



Kaleidoscope

Gail Bowen

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The thirteenth in Gail Bowen's beloved and award-winning Joanne Kilbourn mystery series promises to be the best of them all: some very bad things happen very, very close to home, and Joanne may never be quite the same again.

"Security for any one of us lies in greater abundance for all of us." For many years, this was the core of Joanne's political beliefs, but for a number of reasons, she has drifted away from it. But on the day Joanne retires from her university teaching post, she has a dream about her first husband (murdered many years ago), and this line comes back vividly in it.

Soon, she is forced to experience the truth of what, for most of her life, had just been a good closing line for a political speech. The night after Jo and Zack have dinner with Zack's colleague Margot and one of his law firm's biggest clients, the developer Leland Hunter, Jo and Zack's house is blown up. They're at the lake with daughter Taylor and their dogs, but the house is destroyed. And that is only the first of several terrible incidents. It isn't long before Joanne is witness to events far more distressing than even a destroyed home. She begins to understand what it's like to live in a world where she can count on nothing.

Kaleidoscope Details

Date : Published April 24th 2012 by McClelland & Stewart

ISBN : 9780771016899

Author : Gail Bowen

Format : Hardcover 336 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Cultural, Canada

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Wendell Hennan says

Inner city redevelopment, court cases, university life, family life, Gail Bowen rolls it all into an outstanding story. A Wadena wedding, pregnancy, childbirth, and gang war, Joanne is in the centre of it all, including the bombing of the house she and Zack and Taylor live in. Another incredible read from this National Treasure/Saskatchewan Treasure.

Lori says

3.5 stars actually and a better novel than the last couple in this series. I have become disappointed in how far Joanne had come from her old, amazing self in the earlier books. Since her marriage to Zack, I have disliked the person she's become: rich, privileged, leading the perfect life with her "perfect" but rather ickedly-portrayed marriage, rich and mostly annoying friends and her unbelievable children. In this story the friction between the have and the have-nots hits close to home, remarkably close to home with a bomb detonated in Zack and Joanne's garage blowing a good chunk of their home and their boring and nauseatingly ideal life to kingdom come. Yes..! What a great way to start this story. Now living in the heart of one of the poorest neighborhoods in Regina, North Central, all of a sudden Joanne is slap-dab in the middle of social unrest, gang warfare and the hopelessness of many even in a society as supposedly privileged as Canadian society is. Adversity and tragedy continues and slowly but surely realization dawns on Joanne that she needs more in her life to feel truly alive than just being a retired Political Science professor lounging in her perfect garden sipping martini's. On her journey she is forced to reframe her past with her young and up-and-coming politician first husband and her present as a society wife to a successful trial lawyer with rich and powerful friends. Her transformation in this regard makes me look forward to the next book in this series. That said, I could only give the book 3.5 stars as the plot with all the familial and friendly connections strains believability and the prose at times is pedantic and lacks the ability for the reader to make that guttural and emotional connection with the story and the experiences of the characters. However, the fact that husband Zack played less of an "icky"role in this one and more of a "lawyer" role was a plus.

Lynn Kearney says

Not her best, but I've grown quite attached to the Kilbourn family over the years so will keep reading them as long as she keeps writing them. Who knew Regina, Saskatchewan was such a hotbed of vice! I liked the earlier ones when Joanne was a lefty political activist.

Elaine Tucker says

Wow a great story set in Regina Saskatchewan. A mystery, who did it and why. A home is blown up, a friend is murdered while out on an early morning run.

Will be looking for more books written by Gail Bowen.

Debbie says

One of the better ones in this series. Although I still don't care for the main character, Joanne. And her daughter is getting on my nerves too. In fact most of the regulars in these books are unrelatable to me. And I am sick of Joanne and her husband having sex on every other chapter. They are in their late 50's, busy careers and he is a parapalegic and they have more sex than I had in my 20's! But maybe I am just jealous! Anyways, the social and economic tensions between the haves and have nots in this book helped make it a pretty good read for me.

Maureen Ulrich says

Kaleidoscope is not one of Bowen's best mysteries, but as always, I am inspired by the way she uses a social issue in our province (in this case crime and poverty in North Central Regina) to underscore the plot.

Roberta says

Another good, solid Joanne Kilbourne mystery. I like the reality of this series and the Saskatchewan setting. I particularly like the way Joanne's life, and the people in it, evolves with each new installment and I like what seems to be a growing focus on community activism. The mystery was easy to solve very early on but that didn't detract from the story and the motivation was a surprise. One quibble I do have is that everyone in the story is connected in some way and it started to feel too pat.

Cybercrone says

These are getting better.

One interesting thing - in Ontario here we say a thing is "six ways to Sunday" and apparently in Saskatchewan it is "six ways to sundown"

Kelly B says

I liked this book, as I like all of Gail Bowen's Joanne Kilbourn books. It's a good, quick read, and it's nice to drop in on the Kilbourn family again. However....

The plot of this book relied too much on coincidence. I realize Regina, even with a population of ~200,000, is still a small town at heart. I lived in Saskatoon for 10 years, and joked that you could never have an affair there - everywhere you went you ran into someone you knew, or someone who knew someone you knew. Never mind 6 degrees of separation - in Saskatchewan, it's two degrees (kinda like the average temperature)!

I can accept a coincidence of two in a murder mystery (and in fact, most have their fair share of them), but this book had a few too many. Ready?

Before entering provincial politics, Joanne's first husband, Ian Kilbourn successfully prosecuted...

Bryce Mackenzie for the murder of his wife and her lover. Bryce was the father of...

Sage Mackenzie, who grows up and gets a job as a cop, then becomes a lawyer, and gets a job at the firm of...

Zach Shreve, Joanne's new husband. One of the other lawyers at the firm is...

Margot Wright, who is engaged to...

Leland Hunter, who is also one of Zach's clients, and the father of...

Declan, who is in a relationship with Joanne's daughter, Taylor, and who's mother...

Louise Hunter, Leland's ex-wife, is looked after by Sage Mackenzie, who's brother...

Riel Delorme, is Joanne's former student and is now in a secret relationship with Joanne's other daughter, Meika.

And lastley, Cronus, another of Zach's clients, stands accused of killing a cop who is a former co-worker of Sage Mackenzie.

In addition to all of that, there are sub-plots that are left off with no successful resolution (One wonders if Ms. Bowen forgot them in among all the tangled plots lines.)

Who killed Danny Racette? What happened to Ed Mariani investigating the gangs of North Central?

At one point, one character asks when the whole thing became a soap opera. Unfortunately, that is the one sentence that rings true in this book.

Beth Mills says

In Bowen's newest mystery Joanne Kilbourn's growing friendship with a controversial real estate mogul and her lawyer husband's defense of a sleazy slumlord accused of murder are causing friction with family and friends as well as public outcry. When Joanne's home is bombed her life is turned upside down. Was Joanne the target? Her husband? Are there clues buried in the past? Forced into urgent soul-searching--has she drifted away from what is most important over the years?--Joanne tries to keep her family safe while trying to uncover the face and motive behind the violence. This fine series (Kaleidoscope is #13) makes good use of Canada's political and social landscape and deserves to be far better known in the US than it is. If you're not familiar with Bowen, do yourself a favor, go back to her early titles and follow a very interesting woman through a well-written and thought-provoking series.

Toni Osborne says

Book 13, in the Joanne Kilbourn mystery series

From time to time I like to pick up one of the books in this series. I admit I have not been reading them in order, however I feel each one can be equally enjoyed on its own. With great skill of the pen, Ms. Bowen brings us up to date and gives another thread of Joanne' life, her family and friends.

In this latest installment, the political science professor Joanne Kilbourn is looking forward to retirement and spending the summer with her husband Zack and young daughter at their cottage on Lawyer's Bay. While at the cottage and just starting to sample retirement life she receives a call from a city detective to warn them they may be a target, someone has detonated a bomb in their garage destroying part of their city home.

They fear there may be a coincidence, the night before they had dinner with a very controversial individual Leland Hunter, a land developer and one of Jack's biggest clients. Hunter's model project to rejuvenate a slum area in the downtown core is creating many enemies. Blowing up the home of one of the prominent players in the project is just a taste of the tension that is building and a sample of how far the opponents will go.

The story keeps a leisurely tempo all through the drama and focusses mainly on community activism and family ties. I found the plot rather predictable and frustrating at times, we were sidetracked to often by Jo and Zack's drinking and sex activities to a point where it became a boring sub-plot. I found the characters to be a bit bland and Joanne's new role to be ho-hum in comparison to the role she played in the other mysteries and made for TV movies. Hopefully she will soon tire of her new life and get back to her old self.....the vibrant sleuth she has played in the past.

PrairieReader says

I read the first few Joanne Kilbourn books years ago, then picked up again with "The Nesting Dolls". I really disliked all the acquaintance coincidences going on in "Kaleidoscope". It seemed everyone, even subplot characters, were interconnected, which seemed entirely implausible. The developer is marrying Joanne's husband's law partner; the developer's adversary is dating Joanne's daughter; the developer's son has a relationship with Joanne's other daughter; the ex-wife of the developer's caregiver used to work for Joanne's husband; the hostess of the shower is the prosecutor Joanne's husband is up against in a court case . . . the list goes on and on. It really, REALLY ruined the book for me. I had a hard time keeping the characters straight, I found the writing pretentious and am not too eager for the next Joanne Kilbourn installment.

Penny says

Enjoyed the local setting as always, and this entry into the series is much better than the last. However, Bowen seems to be veering quite far from the mystery format - yes, there's a murder but Joanne has pretty much nothing to do with solving it. That's because she's too busy having sex and drinking minutely described cocktails. No time for sleuthing!

Carolyn says

Not my favorite Gail Bowen mystery. Is it just my imagination or is Joanne drinking a lot more these days? Martinis in the afternoon, drinks before dinner, with dinner, before bed....how does she solve any mysteries?

Annette Bower says

Gail Bowen explores the vast differences between those who have and those who don't in Kaleidoscope. There are two opposing views in this novel, one black and one white. If both of the issues remain separate nothing will change but with the blending of the two grey can become the new order.

Joanne has always been on the other side of poor but she has an empathetic approach when she helps the less fortunate. Throughout her life she helped one person at a time. In Kaleidoscope she hopes to influence a whole neighborhood which in the past produced productive citizens but gradually became the poorest and roughest neighborhood in the city. A business man wants to change that. With the help of key people living in the neighborhood and the business man's money and expertise she hopes that the blending of ideals and money will lead to a pleasing shade of grey where everyone benefits.
