



## An Innocent Client

*Scott Pratt*

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## **An Innocent Client** Scott Pratt

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.

"Pratt's richly developed characters are vivid and believable, especially the strong Southern women who fight their male-dominated culture from behind a facade of vulnerability in this brilliantly executed debut." -- Publisher's Weekly.

"It's Scott Turow and Grisham... The opening chapter is maybe the most compelling I've read in a decade." -- Ken Bruen.

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 begging for more.

## **An Innocent Client Details**

Date : Published October 23rd 2012 by Phoenix Publishing (first published November 4th 2008)

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Author : Scott Pratt

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# From Reader Review An Innocent Client for online ebook

## Dianne says

Justice is in the eye of the beholder. When burned out defense attorney, Joe Dillard was made a monetary offer he could hardly refuse, he may have known better, he may have had an idea of the real events of the night the zealot preacher was killed, but he also knew his job was to defend the accused murderer.

Angel was a beautiful, young waitress at a strip bar run by a business savvy Southern Belle who knew how to twist people around her bejeweled fingers, or if necessary, load their coffers of cooperation with the almighty dollar. Accused of a vicious murder, Angel hardly fits the MO of a sadistic killer and she softly denies the crime, but evidence says otherwise and it is up to Joe to place just one thread of doubt in the jury's minds, all while standing before a cantankerous judge with a grudge against him.

If that isn't enough, his drug-addicted sister has darkened his doorstep long enough to steal from him, his long-suffering mother is declining and the son of the preacher man has it out for him. And, as they say, the plot thickens...with Joe caught up in a stew of murder, mystery and mayhem with a side of sweet tea and Southern Charm.

Entertaining, easy to follow and to be honest, easy to pass my personal verdict in the case, Scott Pratt's **AN INNOCENT CLIENT** is still one heck of a ride from start to finish with all of the right twists, surprises and revelations, as well as a few side shockers, to boot!

Fabulous character development, with Joe's character being the most conflicted and realistic, I have to say, that, yes, in the end justice was served and I'm pretty sure Joe's conscience was as clear as a defense attorney's can get!

Not too dark, not too much, entertaining, with a steady pace, I'm definitely looking into more reading from Scott Pratt, starring attorney Joe Dillard!

Series: Joe Dillard - Book 1

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## Vicki Willis says

This was a legal mystery about a defense lawyer who wanted out of the business. Due to his personal obligations he needed to work for another year before getting out. He lands a high paying case that takes him on a roller coaster ride through the book.

The beginning of the book did not impress me. It was just icky and offensive the way the author wrote the characters. It did improve and I became invested in the story. I liked how the author set up the side characters

and can see how they will fit into future books. I also liked the main character.

The story was a bit stereotypic and predictable, but I was interested in finding out the outcome. The ending was what I expected, but did wrap up the storyline. There were a few side storylines that also worked with the happenings and goings on. You did get the feel for what that job must be like.

Overall, a good read.

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## **Joe says**

### **DOESN'T WORK AT ALL**

This is the first in the Joe Dillard series. An Innocent Client is billed as a legal thriller and comes up woefully short - filled with one-dimensional cardboard characters, stilted dialogue and an extraordinarily simplistic plot. There is nothing original here let alone engaging.

Dillard is a defense attorney in Tennessee, who has become more than jaded with, and definitely tired of his job. There are political and border-line incompetent judges, who all seem to hold a grudge against Joe, continually assigning him the most evil of clients to defend – they're all on or destined for death row – tasks which Joe reluctantly accepts. There's a "bad cop" who will bend any and all rules to put scumbags behind bars and an incompetent, and again, political DA. Joe of course is in the middle of all this, Don Quixote-like, fighting the good fight.

On the personal side, Joe has a mother fighting Alzheimer's, a drug addicted sister and a family of his own, complete with a cute dog – rescued from a shelter of course – and a loving wife, whom Joe treats like a door-mat – which I believe is an unintentional character flaw. Joe is also haunted by his past. He's an Army Ranger – suffering from a mild case of PTSD – from his service in Grenada.

At the center of all this is Joe's new client, a waitress at a strip joint accused of murdering a preacher, who was a patron of said establishment – the client's name – Angel Christian. I kid you not. Joe's job is to defend her. The reader's task – to keep a straight face.

The case, the trial, the plot, the twists and turns – nothing works here. Pass on this one.

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## **Ed says**

Entertaining book #1 in a series about Tennessee lawyer Joe Dillard and his efforts defending a young woman of murder and mutilation of a preacher. In addition to dealing with a crooked detective and politically motivated prosecutor, Dillard has to protect himself and his family from the deceased preacher's son, a police officer in another town. Not quite up to the legal literary standards of John Grisham or David Ellis, Scott Pratt has written an excellent book #1 with good characters, action, legal strategy and a twist ending. Highly recommended.

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## **Jean says**

This book is book one in the Joe Dillard Series. Joe is a cynical burned out defense attorney who keeps

saying he will quit law in a year. All he wants is one innocent client.

The story takes place in rural Tennessee. A preacher is murdered after a visit to a strip club. The club owner hires Dillard to defend the club waitress, Angel Christian, who has been charged with the murder. Dillard's personal life is in chaos, but he carries on with the defense.

The book is well written. I understand this is Pratt's first book. For a debut book this is an excellent and well-crafted story. The portrayal of a cynical burned out defense attorney is realistic. The characters are well developed and are believable. Pratt has created a male-dominated southern culture for the story. The plot has some twists and turns and there is enough action as well as suspenseful courtroom drama to keep the reader's attention. I did note that Pratt has created several strong women that are key to the story.

Tim Campbell does an excellent job narrating the story. Campbell is an opera singer, actor, voice over artist and audiobook narrator.

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### **Laura says**

This was a good, light read. The story moved along at a good clip which I really like. I appreciated the character development of the main character and his sister. I gave it 3 stars instead of 4 because while it was intriguing and I definitely enjoyed it - I do recommend it - I didn't lie awake nights wondering what was happening with the characters as I do with fiction I consider exceptionally compelling.

If you like a fast paced courtroom drama with relatable characters and good action you'll like this book.

The book was told in part from the first person point of view of the protagonist and in part from the third person point of view of other characters, in particular, a lady who hired the main character to defend a murder suspect.

My only criticism of the writing would be that while I found the main character's voice/thoughts very realistic, the character who hired him didn't always seem realistic to me. Things she said and thought both seemed "off" to me at times. But that was a very small part of the book.

Overall, great, fast paced enjoyable read.

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### **Ray Cerrone says**

I stumbled onto Scott Pratt through the Kindle Owners Lending Library. This is a feature provided to kindle readers that allows for one book per month at no charge.

Pratt writes a books that moves at the pace of a John Grisham novel, but tells multiple stories from the life an an attorney at one time. Most Grisham novels, focus on one case while Pratt focuses on many cases.

Pratts books also develops the character in a manner that allows the reader to understand the perspective of the attorney in the story.

I found this book to be a relaxing read. It was good enough for me that I purchased the next book in the series and am well on my way to enjoying that as well.

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### **Eric\_W says**

Joe Dillard has had it with the justice system. "The whole system is crazy. For over ten years, I've been traveling every day to this bizarre world of lies and deceit. There's no honor in it anywhere. It's all a sick game, and the people who win the most are the ones who lie the best. They call it the criminal *justice* system???. What a crock. Defendants lie and cheat, police officers lie and cheat, prosecutors lie and cheat, defense lawyers lie and cheat, and judges--Jesus, don't get me started. The American legal system would do itself a great service if it could somehow execute half the sitting judges in this country and start all over again--."

Tired of defending sleaze balls, he is hired by the madame, the widow of a corrupt local sheriff who was running a topless bar and dealing cocaine on the side, to defend one of her girls who has been charged with the murder of a preacher who enjoyed coming to the club and getting his rocks off. He's actually pretty sure the girl, Angel Christian (appropriate name, don't you think?) is innocent, although it's not improbable that the widow herself committed the murder. There is little evidence against Angel but the local DA is up for re-election and needs to have a solid win just before the votes are counted.

Pratt, an attorney himself, writes reasonably well and the characters, if a bit exaggerated, made for an interesting group (Landers, the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation investigator is about as morally degraded as one could imagine). The courtroom scenes were well-drawn. If you enjoy Grisham and Teller, you will enjoy Pratt.

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### **Una Tiers says**

An unintentional re-read. At the beginning the book is funny, poking at the system. It resorts to really vulgar stuff. What really disappointed me was the one dimensional characters. Some were perfect, others really bad.

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### **Monnie says**

As I've said in other reviews, I'm always looking for a good mystery/thriller series - one in which the stories are good enough that I'm happy to read them any time, but mostly to fill in gaps between other books - when I need something dependably enjoyable and easy to read. As luck would have it, I've found two winners in that department over the last couple of weeks - this one included.

I keep a running list of free and low-cost books I've downloaded as a result of membership in services like BookBub that specialize in that kind of thing; I cross them off as I read them and try not to get too far behind. This one, though, managed to slip through the cracks; I got it free back in 2013 and it's been stuck in the middle of my list ever since. When I noticed it's a legal thriller, it got my attention; when I learned it's the first in a series featuring criminal defense attorney Joe Dillard, I couldn't wait to get started.

I finished it in short order, picking it up every chance I got just because the story and characters reeled me in

from the beginning. Set in Tennessee, it begins with the murder of a preacher (a cat brings part of the guy to his mistress as a gift, adding a touch of grisly to the murder). The preacher, it seems, had visited a bar known for its "girls," and one of them - a pretty young thing - is accused of the murder. The bar owner, herself a shady character, is rolling in dough and hires Joe to defend the girl.

Joe, however, is beyond ready to stop doing what he's been doing; his mother has Alzheimer's and is failing fast, and his estranged sister is a drug addict who's just been released from prison. On the plus side, he's got a loving wife, a former dance instructor who now helps out in his office, a couple of kids who seem more "normal" than my own two, and a excitable dog who pees on his master's shoe with regularity.

As Joe reaches a birthday, his only wish is to defend just one client who is innocent. As the story unfolds, it appears this young girl may make his wish come true. But haven't we all been advised to be careful what we wish for?

There are some twists and turns and even more lawyers and judges who try to bend the law when it suits their purposes. The chapters shift from first-person accounts as told by Joe to third-person descriptions of what happened, is happening and may happen down the line. I won't say I was surprised at any point - much of the book is for the most part predictable - but the writing is solid and the story well thought out with insights into the legal process (a tribute, I assume, to the fact that the author holds degrees in both English and law). And yes, if you're asking, I plan to get my hands on the rest of the series, starting with the second, *In Good Faith*, as soon as I can.

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## **Tracie Payne says**

Audiobook. I love this series so far. Joe Dillard is a badass who loves his family and the law. These aren't very deep and the mystery isn't hard to figure out, but you can tell the author practiced law and I just love how he writes the characters. This series is just so entertaining.

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## **Nicole says**

I did enjoy this book, I liked the storyline but the characters annoyed me a bit. Like let's take the main character Joe for example, he seemed whiny to me. He said he felt like the justice system was flawed and he wanted to help innocent people, totally not what most of his cases were which is why he was miserable. Either accept it or don't. Then constantly feeling bad for his sister and accountable for something he didn't do or have control over, that was annoying until the end when they seemed to reconcile. Also all the characters had something I disliked about them even his wife who babied her husband. Angel, who everyone treated like a princess because of her good looks even though she was involved in a murder. But even with all the dislikable characters and Joe who always justified in some way why criminals committed a horrible crime, I enjoyed the story. I'm going to continue on with the series to see how Joe develops and to see if he actually decides to leave his job as a defense attorney. Hopefully he changes a bit throughout the series.

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## **Rex Fuller says**

Great fun read. Joe Dillard wants one thing before he gets out of criminal defense forever, an innocent client. What happens between wanting and getting one is a great murder trial yarn. The characters we can't help but like, as well as the ones we don't, are all just a little bit guilty. Or maybe more. The book keeps you wanting come-uppance and catharsis to be properly distributed and satisfies the desire.

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## **Joseph - Relax And Read Reviews says**

This is the first book in the Joe Dillard series of legal thrillers by Scott Pratt. It is also the first book by this author that I have ever read.

Joe Dillard is a criminal defence attorney, that is he defends murderers, thieves, drug dealers, prostitutes and rapists among others. Although he has made a lot of success in this career, he is now fed up of defending such scumbags. Having now saved a considerable amount of money, he wants to quit the legal profession permanently but before that he wishes to defend at least one innocent client.

A preacher, Rev. John Paul Tester is found murdered and mutilated in a motel room. Phil Landers, a Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI) special agent is sent to investigate. On checking the whereabouts of the preacher, Landers finds that the victim, although a man of God, had visited a strip club the night before. From there all leads point to a young beautiful waitress, Angel, who had been seen serving the victim in the club that night. She is immediately arrested on first degree murder charges. The club's wealthy owner, Erlene, being a close friend of Angel and knowing Joe Dillard to be one of the best attorneys around, pays him a hefty sum and hires him to defend her employee.

Dillard is convinced that Angel is innocent and is prepared to use all his skills and do everything in his power to defend her. But he finds many obstacles in the way and by the end his sanity and his life are put in jeopardy on more than one occasion. Will he be able to save Angel from death row? Is she really telling all the truth? What really happened in that motel room that night?

Apart from this case, Joe has to deal with his very own demons which continually return to haunt him from the past. There are also his drug-addicted sister Sarah and his bed-ridden sick mother in the picture.

All characters in this legal thriller are richly described and the dialogue believable. Joe Dillard is a very likeable character indeed and the court sessions are always realistic but never annoying.

I really enjoyed reading this book and will surely read the rest in the series to find out how Joe Dillard's life goes on.

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## **Wendy Soliman says**

I really enjoyed this disillusioned defense lawyer's quest for an innocent client and his ethical struggles to come to terms with what he did for a living, juggling his family life, along with a drug addict sister and mother who was dying.



When a preacher visits a gentleman's club and then finishes up dead in his hotel room with his penis chopped off, Joe defends the beautiful young lady accused of the crime. Could she be his long-awaited innocent client? I only deducted one star because the reason for the killer being in the guy's room in the first place seemed unlikely to me. the author could easily have figured out a more plausible reason.

That said, it was a great read with a clever twist at the end and I shall definitely read more of Scott Pratt's books.

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