



Dorie McCullough Lawson

## Along Comes a Stranger

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The summer of 1995 marks Kate Colter's fifteenth year in the small town of Hayden, Wyoming. She is a woman who is generally happy in her marriage and with her now predictable day-to-day life as wife, mother, and part-time breadwinner. Even though she is a New Englander at heart, Kate has reached a point where rodeos, summer heat, sharp light, and the vast, desolate beauty of the West have become almost second nature to her. She loves her husband and daughter, is fond of her neighbors, and enjoys the company of her mother-in-law. Yet, privately, she longs for the conversations and stories of her past, and she can't help but feel disconnected from the people around her.

In walks Tom Baxter, Kate's mother-in-law's new suitor from "back East."

Kate is immediately drawn to Tom—his gentle charm and engaging conversation spark an unusual companionship. Tom seems like the little piece of home that Kate so misses. She's curious about him and about his story, but finds unexplained gaps and inconsistencies that pique her interest to a new level. Then a series of peculiar and seemingly suspicious events leads Kate to a terrifying conclusion—a conclusion that could forever shatter her life and the lives of those she loves.

In this debut novel, Dorie McCullough Lawson vividly captures a familiar American landscape. Filled with unforgettable characters and written in eloquent yet suspenseful prose, *Along Comes a Stranger* is a darkly humorous novel that examines the depth of identity and family life.

## Along Comes a Stranger Details

Date : Published April 24th 2007 by Harper

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## **From Reader Review Along Comes a Stranger for online ebook**

### **Sharon Huether says**

Kate Colter tells about her town of Hayden Wyo. in mediocre terms. She tells about her daughter, husband and mother-in-law. Everything has a sameness to it. Then a stranger comes to town. Kate is very suspicious. He is seeing her mother-in-law. When she sees his pearl handled knife, all is made known to her.

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### **Britt, Book Habitue says**

Wow.... I've never been so bored. Seriously, never. I mean, I completely understand the day to day life of a stay-at-home mom, I am one, but I'm not crazy enough to think people would want to READ about the day to day life of a stay-at-home mom! (Hence my blogging about things OTHER than daily life in my house!) This one starts out with major hints about a HUGE event happening in the life of the main character... of course, nothing happens until the last 10 pages of the book. Frankly, by that point, I really didn't care anymore. As a mom, I vaguely felt for the little girl, but it was hard to care much when it didn't seem like the main character cared!

Blah, I don't even want to spend any more time writing about it. I would say, don't waste your time. Obviously, though, not everyone agrees with me. The quotes on the book jacket say things like "I couldn't put it down" and I noticed on the sign posted at the library that at least a couple of people had voted "loved it".

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### **Deb says**

A quiet, little book about a New England woman transplanted to Wyoming for her husband's job as a paleontologist. With her husband traveling for work, Kate is left alone outside a quiet country town with her daughter who has a medical condition that needs frequent management. Kate is happy to meet a stranger to town, her MIL's new boyfriend Tom who shares many of her interests but starts to get suspicious when things about him and his story don't add up. A bit slow-moving at times but I stayed with it to find out what happened as I liked the characters.

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### **Sue says**

I rated this higher than the average, because I read it for what it seemed, a type of "cosy mystery." It was a quick read and other than the now ubiquitous misuse of "brought" for "took" I didn't find any awkward grammar or plot inconsistencies. Also, considering that during the time of the story (and at the time of publication) Whitey Bulger was still a fugitive, the climax and resolution was realistic and well handled. The author does not appear to have written anything else in this line, but perhaps could have made a series of Kate Colter stories (especially featuring her spunky mother-in-law.)

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### **Jackie Lane says**

This book is a story about a stranger who comes to town.

Kate married her husband George (a paleontologist), who is away a lot of work, leaving Kate to raise their daughter. Her mother-in-law meets a “stranger”, Tom Baxter, who becomes her boyfriend and Kate and Tom have a common ground, New England, so they hit it off.

Kate’s curiosity is piqued when she starts to notice some inconsistencies in Tom’s story and she checks into the facts.

This was an okay read, a bit predictable, but still enjoyable. The last pages of the book were the “meat” of the story.

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### **Patti says**

I suspect this book was supposed to be intense, but it certainly fell short. The assumptions that Kate makes to uncover Tom's true identity are rather akin to throwing a dart into a pitch black room and hitting the target...unlikely. Truthfully, I was bored for most of the book.

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### **Sheila says**

I read this book in 24 hours. It is an easy read and I was so drawn into the character's lives. You can't but help feel compassion for this woman on many different levels. I also learned many things about myself, while the main character was going through her journey of self discovery. The great thing about this novel, along with this woman's journey, is the mystery of the stranger that has come to town. The only warning, would be for those sensitive to cursing, though it is not excessive. This was an enjoyable story.

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### **Marianne Jay says**

This book is "chatty". It's like sitting across the table from someone and listen to them tell a story. At times the story is a little boring and at times it's exciting and at times you just want them to hurry up and finish telling the story....that is what this book is like.

This book wasn't great. This book was ok. It didn't rivet me....but I wanted to hurry up and finish it so I could get to the end of her story.

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### **Jill says**

I remember being totally enthralled with this story. I sympathized with Kate as the story progressed as any stay at home mom would understand those feelings of longing for freedom and some adventure. And I

certainly understand wanting to be with someone who is from your corner of the earth. But THIS someone is terrifying and oh so real! Loved the tension and the slow build up with words.

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### **April says**

This was a very difficult book for me to "get into." It never quite captured my attention, it was only the mysterious stranger that kept me going, my curiosity. Everything else was like filling that I could've done without. I can't really say it was a BAD book, I think maybe I just wasn't in the right mood for it? Not really sure. It was only the last 15 or so pages that really held my interest and made me want to read faster to find out what was going to happen. The author is a good writer but I think I prefer a little more suspense and that's what I expected, but didn't get. I won't be recommending this to anyone, I don't think.

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### **Sandra says**

This was a mediocre read. I thought the plot fell apart about halfway through. Then the ending just kinda got sprung on you and nothing was there to back it up. However, I did read it fairly fast, so I have to give that some credit.

The setting was a year prior to when the narrator was narrating from and there were some inconsistencies. A murder in a small town, but no real connection to the story. And a large amount of mundane detail that I don't think anyone would recall a year later, no matter the circumstances.

Definitely not my favorite reader's choice pick.

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### **Michael Ramsay says**

An auspicious debut. Looking forward to her next novel. "Along Comes a Stranger" is typical of great works: it commences with a brief fragment of an idea and then becomes a work of imagination. Original. Non cliched. Almost deceptively pedestrian. Readable font. Occasional brief attractive short chapters. Lovely flawless gentle effortless prose without pondering exhausting small print detail. Yes, an auspicious debut. More please.

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### **Becky says**

A quick read. If you are looking for suspense, this isn't the best choice. However, I felt the characters were well developed and liked the connection of a real historical crime figure in a fiction book. I always enjoy a book that makes me search further into a subject I know little or nothing about. Not on my top 10 list for the year, but worth the time invested.

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## **Christie says**

Okay – so another book that sounded so promising and ended up being mediocre. What's up!?

Kate Colter has lived in small-town Wyoming for 15 years. Her husband, George, is a paleontologist; her daughter, Clara, is just seven and suffers from MCADD, a disease that requires her to eat regularly or else her body runs out of glucose and starts to shut down.

What we're expected to believe – because the author tells us, is that Kate is somehow dissatisfied with her beautiful family and lovely life, that she's an East Coast girl at heart and has never really settled into life in the West. That's why when she meets her mother-in-law's new boyfriend, Tom Baxter, she's immediately smitten. He's from away and as far as Kate's concerned, he's exciting and intelligent and they have things to talk about.

About 50 pages in, Kate mentions her aunt Joanie. She's clearly a plot device, so the author can tell us about Kate's fascination with criminals.

"I can't say Joanie's and my interest in the underworld arises from a concern for something greater, like justice, nor does it come from something emotional or psychological within either one of us, like a deep-seated fear of evil, for instance. No, Joanie and I just like to talk about all these crimes and criminals because they make for good, fast-moving stories."

So, life ticks on. George goes off on a dig and Kate is required to fill her days – which she does. Maybe this is the reason why she doesn't notice, at first, the huge red flags that something is not 100% square with Mr. Baxter. Oh no! Then, even the tiniest things start alarm bells ringing until the novel's wholly ridiculous conclusion.

Look, I've read dozens of these stories – you have, too – lots of them are terrific. This one is not. The characters, every last one of them, are one-dimensional and the whole thing is contrived and lacks any sort of suspenseful momentum.

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## **Michelle Johnson says**

This book was interesting but pretty predictable. It was a fast read though and would be a great vacation read. Nothing stellar to report but decent enough.

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