

<<The Darkest Evening >>

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内容概要

A fast-paced and emotionally devastating suspense novel from the bestselling author of *Velocity*, *The Husband* and *The Good Guy*. Amy Redwing recklessly risks everything in her chosen field of dog rescue. When she confronts a violent drunk in order to rescue Nickie, a beautiful golden retriever, Amy has no misgivings. Dogs always do their best, and so will she. Whatever it takes. Riding shotgun nervously is her friend and lover, Brian, an architect who would marry her if only she were not so committed to these crazy ! heroics! He blames her work for her refusal to marry him. But everything is due to change in the Redwing household. Someone is trying to destroy Amy. Subtle intrusions escalate into terrifying assaults on everything she holds dear. Amy believes her attacker is Wes Greeley, just released after an eighteen-month stretch, thanks to Amy's testimony, for egregious animal cruelty. But if Greeley is the culprit, it's clear he's not working alone. At last Amy understands her need of Brian, and a lot more from her troubled past that has been hidden by her passion. Unable to turn to any authority, Amy and Brian are pressed to the edge of a precipice as Koontz's most emotionally devastating thriller races with inexorable speed to a wrenching climax. Pick up a Dean Koontz thriller and you can't put it down: try one

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作者简介

Dean Koontz is an international household name whose hugely entertaining parables for our times have been bestsellers in many countries, selling seventeen million copies each year. Born and raised in Pennsylvania, he lives with his wife Gerda, their dog Anna, and the enduring spirit of their dog Trixie in southern California.

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章节摘录

Chapter One Behind the wheel of the Ford Expedition, Amy Redwing drove as if she were immortal and therefore safe at any speed. In the fitful breeze, a funnel of golden sycamore leaves spun along the post-midnight street. She blasted through them, crisp autumn scratching across the windshield. For some, the past is a chain, each day a link, raveling backward to one ringbolt or another, in one dark place or another, and tomorrow is a slave to yesterday. Amy Redwing did not know her origins. Abandoned at the age of two, she had no memory of her mother and father. She had been left in a church, her name pinned to her shirt. A nun had found her sleeping on a pew. Most likely, her surname had been invented to mislead. The police had failed to trace it to anyone. Redwing suggested a Native American heritage. Raven hair and dark eyes argued Cherokee, but her ancestors might as likely have come from Armenia or Sicily, or Spain. Amy's history remained incomplete, but the lack of roots did not set her free. She was chained to some ringbolt set in the stone of a distant year. Although she presented herself as such a blithe spirit that she appeared to be capable of flight, she was in fact as earthbound as anyone. Belted to the passenger seat, feet pressed against a phantom brake pedal, Brian McCarthy wanted to urge Amy to slow down. He said nothing, however, because he was afraid that she would look away from the street to reply to his call for caution. Besides, when she was launched upon a mission like this, any plea for prudence might perversely incite her to stand harder on the accelerator. "I love October," she said, looking away from the street. "Don't you love October?" "This is still September." "I can love October in September. September doesn't care." "Watch where you're going." "I love San Francisco, but it's hundreds of miles away." "The way you're driving, we'll be there in ten minutes." "I'm a superb driver. No accidents, no traffic citations." He said, "My entire life keeps flashing before my eyes." "You should make an appointment with an ophthalmologist." "Amy, please, don't keep looking at me." "You look fine, sweetie. Bed hair becomes you." "I mean, watch the road." "This guy named Marco; he's blind but he drives a car." "Marco who?" "Marco something-something. He's in the Philippines. I read about him in a magazine." "Nobody blind can drive a car." "I suppose you don't believe we actually sent men to the moon." "I don't believe they drove there." "Marco's dog sits in the passenger seat. Marco senses from the dog when to turn right or left, when to hit the brakes." Some people thought Amy was a charming airhead. Initially, Brian had thought so, too. Then he had realized he was wrong. He would never have fallen in love with an airhead. He said, "You aren't seriously telling me that Seeing Eye dogs can drive." "The dog doesn't drive, silly. He just guides Marco." "What bizarro magazine were you reading?" "National Geographic. It was such an uplifting story about the human-dog bond, the empowerment of the disabled." "I'll bet my left foot it wasn't National Geographic." "I'm opposed to gambling," she said. "But not to blind men driving." "Well, they need to be responsible blind men." "No place in the world," he insisted, "allows the blind to drive." "Not anymore," she agreed. Brian did not want to ask, could not prevent himself from asking: "Marco isn't allowed to drive anymore?" "He kept banging into things." "Imagine that." "But you can't blame Antoine." "Antoine who?" "Antoine the dog. I'm sure he did his best. Dogs always do. Marco just second-guessed him once too often." "Watch where you're going. Left curve ahead." Smiling at him, she said, "You're my own Antoine. You'll never let me bang into things." In the salt-pale moonlight, an older middle-class neighborhood of one-story ranch houses seemed to effloresce out of the darkness. No streetlamps brightened the night, but the moon silvered the leaves and the creamy trunks of eucalyptuses. Here and there, stucco walls had a faint ectoplasmic glow, as if this were a ghost town of phantom buildings inhabited by spirits. In the second block, lights brightened windows at one house. Amy

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braked to a full stop in the street, and the headlights flared off the reflective numbers on the curbside mailbox. She shifted the Expedition into reverse. Backing into the driveway, she said, "In an iffy situation, you want to be aimed out for the fastest exit." As she killed the headlights and the engine, Brian said, "Iffy? Iffy like how?" Getting out of the SUV, she said, "With a crazy drunk guy, you just never know." Joining her at the back of the vehicle, where she put up the tailgate, Brian glanced at the house and said, "So there's a crazy guy in there, and he's drunk." "On the phone, this Janet Brockman said her husband, Carl, he's crazy drunk, which probably means he's crazy from drinking." Amy started toward the house, and Brian gripped her shoulder, halting her. "What if he's crazy when he's sober, and now it's worse because he's drunk?" "I'm not a psychiatrist, sweetie." "Maybe this is police business." "Police don't have time for crazy drunk guys like this." "I'd think crazy drunk guys are right down their alley." Shrugging off his hand, heading toward the house once more, she said, "We can't waste time. He's violent." Brian hurried after her. "He's crazy, drunk, and violent?" "He probably won't be violent with me." Climbing steps to a porch, Brian said, "What about me?" "I think he's only violent with their dog. But if this Carl does want to take a whack at me, that's okay, 'cause I have you." "Me? I'm an architect." "Not tonight, sweetie. Tonight, you're muscle." Brian had accompanied her on other missions like this, but never previously after midnight to the home of a crazy violent drunk. "What if I have a testosterone deficiency?" "Do you have a testosterone deficiency?" "I cried reading that book last week." "That book makes everyone cry. It just proves you're human." As Amy reached for the bell push, the door opened. A young woman with a bruised mouth and a bleeding lip appeared at the threshold. "Ms. Redwing?" she asked. "You must be Janet." "I wish I wasn't. I wish I was you or anybody, somebody." Stepping back from the door, she invited them inside. "Don't let Carl cripple her." "He won't," Amy assured the woman. Janet blotted her lips with a bloody cloth. "He crippled Mazie." Mouth plugged with a thumb, a pale girl of about four clung to a twisted fistful of the tail of Janet's blouse, as if anticipating a sudden cyclone that would try to spin her away from her mother. The living room was gray. A blue sofa, blue armchairs, stood on a gold carpet, but a pair of lamps shed light as lusterless as ashes, and the colors were muted as though settled smoke from a longquenched fire had laid a patina on them. If Purgatory had formal parlors for the waiting multitudes, they might be as ordered and cheerless as this room. "Crippled Mazie," Janet repeated. "Four months later, he . . ." She glanced down at her daughter. "Four months later, Mazie died." Having begun to close the front door, Brian hesitated. He left it half open to the mild September night. "Where is your dog?" Amy asked. "In the kitchen." Janet put a hand to her swollen lip and spoke between her fingers. "With him." The child was too old to be sucking her thumb with such devotion, but this habit of the crib disturbed Brian less than did the character of her stare. A purple shade of blue, her eyes were wide with expectation and appeared to be bruised by experience. The air thickened, as it does under thunderheads and a pending deluge. "Which way to the kitchen?" Amy asked. Janet led them through an archway into a hall flanked by dark rooms like flooded grottoes. Her daughter glided at her side, as firmly attached as a remora to a larger fish. The hall was shadowy except at the far end, where a thin wedge of light stabbed in from a room beyond. The shadows seemed to ebb and flow and ebb again, but this phantom movement was only Brian's strong pulse, his vision throbbing in time with his laboring heart. At the midpoint of the hallway, a boy leaned with his forehead against a wall, his hands fisted at his temples. He was perhaps six years old. From him came the thinnest sound of miser...

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'The long, dark winter nights take centre stage and keep you on tenterhooks in this brooding thriller' News of the World 'The plot twists that come thick and fast are classic Koontz' West Australian 'Praise for Dean Koontz: 'There's surprise after surprise, including a killer finale ! a read-in-one-go novel' Independent on Sunday on Velocity 'Velocity hits its pace from the first page and races through to a suitably climactic ending' Sydney Sunday Telegraph 'Dean Koontz is not just a master of our darkest dreams, but also a literary juggler' The Times 'Psychologically complex, masterly and satisfying' The New York Times 'A modern Swift ! a master satirist' Entertainment Weekly 'If Stephen King is the Rolling Stones of novels, Koontz is the Beatles' Playboy 'Dean Koontz writes page-turners, middle-of-the-night sneak-up-behind-you suspense thrillers. He touches our hearts and tingles our spines' Washington Post Book World 'Tumbling, hallucinogenic prose. Serious writers might do well to study his technique' New York Times Book Review 'Fast-paced and dark ! Koontz knows we live in a world where evil delights in justifying itself ! Classic literature that deserves a place on the bookshelf beside Orwell's 1984 and Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451' California Literary Review 'Koontz is writing right where popular culture swells into something larger, just as it did for Homer, Shakespeare, and Dickens. He's got the gift' Australian 'Koontz is a superb plotter and wordsmith. He chronicles the hopes and fears of our time in broad strokes and fine detail, using popular fiction to explore the human condition' USA Today 'Inspires both chills and serious thought ! has the power to scare the daylight out of us' People 'The poet laureate of paranoid pop fiction' Denver Post 'Koontz achieves a literary miracle ! stunning physical description, unique turns of phrase' Boston Globe 'Near Dickensian powers of description' Los Angeles Times

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