



Smoke in Mirrors

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A con artist and seductress, Meredith Spooner lived fast—and died young. But her final scam—embezzling more than a million dollars from a college endowment fund—is coming back to haunt Leonora Hutton. The tainted money is stashed away in an offshore account for Leonora. And while she wants nothing to do with the cash, she discovers two other items in the safe-deposit box: a book about Mirror House—the place where Meredith engineered her final deception and a set of newspaper stories about an unsolved murder that occurred there thirty years ago.

Now Leonora has an offer for Thomas Walker, another victim of Meredith's scams and seductions. She'll hand over the money—if he helps her figure out what's going on. Meredith had described Thomas as “a man you can trust.” But in a funhouse-mirror world of illusion and distortion, Leonora may be out of her league...

Smoke in Mirrors Details

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Author : Jayne Ann Krentz

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From Reader Review Smoke in Mirrors for online ebook

Carrie says

3.5*

*****Possible Minor Spoilers*****

The first half or so of the book was very good. The story grabbed my interest, as did the characters. The first chapter was definitely creepy, and several other times I thought I was in for one of JAK's "touch of paranormal" suspense novels. Even though the second half of the book was still good, the creepy factor dropped away and the resolution ended up being fairly typical mystery fare.

I liked the relationship growth between the main characters. I would rate the sensuality mild, although I enjoyed the romance very much. I definitely enjoyed JAK's avoidance of all the major plot devices I hate, such as "big misunderstanding" or or having either main character pull away for some off-base "noble" reason. This relationship felt more believable, with a few understandable insecurities and hesitations, but no outright stupidity.

Bonnie Randall says

This novel did not pretend to be anything other than what it was: a straight-up, formulaic, romantic suspense - and you know? It's good. No insta-love or skanky insta-sex that's become the Holy Grail of 2k romances. Here there is mystery (though a titch convoluted) and a gothic-y setting; foggy woods which hold a house-turned-library, within which every wall is covered with creepy antique mirrors.

Oh, how I wish those creepy mirrors had played a bigger role (but I am a ghoul, so don't mind me).

Okay, so there are a few convenient plot-points: Leonora takes no time whatsoever to give up her (decent) job and move to Creepy Small Town. She is fiercely loyal to a half-sister who bedded her dude (and every other dude by the looks of things) and was also renowned as a thief and a liar. (So why was Leo loyal? I am still wondering). There is a (voila!) *perfect* librarian's job just a-waitin' for her in Creepy Small Town and yet I could overlook these (kinda ridiculous) conveniences because, like I said, this novel was what it was, it delivered, and, right or wrong I have sort of missed books like this.

Criticism: What was ex Kyle doing there other than taking up needless word count?

Hat-tip: The oldsters! Herb & Gloria were *great* and the last line she got to deliver: "Looks like you've finally slept your way to the top" was cute enough to make me smile real big.

And that sums it up. Cute. Smiling big at a HEA. So...if you're looking for emotional depth or substance do NOT look here. Ditto complex, layered characters. But Krentz isn't purporting to deliver any of these things with Smoke & Mirrors. Instead she's giving you a shallow little trap door to dive through while you're at the beach or in your lawn chair and what the hell? Escape for a few hours. It's all good.

3 Solid Stars.

???????? says

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Gwen (The Gwendolyn Reading Method) says

Love me some Amanda Quick/Jayne Ann Krentz, but this one was kinda boring. the pacing was off.

Ns says

Smoke in Mirrors was an interesting murder-mystery with a sizzling romance. The prologue immediately set the tone of the story, immersing the reader right into the mystery. Somewhat confusing, but quite intriguing. Like most prologues, it is only as the story progresses does the pieces start to make sense.

The murder-mystery had its finer moments and other moments that were boring. Thomas Walker and Leonora Hutton played amateur detectives more than really facing any action. The interesting moments were attributed to them uncovering more facts about the unsolved murder from thirty-years ago and connecting it to the recent suspicious deaths of their loved ones. The more they learned, the more the stakes rose, and the town shook. Where Wing Cove was a quiet, college community is now the haven of murder, drug dealings and more suspicious deaths. Thomas and Leonora suspect is has to do with the mystery they are investigating.

There is relative calm, as least for Thomas and Leonora well-being. No real heart-pounding endangerment or attacks, at least in the scheme of things. That is until the very *end* when the killer is identified and conquered. When all the action is bottled up into the end it doesn't give readers much to work with in between, except follow along with Thomas and Leonora. That would have worked perfectly fine if the in-between had more action regarding the mystery. More twists and excitement. Something I did not like was the end when the whole mystery became an explanation, stringing pieces together. It was likely to pull reader into the loop and clear confusion but it felt unnecessary and would have been more rewarding for readers to figure it out by themselves.

Where the mystery lacked drama and excitement there was plenty between Thomas and Leonora who were quite compatible. Both wary about commitments but also willing to give it a try. With the worry of an unknown killer and the determination to find justice and answers, Thomas and Leonora turn to each other. They each found their second chance and it turned out to be the best decision they made. The romance was quite sastifying.

Nenya says

[half sisters (hide spoiler)]

Cheri says

I didn't see this one coming!

Nancy Jones says

Loved it

Denise says

Good premise and execution. Good romance, okay mystery. I have this thing about mirrors, so exploring what they might symbolize in occult terms was really interesting.

Carrie says

Well, well, didn't everyone match up just perfectly! It was almost enough to make me gag, but Krentz pulled it off without any unfortunate reactions from my stomach. Another cute and funny romance, just what I needed to get my head out of the last book I read. And, Wrench is now quite possibly my favorite literary dog.

Rashika (is tired) says

The characters held a lot of potential but the bad romance and weak mystery killed it. Also why do all characters end up in a relationship? I don't understand? Why does a HEA for all characters include a romantic relationship?

Vanessa says

I loved this book. The characters are developed and likable, the plot has twists, and I did not guess who the killer was or how the ending would play out. The romance is also nicely developed as well. The prologue sucked me right in. A nice lighter mystery read.

Lara says

I've only listened to the audio version of this book, which I enjoy because there are two narrators, a man and a woman. The male voices and hero's perspective chapters are narrated by the man, and the female ones by the woman. The story has many of Krentz's trademark themes: a librarian heroine, a faithful pet, thick fog, a near miss on a deserted highway, and dream messages. Not to mention a murder (or more), a break-in, an annoying ex-boyfriend/fiance, and a mystery.

This book had two men who are brothers and two women as their love interests. I really liked Leonora, who is a calm person who maintains her personality and position throughout the book. She doesn't need to be liberated in any way, but does have to risk her heart. Her grandmother and grand mother's friend Herb add some great character to the story as well. Thomas and Deke are great as brothers who are devoted to each other, even though they may not always believe in each others' point of view.

Joy says

What does the death of a con artist in SoCal have to do with the suicide of a math genius at a ritzy conservative college? Everything, according to the math genius's brother-in-law, who recruits (with a little strongarming) the con artist's half-sister to help him discover the truth of the matter.

Typically convoluted Krentz setup, and a lot of her usual types (*of course* Leonora is a research librarian...). Another enjoyable but not particularly memorable read--I had to look up the characters' names to write up this little blurb.

Shirlene says

Bethany Walker was given drugs that killed her. Before she give in to the drugs she found a place to hide a book and an envelope with pictures. She knew that her husband and his brother would find them. It was rumored that she was taking drugs and she spent a lot of time at Mirror House, headquarters for the Eubanks College Alumni Association. Her death was ruled an accident as a result of a car crash.

A year later, Meredith Spooner was dead, rumored to have taken drugs. She also spent a lot of time at Mirror House. She had embezzled one-point-five million dollars from the Bethany Walker endowment fund.

Meredith's death was also ruled an accident.

Deke never believed that Bethany's death was an accident. He thought that she had been murdered. He was almost over her death when Meredith was found dead. He believed the deaths were linked in some way.

Leonora Hutton come to pick up Meredith's belongings from her apartment where Thomas Walker was waiting for her. He accused Leonora of being her partner and told her that he would make sure the investigation would point to her if she didn't help him find the money. She refused and went back to her home outside of San Diego, CA where she lived close to her grandmother who had raised her. Her parents had died when she was younger.

Meredith was born to a crazy mother who used a sperm donor to conceive Meredith. After her mother died, Meredith hacked into the hospital's database and discovered who her father was. He had died a few years back. It turned out that the sperm donor was Leonora's father. They were half-sisters and complete opposites of each other. Meredith had blonde hair and used her looks to get men. She was a con artist. Leonora had dark hair and glasses, she was a librarian.

Leonora planned on having nothing to do with Thomas but she received an email from Meredith. It said that she would receive the email if something had happened to her. She would receive the account numbers for

one-point-five million dollars in the mail. She received the information and called Thomas. She returned the money in exchange for help in finding out what happened to Meredith. She then returned to Wing Cove, near Puget Sound.

Thomas and Deke Walker had found the book with a picture of one of the mirrors in the House circled. They also had the envelope with articles about the death of the son of one of the college founders. Sebastian Eubanks had been murdered thirty years ago. The three of them decided they needed to find the link between the three deaths. Leonora was hired to work in the House of Mirrors and catalog all the research done on the history of mirrors that was in the house. She needed a place to stay and Thomas purchased old houses and fixed them up. He had a house that he was working on and invited Leonora to stay there. It was about 15 minutes walking distance away from Thomas' place.

Thomas went to check on Leonora the first night. He invited her to dinner and she accepted. They talked about her first day and work and about how they thought they might handle their investigation going forward. Thomas lingered because he liked Leonora. He told her that he did have a short affair with Meredith but Leonora had already figured that much out.

Thomas saw the chief of police, Ed Stovall, in town and noticed that he was watching Elissa Kern. Her father had tenure at Eubanks College because of an algorithm that he wrote that made him famous. He became an alcoholic after that. Elissa was basically taking care of him. She didn't know him as a child and after she grew up, she moved closer to him to get to know him better. She was feeling like it was a waste of time because he didn't seem interested in getting to know her, just in getting drunk.

Leonora was approached in the supermarket by Alex Rhodes. He was dressed completely in black and wore amber colored contacts. He told her that he was a stress reduction consultant and he sold a special nutritional formula to offset the metabolic affects of stress. He invited Leonora to go with him to have a cup of coffee. She accepted but opted for tea. Alex mentioned that he knew that she went to dinner with Thomas and asked about their relationship. She told him that he was her landlord. Alex claimed to have approached her because she seemed to be free of attachments and he wanted to talk to someone who wasn't the wife or girlfriend of someone in town. She didn't trust him.

Deke was taking yoga lessons, mostly because he was interested in the yoga instructor, Cassie. She came to his house to work with him because he refused to go out. It was a result of his depression over Bethany's death. He spent most of his time on the computer.

Elissa went to Alex's to see about getting some of his special nutritional formula. He tried to talk Cassie into counseling with him but she only wanted the formula. Thomas and Leonora were watching the house and saw her leave. They broke into his house when they saw him leave for a run. They found the formula and took some of it to test and see what it was. They also noticed that he had a mirror on one of the tables in his house that appeared to have been stolen from the Mirror House. They left out the back door as he was coming in the front door. They found their way to their car through the fog and went back to her place. They ate dinner and kissed. Thomas left when he realized that they couldn't do anything because they had no protection were they to have sex.

Thomas talked with Deke about Alex approaching Leonora. He showed Deke the powders that they had taken from Alex's place. Deke agreed that he needed to do more research on Rhodes.

Leonora was working and heard sounds coming from close by. She watched out her office and noticed two of the workers coming out from a passage hidden in the hallway. She followed them into the secret passageway the next day and discovered a bracelet left stuck there that was Meredith's. She went back to her office and saw Julie, the employee she followed into the passageway, leaving her office. Julie had gone through her purse but didn't notice anything having been taken. Thomas was still watching Alex's house and observed Julie going in and out.

After work, Leonora went to Thomas's and told him about the bracelet. They ended up kissing and making love that evening. Deke came by and they ate dinner and discussed the bracelet and Julie going through Leonora's office and purse and going to see Alex. Deke and Thomas drove Leonora home in her car and walked back to Thomas's place.

The next morning, Leonora was walking to Thomas's and Cassie was out jogging. She slowed down to talk to Leonora about Deke. Cassie wanted to know how to go about getting Deke's attention.

They confronted Julie about going through Leonora's purse and Julie told them that she had little money and was offered money to get the drivers license and credit card numbers for Alex. They told her that they would report her to the police if she told anyone about them questioning her. They figured that Alex was checking up on them rather than working on an identity theft problem. Julie did give them the idea of talking to the college secretary at the time about Eugene's murder. They all went to see her and found out that he had a boyfriend and they set out to find him. They figured that the college would do anything to keep the information private about his homosexuality.

Alex noticed Thomas leaving Leonora's one night and gave a guy some drugs and told him that Thomas was a monster. The drug causes hallucinations and they guy attacked Thomas. Thomas got away and beat the guy off. He called the police and went back to Leonora's place and spent the night.

They were headed home late one night and someone tried to run them off the road. It was Alex Rhodes. They went to his house to confront him once they got home and they found him shot dead. The killer was still in the house but got away. They called the police and the chief was again dead set that it was a result of a drug deal gone wrong.

They found the ex-lover of Eubanks and found out that he had been working on the algorithm that professor Kerns had used to become famous. They figured out that Kerns had argued with Eubanks about the algorithm and Kerns had shot Eubanks and stolen the algorithm to get rich and famous. They went to Kerns house and a note was found relating just that and stating that he was going to kill himself. They found his body the next day. The investigation was over so far as everyone concerned. The loose ends weren't completely tied up but everyone involved was dead now.

Leonora was having trouble sleeping and in her head she was being told that she couldn't rest yet. Thomas and Deke decided they needed to tie up those loose ends and decided to look into Kerns bank accounts to see if they could figure the entire story out and find the blackmail proof.

Leonora was at work on Monday after having had the alumni dinner party at the House of Mirrors over the weekend. Roberta who worked there was retiring and was downstairs packing up. She called upstairs and asked Leonora if she wanted to come down and have a last cup of coffee with her. They were the only two people in the building. They heard the door opening and Leonora heard Roberta talking with Julie. Leonora didn't like coffee so she dumped what she had left in her cup out and started to go back upstairs. She didn't feel well and had to fight the nausea and dizziness to get up. She tried to get upstairs to get her car keys and call Thomas. She knew she was sick and needed help. She knew then that Roberta had drugged her and heard Julie leave the building. Roberta came after her.

Roberta told her that she had first witnessed Kern killing Eubanks and told Kern that she would take care of everything and suggested that he publish the algorithm in his name. She blackmailed him for over thirty years. Her husband had invented a drug that caused hallucinations and she saw the potential for money and then killed him after getting the recipe for the drug. Bethany was studying the history of the House of Mirrors and found out about Eubanks working on the works that Kern published and started asking questions so Roberta killed her so that she wouldn't lose her income from Kern. Alex Rhodes witnessed Roberta killing Bethany. Alex found out about the drug and he and Roberta sold the drugs using people that Alex knew. Meredith came to town and found out things from sleeping with Alex and working in the House of Mirrors. They then got rid of her. Roberta was getting ready to retire and leave town. She had to get rid of Alex because he knew too much. She then also got rid of Kern. She was tying up her loose ends. Leonora was her last loose end because she felt that Leonora had to be punished for disrupting her plans and making her have clean up the loose ends and leave town when she was.

Leonora pretended to be really out of it more than she was and she broke a mirror. She refused to leave with Roberta and Roberta got impatient. Roberta grabbed Leonora and got stabbed by a piece of glass that Leonora had picked up from the mirror she broke. Leonora caused Roberta to let go of the gun she held. That was when Thomas and Deke arrived. Thomas sent his dog to guard Roberta because he looked like a wolf.

Roberta was afraid to move for fear that she would be hurt worse than she was from the cut due to the mirror glass.

All of this was relayed to Ed, the chief of police. Ed told Thomas that he wanted to move into the house that Leonora was living in as soon as he was ready to sell it. He was marrying Kerns daughter. Thomas asked Leonora to marry him and Deke was dating Cassie.

Smoke and Mirrors was the name that Alex gave to the drug that Roberta's husband had created.
