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Coates, Deborah. Wide Open

Coates' novel, likely the first in a new urban fantasy series, introduces Sgt. Hallie Michaels. Hallie has seen ghosts ever since she died for seven minutes following an insurgent attack in Afghanistan. Now she has returned home to South Dakota on a ten-day leave to attend the funeral of her younger sister Dell. But Hallie quickly becomes convinced that Dell's death, considered by many to be suicide, was actually murder. She finds an unlikely ally in local deputy Boyd Davies, whose life-long precognitive dreams predispose him to believing in Hallie's ghosts. They quickly zero in on Dell's former employer Uku-Weber, a weather research firm whose new technology seems to rely on forces more arcane than meteorological science. It becomes obvious that Dell knew more about the truth than was healthy and Hallie and Boyd must find a way to take down the dangerous, magic-using Martin Weber before his body count rises.

Hallie—a brash, profanity-prone, emotionally damaged, but appealing character—and Boyd, equally emotionally damaged in his own way but much more the Boy-Scout type—make an engaging pair. Some slight awkwardness in writing style does not much detract from the characters, interesting plot, and well-drawn setting.

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