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An Innocent Client: Joe Dillard, Book 1



Synopsis

A preacher is found brutally murdered in a Tennessee motel room. A beautiful, mysterious young girl is accused. In this Mystery Readers International finalist for "Best Debut Mystery" criminal defense lawyer Joe Dillard has become jaded over the years as he's tried to balance his career against his conscience. Savvy but cynical, Dillard wants to quit doing criminal defense, but he can't resist the chance to represent someone who might actually be innocent. His drug-addicted sister has just been released from prison and his mother is succumbing to Alzheimer's, but Dillard's commitment to the case never wavers despite the personal troubles and professional demands that threaten to destroy him. Smart and sophisticated, with a plot twist that will leave you shaking your head in wonder, *An Innocent Client* - the first in the acclaimed Joe Dillard series - will also leave you wanting more.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really really enjoyed this book. First of all, I really liked the way the author went between first and third person. It was a great way to move the book along. I liked that you felt a kind of connection to the character when he was front and center and then the watching view when it was the other characters. Kind of like real life, you know what is going on in your head, you are only watching the rest!!! I have to admit, using the old "former soldier" as the main character has been done over and over, I know it gives the author a way to have the character handle physical problems that come along, that most of us could not handle. I didn't mind that. I also saw the end coming, well most of it

anyway, I didn't mind that. I loved that the character loved his wife and kids, had a family, it just seemed, normal. I liked that as an adult, he was doing normal kind of soul searching, like have I made the right decisions in my life? Anyway, I laughed and I was surprised and I just really, really, liked this book. I see the author has a new one coming out in paper in June, I'm surprised they have not picked him up for a hardback yet, but I won't be surprised if that happens on his third. Again, great debut.

AN INNOCENT CLIENT is an impressive legal thriller debut. If you enjoy the work of John Grisham, you might like this one too, since it's written in a similar style. This novel takes place in rural Tennessee, and stars Joe Dillard, a burnt out criminal defense lawyer who hopes to represent at least one innocent client before he retires. When the novel opens, he is seemingly handed such a client, an 18-year old waitress at a strip club who is accused of murdering a fundamentalist preacher. AN INNOCENT CLIENT has a lot of good qualities. Author Pratt, an ex-attorney himself, does a superb job with all the courtroom scenes. The prose in this book is quite polished (truly exceptional for a first effort), and the main character is easy to root for. Pratt also does a good job structuring the plot, which sustained my interest until the very end. If this novel has a downside, I would say it's the rather superficial characterization. Like John Grisham, author Pratt tends to see things in black-and-white, moralistic terms. As a result, most of the supporting characters in this novel are little more than colorful caricatures of one sort or another. The villains in particular are outrageously corrupt and evil, which makes the story more corny than realistic in many spots. Overall, though, AN INNOCENT CLIENT is an entertaining debut, and Grisham fans should definitely give it a try. This is apparently the first in a series, and I look forward to future installments.

This is my first Scott Pratt book and I enjoyed it very much. The story itself is an interesting one and the protagonist, Joe Dillard, is extremely likable. I also liked that he is happily married with a family, something you don't often see in this kind of book. It is told alternatively in the first person by Dillard and the third person for the rest of the story. I have read comparisons of Scott Pratt to John Grisham, but I would disagree. I would compare him to Harlan Coban, which is a compliment. The characters are likable and there is enough humor to offset some of the more tragic aspects of the story. The book moves along quickly, always keeping your interest and has a very satisfactory ending. I would highly recommend it and look forward to reading more of his books.

An innocent client on trial for murder can only happen in one of two ways: either the investigators

are acting in good faith on bad or incomplete information, or they are acting in bad faith. This novel is about investigators who act in bad faith. This is not a spoiler. The author lets you know this early on. As such, there's not much thrill in this thriller. You're rooting for the client, not because you know whether or not she's innocent, but because you can see she's being railroaded by a corrupt prosecutor and one of the most ridiculously corrupt investigators imaginable. Good legal thrillers rely on the facts of the cases to build the necessary suspense. This novel does not. In fact, there's not much suspense at all. Not only are we unsure who the killer is until 80 percent of the way in, we don't really care that much and are unimpressed when the truth is finally disclosed. I've mentioned this in reviews of other novels in the Joe Dillard series: Joe Dillard is a thug who commits an indefensible felony and gets away with it clean. You understand why he did it. Hey, you might even sympathize. But you can't excuse it, as this novel pretty much does. He goes on to commit morally defensible but legally indefensible felonies in the second and third novels as well. It doesn't sit well with this reader. This isn't a bad novel. It moves along at a nice pace. Pratt does a good job of connecting readers with the Dillard character. But Pratt puts Joe Dillard up against a straw man of an opponent. You have such a profound disrespect for the prosecutor and the investigator that it's like watching the New England Patriots take on a football team at a high school for the disabled. If you must start a series from the beginning, *An Innocent Client* is worth the time investment. But for me, the Joe Dillard series doesn't hit its stride until the third novel, *Injustice For All*. You would do well to start there.

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