

Armstrong, Kelley. *The Gathering*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 2011.

Rural Ontario-based writer Kelley Armstrong is the author of over 15 novels, mostly fantasy, including the #1 *New York Times* and *Globe and Mail* bestselling *Darkest Powers* young adult urban fantasy trilogy. *The Gathering* is the first in her new *Darkness Rising* trilogy, a sequel series to *Darkest Powers*, and is interrelated but with a new set of characters.

Sixteen-year-old Maya Delaney lives in Salmon Creek, a small Vancouver Island town of less than two-hundred people which exists solely to serve the needs of a medical research facility owned by the St. Cloud Corporation. In fact, the St. Cloud Corporation owns the entire town including homes, the school and other world-class facilities that have been built for its resident employees and their families. Myah has an affinity for animals and healing and enjoys spending time in the wildlife rehabilitation centre her father runs as the town's park ranger. Adopted from birth from parents of an unknown First Nations background, Maya has a generally happy life and loving and responsible parents but is haunted by the bizarre drowning death of her best friend Serena, the captain of the swim team, a year previous.

Myah's life, and of the town's close-knit residents, changes drastically after a reporter arrives and begins to ask questions about the St. Cloud Corporation and life in Salmon Creek. Myah is led to believe that this reporter may have information on Serena's mysterious death. Other strange occurrences - mountain lions gathering around her home, the appearance of the town's new 'bad boy' Rafe Martinez, and being called a 'witch' during a visit to a Nanaimo tattoo shop - cause Myah to question who she is and where she comes from.

The Gathering is a quick, easy read and a good start to what looks like will be another intriguing trilogy. The characters are believable and of note is the involvement of Maya's likeable parents in her life which is so often missing from other books in this genre. A Native Canadian protagonist and a unique Canadian setting also make for interesting reading as does the move beyond vampires and werewolves. Do not expect a neat and tidy ending; this trilogy is structured as one story rather than three separate stand-alone volumes and leaves you wanting more. Readers will have to wait, however, until April 2012 when the second book in the series, currently titled *The Calling*, is set to release.

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