



# Innocent Monster

*Reed Farrel Coleman*

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## **Innocent Monster** Reed Farrel Coleman

Seven years have passed since the brutal murder that tore Moe Prager's family apart and it's been six years since Moe's brushed the dust off his PI license. But when his estranged daughter Sarah comes to him with a request he cannot refuse, Moe takes a deep breath and plunges back into the icy, opaque waters of secrets and lies. Sashi Bluntstone, an eleven-year-old art prodigy and daughter of Sarah's dearest childhood friend, has been abducted. Three weeks into the investigation, the cops have gotten nowhere and the parents have gotten desperate. Desperation, the door through which Moe Prager always enters, swings wide open. Just as in Sashi's paintings, there's much more to the case than one can see at a glance.

With the help of an ex-football star, Moe stumbles around the fringes of the New York art scene, trying to get a handle on where the art stops and the commerce begins. Much to Moe's surprise and disgust, he discovers that Sashi is, on the one hand, revered as a cash cow and, on the other, reviled as a fraud and a joke. Suspects abound beyond the usual predators and pedophiles, for it is those closest to Sashi in life who have the most to gain from her death. Cruel ironies lurk around every corner, beneath every painting, and behind every door. Almost nothing is what it seems.

Beware the innocent monster, for it need not hide itself and it lives closely among us: sometimes as close as the mirror.

Reed Farrel Coleman's mysteries starring Moe Prager have won or been nominated for many of the crime fiction world's biggest awards, including the Edgar, the Shamus, the Barry, and the Anthony. The Moe Prager mysteries were named as part of Maureen Corrigan's Best Books of 2009.

## **Innocent Monster Details**

Date : Published November 2nd 2010 by Tyrus Books (first published September 2nd 2010)

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Author : Reed Farrel Coleman

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# From Reader Review Innocent Monster for online ebook

## Tony Rampling says

One of the best!! "The biggest mysteries in our genre are why Reed Coleman isn't already huge, and why Moe Prager isn't already an icon."—Lee Child

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## Philip says

From the front pages of the book I somehow got the impression that this was actually the sixth novel about Moe Prager, yet the first part of the book seemed to be introducing him for the very first time. Which seemed odd to me but would have been fine except that it seemed to take a really long time to finish the introduction and get into the story.

Once things finally got underway, this novel seemed like a pretty stereotypical detective novel to me, even though I don't really read many in the genre. It still fit a lot of the style and whatnot that I was kinda expecting. Which isn't inherently good or bad, just noticeable.

Moe Prager is an amusing fellow. I rather enjoyed him. Briefly thinking of the many books I've read, I realized that very few of them have main characters who are near as old as Moe. It really didn't affect much, but occasionally I was reminded that he was older than I was defaulting to and for the most part it was kinda a pleasant surprise as it wasn't the norm.

So, in much the same way that I really liked the Maltese Falcon basically because Sam Spade was fun and the entire story consisted of him doing stuff, I liked this one for the same reason. I like reading about characters I like and Moe, while not the most round/complex/developed/whathaveyou character ever, was fun to read about.

As far as the rest of the story, it wasn't particularly noteworthy. Some of the characters were definitely unusual so that was good. The mystery/plot wasn't great. I felt like the novel really didn't do a good job making me care about the mystery at all. I suppose Moe didn't really either, and was only doing it for Sarah, but I didn't really care too much about Sarah, either, so... yeah... not perfect. I had no idea who did it/what happened until it was explained, but then thinking back, I felt like there really weren't enough hints for me to have figured it out before Moe did, though maybe I forgot something. And I guess that's not all bad, as it equally annoys me when I figure something out long before the main character(s), but at the same time it continued to make me feel uninvolved with the mystery/story.

Perhaps the part that I liked most was the conclusion to the main plot, so spoilers: (view spoiler)

While not a waste of a few hours of my life, nothing extraordinary or even particularly noteworthy. While I enjoyed Moe Prager, there wasn't enough to the rest of the novel to make me particularly interested in buying more of the series.

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## Vicky says

Moe Praeger is back after seven years. His wife, Katy, is dead, murdered in front of him and his daughter, Sarah, has not spoken to him since. All the secrets, through all the years, finally caught up with him. But Sarah calls him one day and needs Moe to return to his P.I. days. Her friend, Candy, has a daughter, Sashi, who is missing. Sashi is an artistic genius and has been since the age of four. Sashi has supported her parents and they have become used to her art bringing in the cash. Moe quickly discovers there are several people who would love to see Sashi disappear off the face of the earth, including her extremely wealthy patrons, who know a dead artist is worth more than a live artist. Moe knows secrets can kill, so he is determined to uncover the facts and find Sashi to bring Sarah back to him. What he uncovers is more sadness. This book is filled with elegant and graceful writing with passages that will stop you in your tracks to re-read them. Another fine entry in the Moe Praeger series; long may Reed Farrel Coleman write them.

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## Rogue Reader says

The sixth Moe Prager mystery, *Innocent Monster*, is my first and I'm glad to discover a new series set in New York and the boroughs. Moe's the protag, an ex-cop, ex-PI, who's bored stiff with the wine shops he owns with his brother and is pulled back into a case by his daughter Sarah. It's a good, straight forward mystery centered on the disappearance of a child painter-prodigy that is in some ways reminiscent of the Jon Benet Ramsey case.

Reed Farrel Coleman's credentials are impressive. He's the former executive Vice President of Mystery Writers of America, a three time winner of the Shamus Award for Best Detective Novel of the Year, received the Barry and Anthony Awards and has been nominated for several Edgars. I'll look for Coleman's earlier Moe Prager mysteries and also read his short stories in *Akashic's Wall Street Noir* and *Brooklyn Noir* 3.

*-Ashland Mystery*

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## Orest Stelmach says

Moe Prager investigates the disappearance of an art prodigy in Brooklyn.

Former cop and private investigator Moe Prager prefers to deal in wine rather than crime these days, but he's lured back onto the streets by his daughter to take on another case. He's motivated by his relationship with his daughter, who is a close friend of the missing child's mother.

The narrative hums through gritty Brooklyn, but it's Moe's soulful voice that propels the reader forward. A wide range of authentic characters are effectively introduced, from thugs to intellectuals. The mystery of the child's abduction is an engrossing puzzler. Some readers may be put off that a child has been put in danger, but those who aren't will be rewarded with elite prose. Mr. Coleman wastes words like his protagonist wastes fine wine.

Conclusion: Move over, Scudder.

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## **dOnnabud lewis says**

An intensely twisted plot with a shocking conclusion; a great read!

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## **Kathleen Hagen says**

Innocent Monsters, by Reed Farrell Coleman, B-plus, Narrated by Andy Caploe, produced by audible inc. downloaded from audible.com.

Seven years have passed since the brutal murder that tore Moe Prager's family apart and it's been six years since Moe's brushed the dust off his PI license. But when his estranged daughter Sarah comes to him with a request he cannot refuse, Moe takes a deep breath and plunges back into the icy, opaque waters of secrets and lies. Sashi Bluntstone, an eleven-year-old art prodigy and daughter of Sarah's dearest childhood friend, has been abducted. Three weeks into the investigation, the cops have gotten nowhere and the parents have gotten desperate. Desperation, the door through which Moe Prager always enters, swings wide open. Just as in Sashi's paintings, there's much more to the case than one can see at a glance. With the help of an ex-football star, Moe stumbles around the fringes of the New York art scene, trying to get a handle on where the art stops and the commerce begins. Much to Moe's surprise and disgust, he discovers that Sashi is, on the one hand, revered as a cash cow and, on the other, reviled as a fraud and a joke. Suspects abound beyond the usual predators and pedophiles, for it is those closest to Sashi in life who have the most to gain from her death. Cruel ironies lurk around every corner, beneath every painting, and behind every door. Almost nothing is what it seems. Beware the innocent monster, for it need not hide itself and it lives closely among us: sometimes as close as the mirror. Reed Farrel Coleman's mysteries starring Moe Prager have won or been nominated for many of the crime fiction world's biggest awards, including the Edgar, the Shamus, the Barry, and the Anthony. The Moe Prager mysteries were named as part of Maureen Corrigan's Best Books of 2009.

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## **Dan says**

Moe Prager is a wreck of a man. He and his daughter are estranged due to an incident that killed his wife a few years back. He gave up being a private investigator and owns a wine store with his brother. But when his daughter calls and asks him to take on a case of a missing 11-year old girl that is also an art prodigy and the daughter of a family friend. He takes the case only if to get back on speaking terms with his daughter. When he starts probing, secrets are exposed and Moe just wants out.

This is the first of the Moe Prager stories that I have read and won't be the last. Moe is no super hero, but an intelligent man that has had a hard life. Some say he is pathetic, I just think he's the kind of protagonist that makes this mystery interesting. Without revealing a lot, I didn't see what would happen next with the main plot, but figured where some of the sub-plots were heading. Now off to check out more of the Moe Prager books.

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## **LJ says**

First Sentence: Kathy's blood was no longer fresh on my hands and after 9/11 people seemed to stop taking notice.

It has been six years since Moe worked his last case; the case that created an estrangement from his daughter, Sarah. When Sarah asks him to find 11-year-old Sashi Bluntstone, an art prodigy who has been missing for three weeks, he can't refuse her. What he didn't expect were the dark secrets and betrayals hidden in that world of apparent refinement.

Coleman's background in philosophy and poetry are clearly reflected in his writing. The story's opening conveys the mood of the story while providing back-story to new readers. Achieving both, without bogging down the story's beginning, is only one example of Coleman's talent. His style and imagery is one which both tells a good story, but makes you stop and think about what he's saying..."There are lies to hate and lies to adore. Even now, seeing it clearly maybe for the very first time, Coney Island was a lie I adored."

The strong sense of place nearly becomes extra character and the dialogue brings the characters to life. Moe is a character I particularly like. He is not perfect, has known and contributed to tragedy, is definitely not a super-PI, but he is intelligent, determined and has a wry sense of humor. He has an overriding morality and ethical core along with a certain vulnerability. It is for others who are vulnerable that he does his job; not for the money.

The book is very well plotted and engrossing. Exposing the dark side of the art world is fascinating as is the reminder that we should all "Beware the innocent monster" as the one we don't suspect is the one who is often most dangerous.

Although there is certainly a case to be solved, the story is very much about Moe. Many of the issues in his life are, if not resolved, at least confronted, acknowledged and accepted. This feels to be a pivotal book in a series one should read in order from the beginning. I look forward to seeing where the series goes from here.

INNOCENT MONSTER (PI-Moe Prager-New York-Cont) – VG

Coleman, Reed Farrel – 6th in series

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## **Lynn says**

It's been a couple of years since I read a Moe Prager mystery and I really enjoyed this one. Moe is the older and no wiser, but I liked him more than ever. I may have to try Coleman's other series as well.

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## **Nancy says**

Though long retired from PI work and occupied with operating several successful family wine stores, Moe Prager takes on a case as a favor to his daughter from whom is is somewhat estranged.

As in other Moe Prager books, threads of his personal life are intertwined with a mystery and the core mystery is solved but not everyone lives happily ever after.

This is a fast paced story that will hold your interest until the last page.

Innocent Monster is part of a series well worth reading. Unlike other books in the detective genre, it really makes a difference if read you read the series in order. At a very minimum, read the first one, Walking the Perfect Square, before reading Innocent Monster.

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## **J.R. says**

Moe Prager, an aging former cop, retired private detective and now co-owner of a chain of wine stores, seizes a chance at redemption when his daughter from whom he's been estranged for seven years asks him to help find the missing daughter of a friend.

Sashi Bluntstone, an 11-year-old art prodigy, has been missing for nearly a month and Moe is leery of the prospects of finding her. Still his eagerness to have Sarah back in his life trumps such mundane concerns.

The job plunges Prager into a maelstrom populated with a host of repugnant characters consumed by greed for which they are willing to sacrifice an innocent child whose only joy it soon becomes apparent has been linked to a dog and a secret friend. Moe's investigation will leave him bruised, abused and threatened in more than one sense.

Coleman is a consummate craftsman. Be prepared for a thrilling ride with a multitude of surprises along the way.

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## **Katherine says**

\*3.5 stars.

I didn't like this book as much as the previous ones in the series. Way too much rehash of the previous volumes and a few really obvious plot points. It had its merits, but paled when compared to the earlier books. Below--a couple quotations I appreciated:

"...a voice called to me from somewhere beyond the womb of my stupor" (3).

"Sixty might be the new forty, but there was no such thing as the new dead" (246).

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## **Charles Fischer says**

The first in the series that I read, and, honestly, I couldn't find a single thing to dislike about it. Strong all around - as these type of PI books go. I'll have to read more.

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## **Logan says**

I really, really enjoyed this book. I purchased it after another book was recommended for me on Amazon, and I just wasn't interested in that book, but THIS one was in the related titles. I have been looking for a good replacement for Lehane's Kenzie and Gennaro books, and had yet to find such well done mysteries again. I haven't read anything else by Coleman yet, but based off of this introduction to the Moe Prager universe, I think I've got a (potential) live one. And for the first time ever, I DID NOT SEE THE REVEAL COMING, AT ALL. I didn't think it could be done! So, thanks for writing a book that doesn't drop too many clues, yet doesn't take the reader off on bizarre tangents or slap you repeatedly with red herrings. A solid, exciting, well written story with a multifaceted, believable character. Spot fucking on.

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