from reading classics, nonfiction, and literary fiction and return to a familiar series. I have been with Faye Kellerman's Peter Decker and Rina Lazarus since her debut book *The Ritual Bath* and followed the story of their lives until present. I had taken a break from the series as I had gotten too emotionally invested in the characters, especially because Peter and Rina share my orthodox religious lifestyle by choice so by default I felt an affinity with them. Summer vacation is the best time as any to catch up with old 'friends' so I decided to pick up where I left off with *The Beast*, a later book featuring Peter, Rina, family, and friends as they have come to a crossroads in their lives.

Longtime detectives Marge Dunn and Scott Oliver have been called to investigate the suspected death of ninety year old billionaire Hobart Penny. A recluse who chose to live in a sparsely furnished apartment, Penny kept an adult female Bengal tiger as a pet and called on massage artists young enough to be his great granddaughters to service him. To everyone who had contact with him, he was viewed as an old creep, and his children and ex-wife were not sorry to see him dead. At first glance, the tiger was an easy suspect in this heinous crime, a trained pet who could not stay tamed. Yet, when Decker, Dunn, and Oliver enter the crime scene, they find that the cat was an innocent bystander, and Penny's death is now registered as murder. If the tiger did not maul Penny to death, then a murderer is lurking somewhere. With the crime in his jurisdiction, Lieutenant Decker and his division take on the case.

At home, Rina is as busy as ever. With all of their children out of the house, she still teaches at the local girls high school and finds time to learn and cater on a regular basis. Plus, the Deckers have agreed to be the foster parents of one teenaged Gabriel Whitman, the child prodigy of none other than Chris Donatti, the forever thorn in Decker's side. Yet, Gabriel is only living with the Deckers temporarily as he is due back at Julliard in six weeks time. Meanwhile, Koby, Cindy, and their family are looking to move east for school and work, with the Deckers other three adult children already located in the New York area. As the horrendous crimes and work load at the LAPD become as busy and brutal as ever, and even Peter looks toward the future, a future that does include his job as Lieutenant that he has become synonymous with. As the detectives canvass the western United States to bring the murderer to justice, all three ponder if maybe this case is their last hurrah.

With Kellerman giving more attention to Rina and to Marge's personal life, the case quickly advances. The tiger out of the picture, the detectives work to find out whodunit. We meet a usual large cast of characters including Penny's children, a director of a large animal refuge, and the owners of the massage parlor who Penny serviced on a regular basis. There are even cameo appearances made by Jonathan Kellerman's Dr. Alex Delaware and none other than Chris Donatti himself, who other than being a thorn in Decker's side, is always intriguing to read about. As these multiple storylines unravel, the case unfolds at rapid speed, reminding me why I have always enjoyed reading these detective stories that are a mix between the cops' work and personal lives.

In *The Beast*, Kellerman has given readers a gruesome case to wrap up Decker and Dunn's careers as LAPD cops. Yet, with the Deckers due to move back east to be closer to their children, and Peter not one to sit and twiddle his thumbs, there are sure to be more cases albeit in a relaxed setting. With at least four more books left in this series, I am sure that I will be returning to Peter and Rina's lives as they settle down to easier lives as more devoted grandparents, away from the rigors of the LAPD. I will miss the rapport between Lieutenant Decker and his team of able homicide detectives because this is partially what drew me into the series in the first place. Yet, with Kellerman's adept writing and multiple storylines, there is no telling what this series will bring as I revisit the Deckers in the future.

3.5 stars

Jennifer says

FINALLY! A mystery book club book selection that I've enjoyed! But not surprisingly, the rest of the book club was a bit "meh" on it.

I liked the setting in the San Fernando Valley. The murder victim deserved to be murdered, so I was fine with his death. Overall, a quick read with a satisfying procedural bent to it. Plus, who doesn't love when a tiger is part of the murder scene? (Okay, I know the answer - my book club. But they don't love much.)

Julie says

I did not like -- I did not like -- I did not like at all.

This was truly a gruesome experience.

And yet I read it. From beginning to end.

That's what happens when you're trapped in hospital waiting rooms, waiting for the shoe(s) to drop. You read garbage. You read each page twice and thrice. And you read to the very end. And you wonder why. And you wished you still belonged to that religion you once believed in, just so you could go to confession and absolve yourself/get absolution for the (chargeable) offence of having read this.

Needless to say, I won't be reading anymore Kellerman based on this experience.

Devorah says

I adored the beginning of the Peter/Rina series. I really did. But let's deconstruct why I loved it:

First, Peter was changing, evolving. Trying to cope with his past and overcome it, and forge a new future.

Second, Rina was dynamic and interesting, involved in Peter and in the cases

Third, Orthodox Judaism is cool and a different perspective on how to integrate religion into a cop's life.

Basically, Faye took that entire construct and just... did away with it. Peter basically gets told by every single character he meets that he's just the coolest. Even by his teenage wards/sons/daughters. I mean, literally in every scene with his child, they tell him just what an amazing person he is. Show, don't tell, Ms. Kellerman.

So Peter doesn't do much besides for act like a detective, rather than a Lieutenant, and bask in everyone's adoration and get amazing suppers virtually every night. (What is UP with all the lamb chops?) No growing, no changing.

Rina is boring. I mean, really really boring. She makes the aforementioned amazing suppers, shows up to be the calm voice of reason --yet is STILL ignored (no one ever tells HER how cool she is), and then gets a perfunctory "you're the greatest for acting like a domestic servant and calming me down whenever I get all

testy, especially because I never bother to come home” from Peter. She just shuffles off to the kitchen to make another round of lamb chops and just lets her husband do whatever he wants. She gets a little blurb in this novel about how she’s got all these sorts of extracurricular activities to balance out the fact that she no longer has anything but a brief relationship with her Ultra Cool Husband, but again, show, don’t tell.

Judaism? Nope. Not only does Peter not keep the Sabbath any longer, (“Um, this phone call at 10pm on the Sabbath might be REALLY IMPORTANT. . .but it isn’t. But must do my JERB!”), he also doesn’t keep kosher (“Hey, this doesn’t have lard or anything in this burrito, right?”) or do anything remotely related to Judaism other than being affectionately called “Rabbi” by his colleagues. See? Even his EMPLOYEES love him! No one is this popular.

And in the end of the book, he basically informs Rina that he'd like to move to the Northeast. He comes to this decision for no discernible reason. I mean, none. Even his excuse that he wants to live close to his kids doesn't make sense, because he basically pulls a town out of his hat that's a THREE HOUR drive from all his kids. Oh, and from anyone remotely Jewish, but Rina will just have to adapt, because its not like he religion is in anyway important to her, and she'd just adore being isolated from her entire community and family! That Rina, so supportive.

Then, to cap it all off, we get some ridiculous plot about a Tiger that has somehow lived in an apartment locked up, and no one else has figured that out, and this tiger never ever escapes except for the one time when his owner is hurt. Because tigers are like loyal little golden retrievers. What is it, Lassie? Did your owner get shot AND have his head bashed in?

And then, somehow Peter has this HUGE MAFIA BOSS MAN on a tight leash. Here, Fido! Get this information for me! For free! No Problemo, Peter! You’re so cool, you have your very own Pet Mafia.

I’m actually somewhat interested in Gabe, because he must be phenomenally screwed up, but just like little Jake (“Yonkie” is somehow over 30. That’s all the information we get in the last three books. And his older brother, despite possibly being married for about 15 years by now, has no children? Only precious Cindy gets an honorable mention with her twins. Named after her own father, OF COURSE.), his issues are somehow overcome BY TWO LOVE!!!

In closing, what started off as a much loved series has degenerated. That’s probably true of any series that has gone on this long, but it’s a sad, sad observation.

Jerry B says

Third lackluster outing in a row for Lazarus and Decker:

We’ve read every entry in the now 21-book set that are basically police procedurals starring LAPD Homicide Lt. Peter Decker. Wife Rina Lazarus has increasingly taken a filler role – in the early days she was used to illuminate, sometimes blatantly, the strict practices of conservative Judaism. In more recent novels, she is basically the mother image holding things together. And when the Decker nest was finally empty, they took in a teenaged foster kid of sorts, Gabe; and so the last three books, including “Beast” are filled with Gabe’s “forbidden” affair with Yasmine and other teenaged angst – all of which has zero to do with the crime plots at hand.

In the mystery story, an 89-year old reclusive man has been found murdered in an apartment complex, but retrieving his body is overly exciting as he was hiding and housing a Bengal tiger in his room – and as it turns out, poisonous snakes and insects in other rented units adjacent to his main one. He also had weird sexual gigs going on with “escort” women, two of whom revealed by some nearby video cameras are virtually the only suspects, plus maybe the woman who they found out helped take care of the tiger. In this 350-page+ book, very little happens thereafter until near the end when the actual perps start falling over each other to spill the beans (sans lawyers, which is hardly realistic), and eventually all is wrapped up with a nice Hollywood ending. Incidentally, a brief "cameo" by Alex Delaware, the leading man in Faye's husband's novels, was gratuitous -- and silly.

For the third straight outing, our two-star reaction reflects boredom and disappointment. Earlier entries were significantly better, even with the religious information sometimes “in your face.” And with almost all the main characters talking about retiring and changing up their lives, we would kindly suggest our once admired author may be considering those same steps in person.

Cindie Harp says

I am a sentimental gal. The mystery aspect was not great, but not bad. Five stars for the update on the characters in the book. I just wish Faye would write a book about Peter and Rina, and not bother me so much with the mystery!!

Linda says

Its been a long while since I have read a Faye Kellerman book. Bad idea to pick up again with her latest! So much has happened to the characters it made me mad I had not read the books in between.

Can I say that I think Faye is a better writer than her husband?? I love them both but Faye has the edge.

Predator is another Decker and Lazarus thriller. An 89 year old recluse has been found dead....with a pet tiger in his apartment. It soon becomes clear he was murdered and as they delve deeper into the victims life, they find that he was far from perfect and may even have killed others himself.

Skip says

Two intense storylines. Peter Decker is called to an apartment building where a female Bengal tiger is angry and nobody has seen the tenant. After Animal Control tranquilizes the tiger, the old man is found murdered. Suspicion falls on his sanctuary friends although he has a kinky past and is regularly visited by masseuses. Meanwhile, Gabe Whitman, Peter and Rina's charge, continues to see his girlfriend Yasmine against her mother's wishes, leading to a nasty scene with the police. Marge and Peter seems ready for life changes.

Liz Barnsley says

First of all a HUGE thanks to Kate for sending me a copy of this book for review. And because I love the Kellermans!

This instalment of the Decker/Lazarus series begins with a body in an apartment building. Well, they think there is a body...trouble is there is also a Tiger. A very large and rather hungry looking Tiger..perhaps one of the most entertaining openings to this series yet.

As Decker investigates it becomes apparent that a tiger is not going to be the only problem...the dead man was wealthy and eccentric...and not at all a nice person to know. As the team find out more about him a dark secret emerges...and the suspect pool will be large.

I very much enjoyed this addition to a series I have followed from its humble beginnings...when Pete Decker first met his wife Rina Lazarus and they became an enthralling literary partnership. Pete solves the crime, Rina solves the domestic issues...and it works out for all concerned. Pete and Rina often have as much drama in their own lives as Pete has in his working one...especially since they took on the care of yet another young man, one whose parents are not exactly model citizens.

The mystery elements are well done here as always - it will keep you guessing and also might induce some chills - Tigers are not the only thing to be discovered here and I did occasionally have a little shiver. Mrs Kellerman's trademark characterisation is not notch as always. My favourite character (since he first appeared a few books ago) Chris Donnatti makes a short but sweet appearance and Mr Jonathan Kellerman's protagonist Alex Delaware has a cameo role. Other well loved characters you know will also be around doing their thing - so as usual a satisfying, enthralling and entertaining read that will not disappoint you.

If you have yet to begin this series well, terrific you have a wonderful journey to start...and to do so you need "The Ritual Bath".

Happy Reading Folks!
