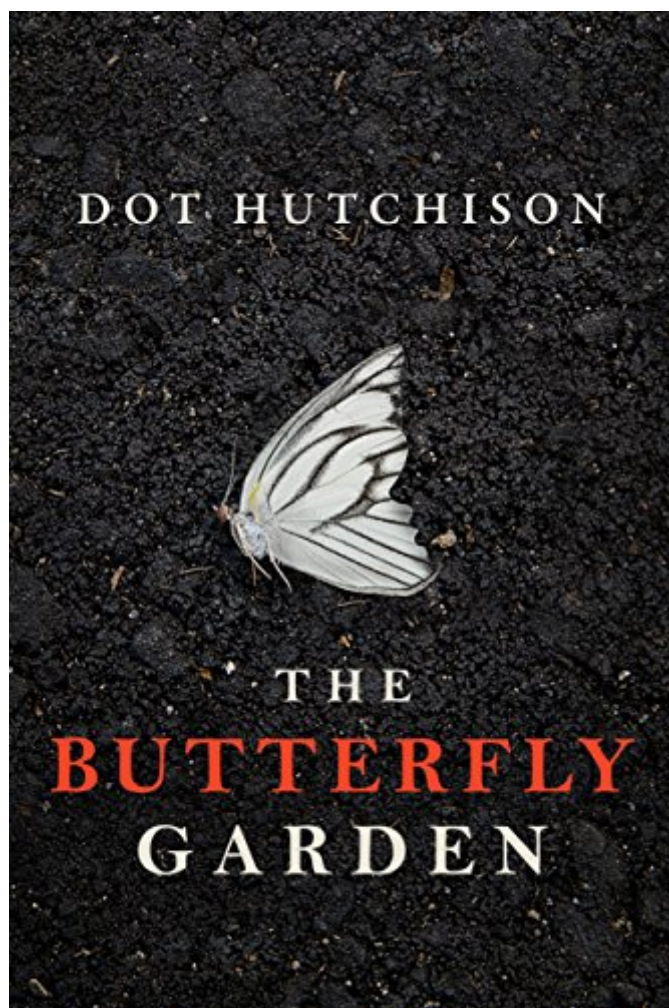


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The Butterfly Garden (The Collector Trilogy Book 1)



Synopsis

Near an isolated mansion lies a beautiful garden. In this garden grow luscious flowers, shady trees, and a collection of precious butterflies – young women who have been kidnapped and intricately tattooed to resemble their namesakes. Overseeing it all is the Gardener, a brutal, twisted man obsessed with capturing and preserving his lovely specimens. When the garden is discovered, a survivor is brought in for questioning. FBI agents Victor Hanoverian and Brandon Eddison are tasked with piecing together one of the most stomach-churning cases of their careers. But the girl, known only as Maya, proves to be a puzzle herself. As her story twists and turns, slowly shedding light on life in the Butterfly Garden, Maya reveals old grudges, new saviors, and horrific tales of a man who'd go to any length to hold beauty captive. But the more she shares, the more the agents have to wonder what she's still hiding.

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Customer Reviews

This review does not contain spoilers, however, I do discuss points included in 's summary description; if you consider those spoilers, avoid this review. :) I read this as my Kindle First selection

for May. The novel contains violence, profanity, sexual violence against minors, pedophilia, and rape (both of minors and adults). The majority of this type of content is non-graphic, but it is very prevalent (rape is often referred to, but is rarely shown 'on-screen.')

Given what the story is, none of the content felt gratuitous. but for those who are triggered by it, or prefer stories without it, avoiding this story might be advisable.

'The Butterfly Garden' is told in alternating first and third-person-limited perspectives: the main character relates her story to FBI agents following her rescue from the Garden. I have mixed feelings about this approach. When used by experienced writers (Rothfuss' 'Name of the Wind' is a good example), a nested story can be very effective. Unfortunately, in 'The Butterfly Garden's' case it ruins much of the suspense: the audience knows the protagonist escapes. From 's summary/blurb, we know most of the other details of what she endured during her captivity. There is little left to surprise us. I found the sections containing the protagonist's backstory to be somewhat needless, and a little long in exposition. The writer's style is competent and accessible, making for a quick read. Not too many clunky sentences, although the dialogue (especially at the beginning) isn't natural. I found the first-person much smoother than the third-person; perhaps if the entire novel were told linearly in first-person, I would have enjoyed it more. The style is engaging enough that I would likely read another of this author's stories to see her improve. The protagonist was somewhat unbelievable, as I found her vocabulary, mannerisms, emotional maturity, and so on to be that of an adult. It takes a lot of suspension of disbelief for me to buy that a child who had her background, also had that level of polish. This seems to be more of a YA trope, and I was surprised to see it in an adult thriller novel. (Her knowledge of classic literature is an example of this, and an author making a heroine just a little too cool.) The side characters were underdeveloped in the third-person sections, although in the first-person bits were better.

While on the subject of suspension of disbelief...I don't expect present-day thrillers to require the level of suspension this one does. It was hard to believe in the setting, both that it could exist (how do you find contractors to build this sort of thing?) and that it was never discovered. Maybe in a futuristic science fiction novel, where things can be a bit surreal this Garden would have been more believable. Your mileage may vary, of course. The pacing was just 'okay' for me. The third person portions tended to exposition, which made those times in the story feel like they moved more slowly. The 'twist' at the ending was unnecessary, without adequate foreshadowing to make it satisfying for the reader.

Bottom line? No two ways about it, this book was weird for me. I can't say I 'liked' it, but I didn't dislike it, either, despite my criticisms above. If allowed half-stars, I would give it 3.5 stars, and I would likely read another of this author's future novels.

I know how hard it must be to write a novel... So, I apologize to the author, but I don't understand the high rating. I basically agree with many of the other one and two star reviews of the book... Most of all that it is very immature and the "twist" that came out of nowhere made absolutely no sense at all. I was fairly entertained by it and it is a very easy read until the end that came out of left field and was just silly. I reread the end 3 times to make sure I was reading it correctly because it made so little sense.

Spoilers follow: This book is all hype and let down. I had such high hopes for this story because the premise is very interesting but it fell short in so many areas. The first problem is the setting; It's hard to picture the "butterflies" (The kidnapped girls) being kept in some kind of enormous greenhouse (big enough to hold a pond for swimming, a waterfall, a cliff, a glorious garden, a kitchen, rooms, hallways, essentially an entire compound) inside an even bigger greenhouse on the killer's private house grounds. Such a colossal structure wouldn't slip by prying eyes for the nearly 30 years that the Gardener has been abducting girls. It's even harder to imagine over 20 girls being kept against their wills in this place with only 3 abductors. 20 against 3. The girls have access to an entire stocked kitchen with knives and one girl is allowed to carry a small pair of cross stitch scissors. The girls, not a single one, never seize the opportunity to kill the Gardener or his son, even with these tools available at their disposal. You're led to believe that the survivor, Maya, may or may not be on the right side but then she starts singing like a canary right after that and the mystery is lost. I wanted to abandon this book a few times but I didn't because I wanted to see how it ended. Almost the ENTIRE book foreshadows some big shocking revelation and escape at the end that just ends up being lackluster and not believable at all. Maya was protecting her former roommate who was the one butterfly who had escaped 10 years prior, pregnant with the Gardener's child. What are the odds? And the roommate never went to authorities because she wanted to keep the killer's baby (which was conceived by rape). There were women being beaten, tortured and raped almost daily. She knew this and never told the police because of her baby? I also really dislike how apathetic Maya's character is portrayed. She literally doesn't care about anything at all. She's being put through hell and doesn't care. And it's not character development. She never cares. She also takes such great care to not let the detectives find out her real name and this is never properly explained why. She was a runaway. That's all. The author seemed to be more concerned with reminding the reader every few pages that a butterfly was being raped or beaten by the Gardener and his son instead of moving the story forward at an even pace. The fact that the only time Maya shows any emotion is when she's developing affections for the Gardener's other son, Desmond (who discovers

the truth and doesn't go to the police until 6 months later) is infuriating. And finally, the way it all comes tumbling down. Avery, the Gardener's son and fellow psychopath, kidnaps, rapes, and brings a 12 year old girl to the garden and suddenly, everyone involved in these crimes has an epiphany that the whole thing, what they're doing, is wrong. Why? There's a 4 year difference between being 12 and 16. It's okay, in their minds, to abduct and rape a 16 year old girl but not one who is 12 years old. What little story there was moved so slowly and it made this book very drawn out. With as many pages as this book occupies, not a whole lot happens that is in any way eventful.

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