

Book Review: Still See You Everywhere
By Lisa Gardner

In the Author's Note and Acknowledgment section at the back of the book, author Lisa Gardner explains how, after taking a one-year sabbatical from writing to travel the world, she came home with thirty new novels in her head. "Still See You Everywhere," the third book in the Frankie Elkin series, is the first off the assembly line.

Elkin is a nomad. She travels the country almost exclusively by bus or train in search of missing persons that the rest of the world has forgotten. The searches are of her choosing, and help bring closure to others for loved ones who have disappeared. She receives no monetary compensation for her work.

In "Still See You Everywhere" however, Elkin is summoned to a women's prison in Gatesville, Texas. Kaylee (Keahi is her preferred Hawaiian name) Pierson is a condemned murderer who slaughtered 18 men. In 21 days she will be put to death for her crimes. Why does she want to see Elkin?

Here's where the overall plot becomes a bit of a stretch. Twelve years ago, Pierson's five-year-old sister Leilani went missing in Hawaii. The sisters grew up in a home with an abusive father. The main suspect in the disappearance is Pierson's tech mogul ex-boyfriend, Sanders MacManus. Pierson believes Leilani is alive based on a letter she received, and is being held against her will by MacManus. Pierson, and her attorney, have arranged for Elkin to fly to a small atoll purchased by MacManus an hour south of Honolulu where he plans to build an upscale, eco-friendly resort. Elkin will be inserted as a new member of the hired help.

As I noted, the plot is a bit of a stretch. Why does a condemned murderer scheduled to be put to death in 21 days suddenly need to find her sister? And why drag Elkin into this? Why not just send in a trained undercover agent?

If you accept and move past the structurally weak storyline, the narrative is quite compelling. The first few chapters move at rapid-fire pace. Dialogue is crisp, and it's easy to get caught up in Elkin's curiosity for her destination: an island paradise in the middle of nowhere. She's told to find out if Leilani is alive, report back, and that's it. Piece of cake.

But as Elkin quickly learns, nothing on the island is as simple as it first appears. That includes the plot, where a major shift occurs just past the midpoint of the story. I won't give anything away here, but suffice to say that, despite the action-packed drama that unfolds, the major plot shift, and some minor twists that follow, are also of the hard-to-believe variety.

But remember, it's fiction.

Gardner's writing keeps you turning the pages. She's skilled at the art of story flow and pace, and the foreshadowing at each chapter's conclusion creates anticipation, prompting you to quickly start the next one – no matter how late at night it may be.

I give "Still See You Everywhere" 3.5 out of 5 stars. It's a good, action-packed thriller that simply asks you to accept the somewhat convoluted storyline. If you can do that, you'll enjoy the read.