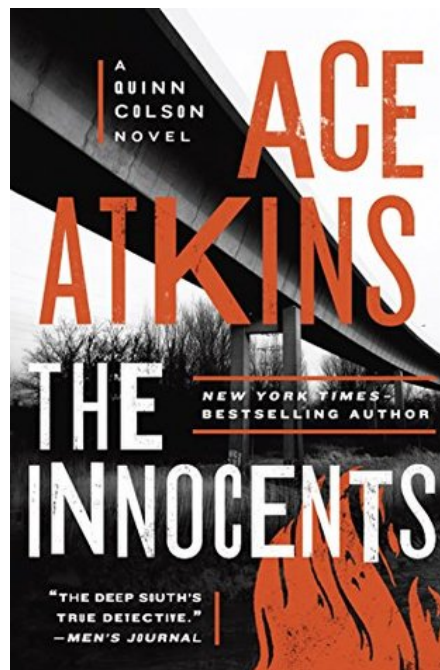




The Innocents

Ace Atkins

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The Innocents Ace Atkins

She was just seventeen, a high school dropout named Milly Jones, found walking down the middle of the highway, engulfed in flames. Even in a tough Mississippi county like Tibbehah, it shatters the community, and it is up to Sheriff Quinn Colson, back on the job after a year away, and his deputy Lillie Virgil, to investigate what happened and why. Before long, however, accusations start to fly, national media and federal authorities descend, and what seemed like a senseless act of violence begins to appear like something even more disturbing—with more victims waiting in the shadows.

The Innocents Details

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From Reader Review The Innocents for online ebook

Lyn says

Very good! I really liked that we got to know the victim a little bit before her death, and that all of the seemingly small characters in the beginning ended up being important in the end. Also, the book didn't just end once we found out who killed Milly (who did that was a surprise, another great thing about the book!). Rather, we find out that there is more to her death than just a sick killer. Initially, it seemed like this alone would be the focus of the next book. Then we got an answer for that, as well, but it seems like it may also be part of the next story... and I am pretty confident that there will be another one. This is the first book that I've read from this series, and I would be another, though I am a little hesitant about going back and reading ones before this. In the past, I've tended to not enjoy the series so much when I start late and go back.

Note: I received this book for free through Goodreads Giveaways.

Bill Reed says

Great read. The ending was not what I expected.

Debbie says

Wow, I just sped right through this one. The story was great. Of course, it's Ace Atkins! I thought I knew the killer pretty early, but was I right? Sort of. There are a LOT of bad guys in this story and I mean bad. But what a good story it was, yes I'm saying it again.

This is definitely one you won't be able to put down, so don't start it at bedtime. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who likes a little mystery with a lot of suspense.

Thanks Putnam & Sons and Net Galley for providing me with a free e-galley in exchange for an honest review!

Susan Johnson says

You would think after all the mysteries I've read that I could figure out who the bad guy is right away. I didn't in this one but once their identity was revealed it made perfect sense. All the clues were there. I just believed one of the red herrings. Drats, foiled again.

This is the sixth Quinn Colson novel but the first one I've read. It was quite easy to follow as a stand alone even though you know you missed some background. The characters are all very vivid and I really didn't like his high school girlfriend, Anna Lee, who is still married but separated. Quinn comes from a quirky family. His father is a former stuntman and his sister runs a rescue camp where abused people can go to recover.

The plot is quite interesting. It centers around Milly Jones, a young woman, who takes up pole dancing for the money to get the heck out of town. She is found running down the highway one night engulfed in fire screaming for help. This is not a spoiler. It's in the book's blurb. What happened to Milly? How did she end

up in this situation and who did it? I guessed wrong.

The prose is smooth and it was easy to keep the pages turning. I couldn't wait to find out what was going to happen next. That's the sign of a good book to me. This author also writes Robert Parker books. I have never read any of them not written by Parker but maybe emulating Parker keeps the writing sparse and succinct.

Here's what I didn't like. I never got a sense of place. It supposedly takes place in Mississippi. I didn't realize Mississippi had cowboys so it kept me thinking it was set in the West, someplace like Nevada or Montana. It really had a Longmire feel to me. The descriptions of the houses littered with trash, cars up on blocks and Confederate flags flying could have easily been in the West too. Other than talking about popping into Memphis, I never felt like it was a Southern setting.

Still it had a great plot, interesting characters and was well worth the read.

Faith says

This is the sixth book in the series featuring Quinn Colson, and it's the second one that I have read. Colson is back in Tibbehah County, Mississippi, after his freelance work with the military, and is again working with the acting Sheriff Lillie Virgil. Colson and Virgil make a good team, but it is all the other characters in this book that really give it color and atmosphere.

There are gradations of innocence with these people, and most of them can't seem to keep clean no matter what their intentions are (as evidenced by the last, sad scene in the book). The chief crime being investigated by the police is the murder of a teenage girl who has recently begun working at a strip joint. Even though I knew early on in the book who had killed her and why, I still enjoyed watching the investigation progress. There were other crimes along the way as well as racism and bullying, and also one unorthodox (but in my view justifiable) use of a water hose.

Fortunately, from my point of view, Colson's horrible girlfriend Anna Lee isn't in this book very much, but sadly not gone entirely. I really disliked her in the last book. I enjoyed this book very much and will probably read more of the series.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

Oh boy, this book was good, can't wait to read the next one!

Harvey says

4.5

Another excellent outing in this series. Tibbedah County sure has some fine characters.

Delves into some very contemporary complex issues along with the remnants of the Old South.

Less than smooth ending (and how Colson's love life is evolving) keep this from a full 5 star.

Liz Barnsley says

The Innocents, apparently, is Quinn Colson 6 – it is the first one I have read and has immediately sent me rushing towards the back catalogue -Quinn as a character immediately engaged me, this one set in Tibbehah, Mississippi it also had that small town southern noir feel that I have loved muchly in other novels.

Actually Quinn is not Sheriff in this novel – that falls to Lillie Virgil, a strong female role offset with another strong female roll in “Miss Hathcock” playing the good v bad roles and everything in between – the ongoing verbal battles between these two being one of the highlights of the read for me. Quinn is a returning character, back from overseas, not looking to reinstate himself into the police until a tragedy occurs that sets the whole town reeling and plenty of accusations flying, so he finds himself lured back into the mire.

The setting is so beautifully described that you could almost feel like you lived there yourself. I didn't feel discombobulated by the fact that I had not read previous novels – I just got pulled right into it and everything that needed explaining was explained through subtle nuances of conversation and remembrance.

The characters are diverse, eclectic, often very quirky and the community dynamic is divisive and entirely fascinating. The crime itself doesn't happen until well into the story – by then you have a real feel for this place and these people, enough that you feel you can make some genuinely good guesses as to the final resolution. Cleverly plotted and ultimately somewhat unexpected, Ace Atkins digs deep into the prejudices, realities and often criminal existence of this populace with a wonderfully vivid and distinctive prose.

Yep I think I'm a fan. And hey look I have 5 other books to add to my never ending and ever growing to be read pile. I'd say that's a good day.

Highly Recommended.

Meg says

Book 5 in this series brought together all the threads from the previous 4 books. Book 6 offers nowhere near as much closure, and seems to be setting up future stories. The central story was good though and it is always great to catch up with Quinn and the rest of Jericho.

Liz says

If you go for the southern noir/grit lit thing, then you shouldn't miss this series by Ace Atkins. It may be referred to as the “Quinn Colson” series but it's really so much more.

This book in particular sees a lot more from acting Tibbehah County Sheriff Lillie Virgil's perspective and that's what tipped it into five-star territory for me. As much as they would like it to be, “the world is not a boy's club” and she doesn't let much get in her way, even though it costs her in the end.

Like its predecessors, *The Innocents* is fairly dark in terms of its methods, motives, and language, so be

warned. Uncluttered writing, authentic characters, and slow, southern dialogue all contribute to the gritty atmosphere that Atkins has developed in this town of Jericho, Mississippi. The mystery is there but not at the forefront. In fact, the best thing about this story is how Lillie, Quinn and company go after the bad guys, rather than who the bad guys actually are. And then, just when I thought they had seen it all down there, Atkins throws a curveball and sets us up for the next installment.

Start with *The Ranger* and see how addictive this series can be.

Jeff Dickison says

This is the first book that I have read in this series. Nothing like starting in the middle. I found the story to be like "Tobacco Road" and "God's Little Acre" meet the police procedural. Lillie & Quinn investigate the murder of a cheerleader turned exotic dancer. There aren't many people in this story who aren't at least partial scumbags. I doubt that Mississippi would use this to promote tourism. But if you have ever driven through Mississippi, why would you want to visit? Recommended.

Kemper says

I received a free advance copy of this for review from NetGalley.

It's that time of year when Ace Atkins once again takes us on a tour of Tibbehah County, Mississippi, so I hope you're ready to eat breakfast at Waffle House, shop at the Wal-Mart, kill an afternoon at a fishin' hole, watch the local high school football team kick some ass, and then head over to the combination truck stop & strip club for a chicken fried steak and some wholesome entertainment.

Quinn Colson may not be the sheriff these days, but between gigs as a military contractor in Afghanistan he's got plenty of things to keep an eye on back in his home town. His ne'er-do-well father is pitching a business idea that would mean asking one of his biggest enemies for a favor, his mother is angry that he's even been talking to his formerly estranged dad, his romantic life is very complicated, and his sister has her hands full trying to run a faith based charity. And Quinn isn't the only one with a full plate. His friend and former deputy, Lillie, is now the sheriff and dealing with a wide variety of small town crime, a tough as nails woman with shady connections has taken over the strip club with the assistance of a biker gang, a couple of bad boy teens seem on verge of turning into outright thugs, and a troubled young woman with a secret is so desperate to get out of town that she starts working at the nudie bar to make quick cash. When a horrible crime is committed that makes national news all of the citizens of Tibbehah find themselves affected by it.

Atkins continues to impress me with the way that he's constructed a realistic rural environment populated with a variety of memorable characters that he then threads a crime story through. I also continue to marvel at how he can shift gears from writing the new Spenser novels in their Boston setting to this series and the style is markedly different between the two. The first person Spensers are naturally centered on the very urban private detective, but when he moves to Tibbehah County there's a more relaxed rhythm as well as an opportunity for Atkins to write from the point of view of multiple characters. This pattern of getting a new Spenser story and then a Quinn Colson book a month or so later continues to be two events I circle on my reading calendar every year.

However, this one is probably my least favorite from this series so far. Usually there's a central story with the other story threads spun off from it, but the motive and culprit behind the main crime thread this time

seemed a bit obvious to me even though it's played as a mystery. The things that happen in Tibbehah because of it are the more interesting angles, but a lot of these sub-plots are left dangling. That's not out of the ordinary for Atkins who tends to leave a few threads uncut to pull on in the next book. However, this felt like most of it was in service of future stories like it was an episode of a TV show at mid-season trying to lay some groundwork for the finale.

Even Quinn feels more like a bystander than a main character in this which makes a certain amount of sense because he's not the sheriff anymore, but some of the secondary characters also seem to have gotten lost in the shuffle. Quinn's sister Caddy seems like she might play a role at a couple of points, but she just kind of vanishes from the story. There's a subplot involving a Muslim clerk at a convenience store that also gets left behind in the third act.

This certainly isn't a bad book, and I still enjoyed my annual visit to Tibbehah County while looking forward to more. It's not necessarily a bad thing in an on-going series to leave some things hanging for future development, and it's likely that Atkins will pay these off in the future. However, the emphasis on the set-up instead of pay-off made this a little unsatisfying when compared to the others of the series.

James Thane says

There's a new sheriff in town, or in Tibbehah County, Mississippi, to be more precise. Ex-Army Ranger, Quinn Colson, who had returned from Afghanistan, been elected sheriff and begun cleaning up the county, has been voted out of office, the victim of a smear campaign conducted by his opponent. Colson's successor is murdered almost immediately upon assuming the office, and this leaves Quinn's trusted deputy, Lillie Virgil, as acting sheriff.

Looking for a change, Quinn goes back to Afghanistan to help train the government's forces. But after a year, he's back in Mississippi only to discover that a number of other changes have occurred. Thanks to Colson, Johnny Stagg, the crime boss and county commissioner who had run the county as his private fiefdom, is now in jail. The truck stop and strip club that Stagg had owned and operated is under new management in the person of Fannie Hathcock, a tough, no nonsense woman who is determined to hold her own against both Sheriff Lillie Virgil and the outsiders who want to muscle in on her operation.

Quinn returns to find that both his family and his love life are about as dysfunctional as they were when he left. In particular, his father, ex-Hollywood stuntman Jason Colson, has grandiose dreams of building a dude ranch on land adjoining Quinn's farm. The issue is complicated by the fact that the land in question is owned by none other than the imprisoned Johnny Stagg, who continues to be Quinn Colson's bitter enemy. The elder Colson attempts to entice his son into joining his grand schemes, and the reader can only hope that Quinn has better sense.

As all of this plays out, a young woman who was once the top cheerleader at the local high school takes a job working at Fannie Hathcock's renovated strip club. She's a natural on the pole and is pulling down huge tips until she is brutally murdered. The investigation into her death turns into a three-ring circus, and Lillie Virgil recruits Quinn Colson to come back to work for the county, this time as *her* deputy. As things spin out of control, even Lillie and Quinn working together may not be enough to hold back the chaos.

This is another very good entry in an excellent series. In his fictional Tibbehah County, Atkins has created a fully-formed world with believable characters who range from being extremely sympathetic to downright loathsome. Quinn Colson, in particular, is a very appealing protagonist, and it's always fun spending a few hours with him in his home county, even if it might not be a place where I'd enjoy living on a permanent

basis.

Jon Dean says

Better than the previous book in the series.

HornFan2 (Mike) says

Thanks to netgalley.com, Ace Atkins and the Penguin Group Putnam for the advance ARC for my honest review.

What an awesome book, totally enjoyed the latest Quinn Colson adventure and the Innocents is my favorite read of the year so far.

I really like the Quinn Colson character, he's blue collar, tough as nails, an ex-Ranger, ex-sheriff of troubled Tibbehah County, who now works training police in Afghanistan, family oriented and will think of nothing to help his friends.

Have to give huge props to Ace Atkins writing style. The same way Jim Beam makes their wicked good bourbon . Likewise with each book Atkins just gets better and better.

With each offering, he adds new ingredients to his books, offers something new in his writing, it's just not the same repetitive offerings and gets the readers imagination flowing to be right their for all the action.

Good or bad characters, man can Atkins ever just bring them vividly to life, he even makes bad dudes like Nito Reece seem like deep inside he's a good guy who just made some bad choices in his life.

Man I love books like the Innocents, that have intertwining storylines ripped right out of today's headlines, it has the fast pace I love, loaded with twists and turns, red herring offerings as to whodunnit, while the real bad guys hiding in plain sight, and hints of an old-time Western with the good verse evil in Northern Mississippi.

And be ready to be sucked right into the pages, your right their riding along with Quinn and Lilly as they chase after bad guys, or hanging out on the porch sipping Scotch with Quinn and his dad Jason, while steaks cook on the grill.

The other thing I like about Atkins books are, while the main characters top notch, he also has some great support characters in his stories.

With his Quinn stories, you got Lillie Virgil who just seems to take over the story or maybe it's that she makes the story all that much better. Definitely would make for some good reading, if he every decided to start a series with her, like the chemistry they have and she's probably the lady that Quinn should be dating. Bet she'd have him wrapped around her finger.

Then you have Quinn's dad Jason, his mom Jean, his troubled sister Caddy who seems to finally have it together, Hondo his dog and his nephew little Jason. They all add to the storyline.

The other cool thing with Atkins writing is that their's zero fluff, no needless characters, no cheat sheets required to keep up with the storyline and everything in his storyline helps tell the story.

Atkins should be in every reader's book case, he's that good of an author and just feel he deserves more recognition than he gets.

Author Bob Mayer refers to the big known publishing house authors as Airport Authors. Well Ace Atkins would be my favorite airport author, he can out write James Patterson and has a legend smilin' down on him.
