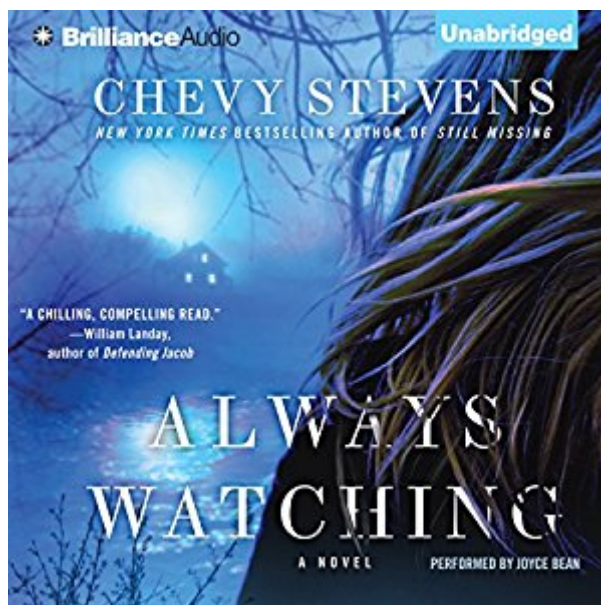


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# Always Watching



## Synopsis

She helps people put their demons to rest. But she has a few of her own.... In the lockdown ward of a psychiatric hospital, Dr. Nadine Lavoie is in her element. She has the tools to help people, and she has the desire: Healing broken families is what she lives for. But Nadine doesn't want to look too closely at her own past because there are whole chunks of her life that are black holes. It takes all her willpower to tamp down her recurrent claustrophobia, and her daughter, Lisa, is a runaway who has been on the streets for seven years. When a distraught woman, Heather Simeon, is brought into the Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit after a suicide attempt, Nadine gently coaxes her story out of her - and learns of some troubling parallels to her own life. Digging deeper, Nadine is forced to confront her traumatic childhood and the damage that began when she and her brother were brought by their mother to a remote commune on Vancouver Island. What happened to Nadine? Why was their family destroyed? And why does the name of the group's leader, Aaron Quinn, provoke complex feelings of terror in Nadine even today? Then the unthinkable happens, and Nadine realizes that danger is closer to home than she ever imagined. She has no choice but to face what terrifies her the most...and fight back. Sometimes you can leave the past, but you can never escape. Told with the trademark powerful storytelling that has had critics praising her work as "gripping" (Kirkus Reviews), "jaw-dropping" (Publishers Weekly), and "crackling with suspense" (People), *Always Watching* shows why Chevy Stevens is one of the most mesmerizing new talents of our day.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book was exhausting in its complexity of characters. The good writing compelled me to stay with it to the end to discover some interesting surprises at the end. Dr. Nadine Lavoie is a psychiatrist wallowing in guilt. She has guilt feelings about daughter Lisa, who is living on the street somewhere. She feels guilty about her druggie mom who she could not help. She feels guilty about the death of Heather, one of her patients. This is a lot of guilt for a psychiatrist. A lot of the guilt involves repressed memories of child sexual abuse. Not to be left out, psychiatrist brother Robbie feels guilty for neglecting his sister (before she was a psychiatrist). Mary feels guilty about her earlier life in a cult commune. Aaron, a cult leader feels guilty, but that is OK, because he is guilty (not a spoiler). Daniel feels guilty about dead wife and former psychiatric patient Heather. Around page 311 there is a fire at a cult center where lots of innocent people die, but few guilty ones. I have a feeling I may have reached a conclusion. But no, we have 26 more pages to discover the various ways the surviving guilt ridden people attempt to resolve their guilt. I can't recall a character that was not constantly wallowing in guilt. There may have been a few of Nadine's patients that were not, but they were institutionalized with other problems. I found it difficult to believe that with all the guilt Nadine exhibited she could ethically fulfill the demands of her profession regarding patients. The preponderant theme of pervasive guilt made this a slow moving story.

This is the second book I've read by Chevy Stevens and I've enjoyed both of them immensely. She's excellent at creating atmosphere and tension, and it's clear she did her research in this one, which revolves around a cult. The end felt a bit rushed, but don't let that stop you from reading it. It's well worth it.

I love Nadine and enjoyed getting to read about her story after reading about her briefly in two other books. She's the kind of woman anyone would look up to and admire, but it was great to read about her own complex life and how she got there. I was so involved in this book that of course there were characters I hated, but it's supposed to be that way. It was full of moments that ranged from heart breaking to joyful, and the ending was almost exactly what I had hoped for. I was able to predict one of the biggest twists that involved the daughter, but I did have two theories, so it wasn't overly predictable. Another Chevy Stevens book I thoroughly enjoy and I'm eager to read more!

When psychiatrist Nadine Lavoie begins working with a new patient at the hospital, something suddenly tugs at her memories. As Heather describes the center where she was living for awhile, and mentions the name of the leader, Aaron Quinn, Nadine is catapulted back to a time in her own

past when she lived in a commune run by the same man. In flashbacks, we learn more about Nadine's childhood and the experiences that have left their mark. But it is not until a tragic event involving Heather, that Nadine actively begins trying to remember what might have happened to her as a child. And what might be happening to others. Meanwhile, Nadine's daughter Lisa is living on the streets, using drugs, and resisting any and all efforts for help. Something about the extreme rage coming from her daughter whenever she sees her is like a twist of the knife, but also something more. Why is Nadine unable to help her own daughter? What events have disrupted Nadine's life to the extent that she now suffers from claustrophobia and panic attacks? And what might be beneath the surface and causing Lisa to lash out at everyone? Not a typical mystery, *Always Watching* is the story of one woman's journey toward uncovering the secrets of her past and finding a way to reconnect with her daughter. As in "physician heal thyself," Nadine is trying to do just that. From the streets of Victoria to Shawnigan, the small town where the old commune existed, Nadine searches for answers...and for witnesses. Will she find them before Aaron gets his clutches into her own vulnerable daughter? While the suspense is of a different kind, I found it captivating. As a retired social worker, I could relate to the "helper" who encounters victims that are unwilling or unable to report what is happening to them. I also connect with how one's own problems add to one's ability to empathize, but sometimes intrude on the actual helping. Another unique feature to this story: the psychiatrist who is the central character in this book was a secondary one in the previous two books by this author: *Still Missing* and *Never Knowing*. The settings and characters were beautifully drawn and shown to the reader in a way that brought me into the time and place of the story. Because the pace was slow, with secrets revealed gradually throughout most of the story, I was pleasantly surprised when the pace quickened, with the last few chapters intensely leading to the final denouement. While I was leaning toward four stars, I am now awarding this one 4.5 stars. This is a book for those who enjoy stories about secrets, family dynamics, and family dysfunction.

This book is more than the usual crime novel - it's an elaborate tapestry with many interwoven storylines. The protagonist, a female psychiatrist, is very sympathetic and human, struggling with many of the issues that we all face in life. (Am I helping this person or harming them? Am I a good enough parent? Am I successful at my profession or just a fraud? Is there life after death? How did I not see that this person close to me was bad? How could I not see that this person close to me needed help? etc.) There's an entire panoply of interesting characters, drawn in various shades of moral white, grey and black. The romantic subplot isn't very satisfying in my opinion, but the details

about the commune / cult were so fascinating that I read this book in one sitting - and that's saying something, because it's a nice long novel. Would've been a bargain at twice the price. Well done, Ms. Stevens!

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