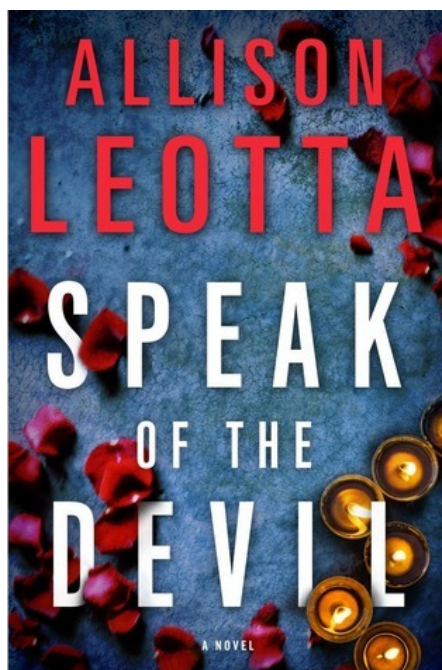




Speak of the Devil: A Novel

Allison Leotta

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Speak of the Devil: A Novel Allison Leotta

In this thriller by “the female John Grisham” (The Providence Journal), prosecutor Anna Curtis must stop a vicious street gang before it destroys more lives—and her own family.

On the same night that prosecutor Anna Curtis gets engaged, a terrifying man known as Diablo leads a vicious attack on a brothel. Anna is assigned to investigate and bring “the devil” to justice. The challenge of her day job contrasts with the sweetness in her personal life, as she plans her wedding and shifts from being a single woman with a secret boyfriend to one half of a D.C. power couple and stepmother to a six-year-old girl.

The investigation soon leads Anna to MS-13, one of America’s most brutal street gangs. As Anna uncovers the full extent of Diablo’s depravity, she also discovers long-buried secrets, official lies, and a terrifying danger that comes straight to her doorstep. The facts she unearths in the case not only threaten her plans for a happy marriage, but everything she thought she knew about the past and present, good and evil, and the price of justice.

In this gripping thriller, Allison Leotta draws on her experience as a prosecutor to take readers into the back rooms of the US Attorney’s Office, the hidden world of the Witness Protection Program, and the secret rituals of one of America’s most dangerous gangs. Praised by top writers in the genre from David Baldacci to George Pelecanos, Leotta deftly weaves fact and fiction to create her best novel yet.

Speak of the Devil: A Novel Details

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From Reader Review Speak of the Devil: A Novel for online ebook

Mike Cuthbert says

Allison Leotta threw me at the start of this mystery by tossing in Diablo or the Devil as a main character. I smelled a supernatural character coming and they turn me off. Fortunately, she soon steered me back to reality and I thoroughly enjoyed the rest of her book. Diablo is a clique leader of the infamous MS-13 gang that has been ravaging DC and other major cities for some years. Begun in Los Angeles with roots in El Salvador, the gang is famous for violence and rape as initiation rituals. They customarily feature tattoos and a total lack of conscience, like a gang of psychopaths on the loose. The plot of *Speak of the Devil* concerns a federal sex crimes prosecutor, Anna Curtis and a series of murders and rapes by MS-13 members. Set in DC and its suburbs, the case seems ripped from the headlines as cases similar to the cases Leotta includes in her book have recent origins here. Complicating things is the approaching nuptials of Anna and homicide prosecutor Jack Bailey, whose wife, Nina, was eliminated by MS-13 a few years before the story begins. There is evidence that at least one policeman may be on the inside and that makes the case more complex, especially when Anna is “greenlighted” or marked for elimination by the gang. Mostly mystery but partly romance as Anna picks out her wedding dress and wedding cake and works on her bridal reception, the novel spends about the right amount of time on each though male readers may get a bit impatient with the soft stuff. The pace is excellent, the action never flags and the level of tension increases as Leotta introduces new and unexpected characters and situations when the plot threatens flagging. An excellent summer read by an author who spent 11 years in the federal prosecutors’ office as a sex-crimes prosecutor before turning to writing full-time.

Michael says

I found this third outing featuring Washington DC prosecutor Anna Curtis first pretty good for realistic coverage of the war against gang violence, but the specifics of the story are both too melodramatic and didactic for my tastes.

I heard good things about Leotta’s first one in the series, “Law of Attraction”, and I was hopeful of benefitting from her dozen years in the trenches as a prosecutor of sex crimes, domestic violence, and child abuse cases. Her Goodreads profile highlights her laudable goals:

I wanted to create a story that would both entertain and teach about the way the criminal justice system works—and doesn’t work. I focused on a nightmare shared by domestic-violence prosecutors: losing a case and setting free an abuser who eventually kills his victim. I wanted to explore why so many women stay with boyfriends who hurt them. And I wanted to create a strong, smart female prosecutor who would empathize with her witnesses because she shared some of their experiences – but whose romantic life would suffer from those same experiences.

Here Curtis works with the metro police on a case against a member of a brutal Latino gang, MS-13, the only one caught in a punitive group action involving murder and rape against a brothel that didn’t pay them protection “taxes”. We are treated to just how hard it is to pull off a successful prosecution, as witnesses are too fearful to come forward and the ones who do can become victims themselves. We also get an education on how the gang works to bond their members into a virtual family, by cruel rituals and initiations, and deadly intimidation by the leaders. The leader of this gang is effectively scary. However, as stories go, the tale here satisfied me only about as well as an episode of “Law and Order: Special Victims Unit”.

Where the story verges a bit into soap opera is with a stilted build-up of the romance between Curtis and a homicide prosecutor in the district attorney's office. And the plucking my heartstrings with the sad story of the past loss of his previous wife by an unsolved execution while she worked undercover with the police. And with the cute daughter Anna slowly wins over to the prospect of her marriage to her father. Plus all the steps of planning a wedding combine in building up your empathy. All now under the real threat of retributions from the gang. Maybe you will be more satisfied than me to watch Anna be brave and tough with all these challenges and, at the same time, emotionally vulnerable to setbacks in the case, from strains in her relationships, and from other big surprises along the way. I was engaged in this rollercoaster, but I am just a little too jaded for my pleasure meter to tip into the red zone.

This book was loaned as an e-book by the publisher through the Netgalley program.

Sebastian says

The dichotomy becomes more and more clear with each book.

I have read all three books in this series and after the first one I have been hoping for the authors talent for writing legal thrillers to come through and overwhelm the silly romance portions she likes to write. It is not that I do not like some romance mixed in with the thrills, but this author does not possess the ability to do this well. All the good things she does when talking about legal procedures, chases and description of vicious criminals and their actions gets lost when love comes into the picture.

When I read about Anna's relationship with Jack and the events that surround it, I could not help feeling that I was watching a truly bad soap opera. The characters become cartoonish and many of their actions are completely out of character. This is striking, especially when we compare it with how well the author crafts characters such as the horrendous Devil. This criminal comes to life in the story and almost jumps out of the pages. The same is true for the second in command in the MS-13 gang, Gato.

So here is where I stand, I either give up on this series to avoid the sappy romance, or I keep reading and just skip over the sections that make me roll my eyes. I am pretty sure I would have a tough time doing the latter, so sadly this may be the last book in this series for me. It is truly a shame, since the good parts of the story are really good, with jaw-dropping revelations and decent pace.

Paul Pessolano says

"Speak of the Devil" by Allison Leotta, published by Touchstone Books.

Category – Mystery/Thriller Publication Date - August 2013

If you are looking for a book that deals with the most notorious gang on record, MS-13, the on again off again romance between Anna Curtis and Jack Bailey, and the search for the depraved "Devil", put this book on your "to read" list.

A brutal murder led by the "Devil" in a brothel that leaves a man decapitated and a young prostitute in fear of her life starts a story that has as many twists and turns as the Corkscrew roller coaster. The story has added impetus because most of the twists and turns are totally unexpected.

Anna Curtis is the prosecutor who is putting together a case against the most dangerous gang in the world MS-113. Anna is also preparing for her marriage to Jack Bailey. Jack has been married before but his wife was found murdered and her murder was possibly the work of MS-13. Anna also has to deal with Jack's young daughter who has accepted her mother's death and looks to Anna as her mother.

As Anna gets deeper and deeper into the case her happy world starts to fall apart as she uncovers dark buried secret after dark buried secret.

A novel that has an even mixture of both mystery and romance. The romance, at time, overshadows the crime but will be of major interest to those looking for more romance in their mysteries. A word of caution in that the book does contain sexual content.

Barbara says

SPEAK of the DEVIL

By Allison Leotta

This is a taunt novel, full of gang violence, new love and heartbreak.

Anna Curtis, a federal prosecutor in Washington DC, is working on a case of murder, rape and intimidation by the MS13 gang. The members are from San Salvador, mostly illegal workers, led by a man they call Diablo. He is an older man and totally without conscience. He leads not just the local gang but the gangs up and down the east coast. His face is black and scaly and he has two horns budding from his forehead. A truly frightening character, especially to the gangs he controls.

After a police raid on a brothel, Anna thinks she has three witnesses who will help her find and capture Diablo. Just before her trial is to begin, two of her witnesses are found in a public park, their heads lopped off with a machete. The third witness, a young woman who is brutally raped and injured by Diablo and his henchmen, suddenly becomes too frightened to testify.

Meantime, Anna and her lover Jack (from the previous novel, Discretion) have re-united after their break up, and, deliriously in love, they become engaged. Fear that his daughter will not accept her are laid to rest when the 6 year old welcomes Anna back into their lives. Anna feels like she suddenly has a real family.

Leotta writes with a storyteller's fine touch. She takes the reader through the highs and lows of Anna as a prosecutor and as a bride-to-be, and the complications and difficulties in both parts of her life. The dialogue is good, the emotion is well elicited, and she writes both a good sex scene (or two!) and describes the violence without overdoing it.

Events change with the turn of a page, and the suspense is tight. There are a few red herrings, but Leotta manages most twists and turns without the use of anything so blatant.

Normally I am not a big fan of legal thrillers, but I look forward to Leotta's books with high anticipation. She writes a good story. Barbara

Caroline says

As a goodreads winner of this book, "Speak of the Devil," here's my review:

Anna Curtis is a sex crime prosecuting attorney struggling to balance a personal life with her professional career. The story revolves around this work-life balance. Along the way, we get to observe multiple levels of city, state and Federal law enforcement in action, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Federal Marshal Service and the Witness Protection Program. Arrayed against the forces of good are the members of the "Mara Savatrucha" also known as MS-13, a vicious Central American crime gang, and some unsavory human traffickers and brothel owners.

The descriptions of MS-13 life, the random violence and neighborhood business shakedowns by juvenile and young adult thugs are thought provoking. There are some interesting tidbits, like gang members unable to legally drive (no driver's licenses) lack of formal education and digital communication being limited to voice communications over cellphones, and gang approval to murder law enforcement officials. While many of these topics have been covered by the "Gangland" TV Documentaries, having them woven into the narrative of this story make them truly frightening. We need to remember that while many come to our country for a better life, it is not always a better legal life.

Anna's pursuit of her life goal (marriage) counterbalanced with her professional goal—survive long enough to prosecute the arrested MS 13 gang members provide plenty of opportunities for plot twists and fast paced reading.

While I am not normally a fan of "Lawyer" stories, or courtroom dramas, this story provided plenty of reading pleasure salted with characters with admirable strengths and realistic shortcomings, as well as a story line that was drawn from your local newspaper's headlines.

I recommend this book for anyone who enjoys suspense novels or courtroom dramas.

Megan says

I started this book while I was waiting for the signing to start on Thursday night and finished it less than 48 hours later -- I simply could not put it down once I started it. My only regret in finishing it so quickly is that I now have to wait for the next one to come out, although I was very happy to hear at the signing that there will be at least two more Anna Curtis books! :) In the third installment, Anna Curtis faces quite her most challenging case yet when she goes up against the MS-13, a gang known for its unpredictable violence and brutality. The opening scene in the book was based on a real event, and the character known as Diablo (aka The Devil) was based on a ruthless psychopath whose primary role in MS-13 was to travel up and down the East Coast riling up gang members and cliques that weren't living up to their full potential. Diablo is a truly despicable villain who appears to be almost completely devoid of humanity, which made it easy to see why he was so feared. When the photo of Nina Flores (Anna's fiancé Jack's deceased wife) turns up as part of the case, it becomes clear that Anna's personal and professional lives will be closely entwined, even more so than in past cases. This time, the stakes are even higher and the lives of Anna, Jack, and his daughter Olivia are put in jeopardy. The story deftly weaves in real facts about MS-13 and actual events that occurred on the East Coast, making it hard to tell where fact ends and fiction begins. Adding more layers of believability to the story are the locations in Maryland, DC, and Virginia that are featured, the glimpses into the inner workings of the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the human reactions of the characters. Readers of the first two books in the series will enjoy seeing favorite characters return and how they've developed, as well as seeing how some of their backstories are brought to the forefront in this one. For new readers looking for a gritty, gripping, and suspenseful tale that does not shy away from shedding light on some dark issues, this fits the

bill and will be sure to prompt you to seek out the earlier books in the series.

Victor Gentile says

Allison Leotta in her new book, “Speak Of The Devil” Book Three in the Anna Curtis series published by Touchstone brings us back to Washington D.C. and another adventure with Assistant U.S. Attorney Anna Curtis.

From the back cover: SPEAK OF THE DEVIL—AND HE WILL APPEAR

On the very night she gets engaged to the man she loves, sex-crimes prosecutor Anna Curtis’s professional life takes a shocking turn that threatens everything she holds dear.

While Anna is enjoying a romantic dinner capped off by a marriage proposal, a few miles away two separate groups are gearing up to raid a brothel. A vicious killer known as Diablo—the Devil—leads one group. A few minutes later, Anna’s own investigative team heads in to search the brothel, as part of the fight against human trafficking in D.C. Both groups are caught off guard, with deadly results.

As Anna investigates the bloody face-off, the boundaries between her work and home life begin to blur. Though eager to focus on her new fiancé, the chief homicide prosecutor Jack Bailey, and her soon-to-be stepdaughter, Olivia, this case and the search for Diablo are never far from her mind.

When Anna discovers a web of long-buried secrets and official lies leading straight to her doorstep, the truth about this case threatens to rob her of the happiness she seemed so close to securing. And everything Anna counted on becomes a question mark as Diablo moves in for yet another kill.

Allison Leotta draws on her experience as a D.C. sex-crimes prosecutor to take readers into the back rooms of the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the hidden world of the Witness Protection Program, and the secret rituals of one of America’s most dangerous gangs. Universally praised by bestselling authors from Catherine Coulter and George Pelecanos to Lisa Scottoline and David Baldacci, Leotta weaves fact and fiction to create her best novel yet.

Get ready for a page-turning, thrill ride. For twelve years, Allison Leotta was a federal prosecutor specializing in sex crimes and domestic violence in Washington, DC so she knows first hand what she is writing about. Diablo, the devil, is the leader of an infamous street gang known for rapes, intimidation and murder. Anna begins by hunting this man who hides his face behind a mask and then he begins to hunt her. “Speak Of The Devil” is a satisfying mystery that will keep you flipping pages trying to find out what is going on. Ms. Leotta gets us caught up in the story and the characters lives to the point that we actually hate to say goodbye to them when the book ends. Time to go to the dark side of Washington, DC as we investigate with Anna Curtis all the curves and twists that this case takes. I liked this book very much and look forward to the next Anna Curtis adventure

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Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from Touchstone. I was not required to write a

positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

Maribel says

By this point Anna Curtis is my friend in my head, as a result I needed a drink at the end of this book. My emotions got the best of me, I need to move on to #4 quickly to see how everything turns out.

Justin Tate says

This was my second read from the "Anna Curtis" series. Both were enjoyable, fast paced and well-written. Leotta educates while she thrills. I learned a lot about the MS-13 gang that I didn't know before. If you like crime stories but also like humanity and want to learn something, this series is perfect.

Susan Tunis says

"Speak of the Devil and he shall appear."

WARNING: Spoilers for Allison Leotta's prior novel, Discretion, below.

Readers of Allison Leotta's Anna Curtis legal thrillers have been waiting on tenterhooks for her latest novel, Speak of the Devil. The mystery of the prior installment, Discretion, was thoroughly wrapped up, but Anna's personal life ended on a cliff-hanger with the words, "I am going to ask him to marry me." The End. I ask you, who does that? Torture! The good news is, Speak of the Devil picks up immediately with Anna's proposal to her significant other, Homicide Chief, Jack Bailey. I'll let you discover what his response is on your own; you won't have to wait long.

On the professional side of things, what should have been a bust on a brothel turns into a murder investigation. Anna is trying to hunt down a machete-wielding monster with ties to a massive criminal gang. Unfortunately, before long this monster with the face of a devil is trying to hunt Anna down as well.

Obviously, there's much, much more to the tale than that, but in this case, I think that telling less is more. Each of Ms. Leotta's novels is more enjoyable than the last, as the plotting of her mysteries becomes defter, and readers become more invested in her cast of characters. Reading Speak of the Devil, I was almost incensed by what Ms. Leotta put her protagonist through. I know that authors are supposed to torture their creations, but enough already! As for the mystery, there are some real shockers this time around, causing me to be especially circumspect in my synopsis.

The good news is that most of the supporting characters that readers have grown fond of, such as Detective McGee and Special Agent Sam Randazzo, are again by Anna's side, and some interesting new characters are introduced. Mysteries alluded to in prior novels are answered conclusively. In general, the author excels at creating a consistent universe, with passing references to elements of past novels helping to sell the ongoing story.

Also helping sell the story is the extensive knowledge of Anna Curtis's world that Ms. Leotta brings to her books. Like her protagonist, she too prosecuted sex crimes as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the DC Attorney General's office. Leotta's experience lends weight to observations like:

"Why, she wondered, just once, couldn't a trial go just as planned—with the witnesses saying what you expected? There was always something. In the dozens of cases she'd taken to trial, not a single one went down without some sort of surprise in the middle or immediately before. The only question was how bad the surprise would be."

Of course, it is those surprises that make for compelling page-turners. *Speak of the Devil* moves quickly, and to be honest, I had a hard time putting it down. I had never heard of the street gang MS-13 before, but apparently every terrifying thing in this book is true. And just as truth is stranger than fiction, it's scarier, too. I don't know whether to be grateful or dismayed that I'm so uninformed about what's going on in the streets.

I'm grateful that *Speak of the Devil* doesn't have the same kind of cliff-hanger ending that *Discretion* did. However, there may be changes ahead for Anna. This series only gets better as it goes. I can't wait to see what the next chapter brings.

Sarah says

Let me start by saying that I like this series and the main character Anna. But for goodness' sake, can we get her a clue when it comes to relationships?! I mean, she is 27 years old. That isn't exactly a spring chicken. Speaking of her love interests, when did Jack become such a patronizing D-bag? All you keep hearing is "Jack is such a good guy." Huh, really? Because from what I'm reading he undermines, disregards and tries to force Anna into his mold at every turn. At first I was pissed when his wife came back from the dead but now I'm glad. They are made for each other. Good riddance to Jack, now please get Anna some backbone and some common sense when it comes to men!

Tamara says

Full review: [Traveling With T](#)

Sex, drugs, and crime. Just another day in the life for Anna Curtis, sex-crimes prosecutor. Until a case hits too close to home.....

Anna Curtis, sex-crimes prosecutor, is at a professional high-point. Helping in the organization of a raid of a brothel that will hopefully lead to some serious jail time- she feels confident by the end of the night she'll have at least 1 piece of good news. Her second piece of good news happens shortly after she arrives at the restaurant in the form of a proposal from Jack. Little does Anna know- that what happens at the brothel will change her life and everyone she loves lives as well.

During the raid, the MS-13, a deadly gang, is at the brothel. A blood-bath ensues- and the clues left behind at the scene pose more questions than answers. One of the police officers kills a gang member- but did he kill in self-defense? Or for his own personal reasons?

As Anna delves further into this case- she soon finds that not all is as it appears. When Anna is greenlighted by the MS-13, she's afraid- but will not back down. She wants these men brought to justice. She just did not realize that in her search for justice- it was going to open doors to questions that she's not sure if she wants the answer about.

Traveling With T's Thoughts:

This is my first Allison Leotta book- and I really enjoyed it. Fiction writing with a true crime-ish twist, this story is a reminder of the types of real-life crimes. Allison dances the line between writing a great fiction story and educating people about crime, police procedures and trials. The plot was action-packed and engaging- and as each twist was revealed- I was surprised. If you enjoy crime books- I recommend this one.

Michael says

A thriller based on a true story, "Speak of the Devil," is a novel with much of the story taken from real MS-13 cases. There are villains in abundance and this particular gang reigns havoc in the Washington, D.C. area.

The story tells of a young woman, Anna Curtis, who works as a sex crimes prosecutor. Plot is a key ingredient to good stories and this story begins with a horrific murder with gang members charging into a brothel and decapitating one of the employees. It seems like an open and shut case but witnesses are reluctant to come forward.

A side story is with Anna and her boyfriend, Jack Bailey. He is the chief of Homicide at the U.S. Attorney's office. Anna and Jack have a romantic relationship. With this aspect, the author provides ways in which love can prevail over violence.

The novel is also provides a biting social commentary on a legal system that fails to protect witnesses.

I don't want to go into the plot except to say that it is well written and I found that the story was one that I couldn't put down.

4 1/2 stars.

Andrew Langert says

This book is two stories in one, with each story being impacted by the other. One story involves a violent gang which tortures and rapes women, kills people and shakes down store owners for "rent". The other story is about Anna Curtis, a terrific character and a highly competent prosecuting attorney, and her romance with a widower who happens to be the homicide chief.

The book alternates between the stories and the parts involving the gang is very tough reading. Very sick people whose actions were graphically described. It was always more pleasant to deal with what was going on with Anna Curtis, though she found herself endangered when she brought a case against gang members. I didn't enjoy this book as much as others by this author, who writes brilliantly. Author Allison Leotta is also

authentic, with her own personal experience backed by research into areas she does not know as well. I still rate this 4 stars as I don't want to downgrade it just because I find the subject matter distasteful.
