

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

**JONATHAN
KELLERMAN**

**HEARTBREAK
HOTEL**

AN ALEX DELAWARE NOVEL



**JONATHAN
KELLERMAN
HEARTBREAK
HOTEL**



Copyright © 2017 Jonathan Kellerman

The right of Jonathan Kellerman to be identified as the Author of the Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Apart from any use permitted under UK copyright law, this publication may only be reproduced, stored, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means, with prior permission in writing of the publishers or, in the case of reprographic production, in accordance with the terms of licences issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency.

First published in the United States by Ballantine Books,
an imprint of Random House, a division of Random House LLC,
a Penguin Random House Company, New York.

This Ebook edition was first published by Headline Publishing Group in
2017

All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Cataloguing in Publication Data is available from the British Library

eISBN: 978 1 4722 0650 3

Author photograph © Joan Allen/ Corbis Outline

Cover design by www.asmithcompany.co.uk
Cover photographs © Shutterstock

HEADLINE PUBLISHING GROUP
An Hachette UK Company
Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment
London, EC4Y 0DZ

www.headline.co.uk
www.hachette.co.uk

Contents Page

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[About Jonathan Kellerman](#)

[Praise](#)

[About the Book](#)

[Also by Jonathan Kellerman](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[Chapter 28](#)

[Chapter 29](#)

[Chapter 30](#)

[Chapter 31](#)

[Chapter 32](#)

[Chapter 33](#)

[Chapter 34](#)

[Chapter 35](#)

[Chapter 36](#)

[Chapter 37](#)

[Chapter 38](#)

[Chapter 39](#)

[Chapter 40](#)

[Chapter 41](#)

[Chapter 42](#)

[Chapter 43](#)

[Chapter 44](#)

[Chapter 45](#)

[Chapter 46](#)

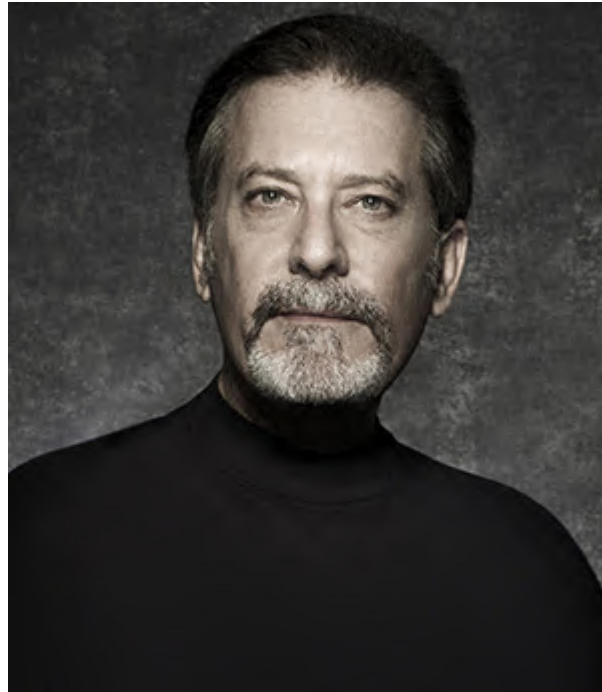
[Chapter 47](#)

[Chapter 48](#)

[Chapter 49](#)

[Chapter 50](#)

[About Jonathan Kellerman](#)



Jonathan Kellerman is the No. 1 international bestselling author of more than three dozen bestselling crime novels, including the Alex Delaware series, *THE BUTCHER'S THEATRE*, *BILLY STRAIGHT*, *THE CONSPIRACY CLUB*, *TWISTED*, *TRUE DETECTIVES* and *THE MURDERER'S DAUGHTER*. With his wife, bestselling novelist Faye Kellerman, he co-authored *DOUBLE HOMICIDE* and *CAPITAL CRIMES*. With his son, bestselling novelist Jesse Kellerman, he co-authored the first two books of a new series, *THE GOLEM OF HOLLYWOOD* and *THE GOLEM OF PARIS*. He is also the author of two children's books and numerous non-fiction works. He has won the Goldwyn, Edgar and Anthony Awards and has been nominated for a Shamus Award. Jonathan and Faye Kellerman live in California, New Mexico and New York.

jonathankellerman.com

[Facebook.com/JonathanKellerman](https://www.facebook.com/JonathanKellerman)

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY

‘When it comes to psychological or even psychopathic themes, Jonathan Kellerman leads the pack – partly because he is a clinical psychologist, and partly because he is a damned good writer’ *Guardian*

‘Kellerman’s psychology skills and dark imagination are a potent literary mix’ *Los Angeles Times*

‘Sophisticated, cleverly plotted and satisfying psychodrama’ *Sunday Telegraph*

‘The combination of Alex Delaware [and] Milo Sturgis . . . makes for the most original whodunit duo since Watson and Holmes’ *Forbes*

‘Kellerman’s speciality is getting quietly but persistently inside his hero’s head . . . thoughtful and intelligent stuff . . . that is slick, quick and a pleasure to read’ *Mirror*

‘A thriller which gives your wits a work-out. Endlessly intriguing; as good as they come’ *Literary Review*

ALEX DELAWARE . . .

A criminal psychologist, Alex works with the police to help solve the most complex of crimes in Los Angeles, city of illusions, glamour and infamy.

At nearly one hundred years old, Thalia Mars is a far cry from the patients Dr. Alex Delaware normally treats. But the charming, witty woman convinces him to meet her at the Aventura, a luxury L.A. hotel with a dark history.

Thalia seeks answers to unsettling questions – about guilt, patterns of criminal behaviour, victim selection. She promises to explain herself during their next session, but when Alex returns he finds Thalia dead in her suite and new questions arise.

Alex and homicide detective Milo Sturgis must embark on one of the most baffling investigations of their careers, peeling back the layers of Thalia's life and nearly a century of secrets harboured by a woman whose life and death draw those around her into a vortex of violence.

**OVER THIRTY BESTSELLERS.
HUNDREDS OF CASES SOLVED.**

By Jonathan Kellerman

The Butcher's Theatre
The Conspiracy Club
True Detectives
The Murderer's Daughter

Alex Delaware Novels
When the Bough Breaks
Blood Test
Over the Edge
Silent Partner
Time Bomb
Private Eyes
Devil's Waltz
Bad Love
Self-Defence
The Web
The Clinic
Survival of the Fittest
Monster
Doctor Death
Flesh and Blood
The Murder Book
A Cold Heart
Therapy
Rage
Gone
Obsession
Compulsion
Bones
Evidence
Deception
Mystery

Victims
Guilt
Killer
Motive
Breakdown
Heartbreak Hotel

Novels featuring Petra Connor

Billy Straight
Twisted

With Faye Kellerman

Double Homicide
Capital Crimes

With Jesse Kellerman

The Golem of Hollywood
The Golem of Paris

To Masha

*Special thanks
to Doreen Hudson
and
Laura Jorstad*

CHAPTER

1

I lead a double life.

Some of my time is spent using the doctorate I earned: evaluating the mental health of injured, neglected, or traumatized children, making recommendations about parental custody, providing short-term treatment. My own childhood was often nightmarish and I like to think I'm making a difference. I keep my fees reasonable and bills get paid.

Then there's the other stuff, initiated by my best friend, an LAPD homicide lieutenant. Once in a while my name leaks into a news story. Mostly I keep out of public view. I doubt any of the families I see are aware of the murders I work on. They've never commented on it and I think they would if they knew.

When my invoices finally make their way through the LAPD bureaucracy, I may get paid at an hourly rate far below my office fee. Sometimes those bills are ignored or rejected outright. If my friend finds out, he makes noise. His success clearing homicides is first-rate. Getting me paid for my time, not so much.

Business-wise, the other stuff doesn't make much sense. I don't care.

I enjoy seeing bad people pay.

What began on a Monday morning in early June seemed to have nothing to do with either half of my life.

Go know.

The answering service operator was a new hire named James, with a shaky voice and a way of turning statements into questions that implied self-esteem issues. Either he hadn't been trained in handling non-emergency calls or he was a poor student.

"Dr. Delaware? I've got someone on the line, a Ms. Mars?"

“Don’t know her.”

“That’s her name? Mars? Like the candy bar?”

“Is it urgent?”

“Um . . . I don’t know, Dr. Delaware? She does sound kind of . . . weak?”

“Put her on.”

“You bet, Dr. Delaware? Have a great day?”

A faint voice as dry as leaf dust said, “Good morning, Doctor. This is Thalia Mars.”

“What can I do for you, Ms. Mars?”

“My guess is you don’t do house calls but I’ll supplement your fee if you see me at my home.”

“I’m a child psychologist.”

“Oh, I know that, Dr. Delaware. I’m well aware of the wonderful work you did at Western Pediatric Medical Center. I’m a great fan of the hospital. Ask Dr. Eagle.”

Ruben Eagle worked with Western Peds’ poorest patients as head of outpatient services and was routinely ignored by hospital fundraisers because the day-to-day maladies of the uninsured couldn’t compete for headlines with heart surgery, kidney transplants, and whiz-bang cellular research.

Had he sent this woman to me as a way of stroking one of the few donors he had? It wasn’t like Ruben to politick without asking me first.

“Dr. Eagle referred you to me?”

“Oh, no, Doctor. I referred myself.”

“Ms. Mars, I’m not clear about what you want—”

“How could you be? I’d explain over the phone but that would take up too much of your valuable time. Once we get together, my check will include whatever charge you decide is appropriate for this call.”

“It’s not a matter of billing, Ms. Mars. If you could give me a basic explanation about what you need—”

“Of course. Your work suggests you’re an analytic and compassionate man and I could use both. I’m not a nut, Dr. Delaware, and you won’t need to travel far. I’m at the Aventura Hotel on Sunset, a short drive from you.”

“You’re visiting L.A.?”

“I live at the Aventura. That’s a bit of a tale, in itself. Would an initial retainer of, say, five thousand dollars set your mind at ease? I’d offer to wire it directly to you but that would require asking for your banking information and you’d suspect some sort of financial scam.”

“Five thousand is far too much and there’s no need for a retainer.”

“Don’t you take retainers when you work for the courts?”

“Sounds as if you’ve researched me, Ms. Mars.”

“I try to be thorough, Doctor, but I promise you there’s nothing ominous at play. The hotel’s a semi-public place and the front desk knows me well. Is there any way you could meet me today, say at three P.M.? You’d avoid rush-hour traffic.”

“What if I told you I had a prior appointment?”

“Then I’d request another time, Doctor. And if that failed, I’d beseech you.” She laughed. “There is an issue of time. I don’t have much of it.”

“You’re ill—”

“Never felt better,” said Thalia Mars. “However, on my next birthday I will be one hundred.”

“I see.”

“If you don’t believe me, when we get together I’ll show you my last active driver’s license. Flunked the test when I turned ninety-five and have depended, since, on the kindness of others and their internal combustion engines.”

My turn to laugh.

“So we’re on for three, Dr. Delaware?”

“All right.”

“Fabulous, you’re analytic, compassionate, *and* flexible. The front desk will direct you.”