



Innocent

Scott Turow

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In 2008, 22 years after the events of the earlier book, former lawyer Rusty Sabich, now a Kindle County, Ill., chief appellate judge, is again suspected of murdering a woman close to him. His wife, Barbara, has died in her bed of what appear to be natural causes, yet Rusty comes under scrutiny from his old nemesis, acting prosecuting attorney Tommy Molto, who unsuccessfully prosecuted him for killing his mistress decades earlier. Tommy's chief deputy, Jim Brand, is suspicious because Rusty chose to keep Barbara's death a secret, even from their son, Nat, for almost an entire day, which could have allowed traces of poison to disappear. Rusty's candidacy for a higher court in an imminent election; his recent clandestine affair with his attractive law clerk, Anna Vostic; and a breach of judicial ethics complicate matters further.

Innocent Details

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Author : Scott Turow

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From Reader Review *Innocent* for online ebook

Richard says

I used to love Turow's legal thrillers — but either my taste has changed or Turow's writing has. I just got bored. Of course, it doesn't help that I've got seven or eight other books sitting on the bedside table and I'm thinking about the trip I'm about to leave on...

Did Turow's characters spend so much time in his earlier books staring into their navels and thinking about *themselves*? The lead character here gets all of his chapters written in the first person, and he has an incredibly dull inner monologue running. *Me, me, me.*

The chapters centering on other characters are written in the third person, and they seem to be better. Still too much moaning and bitching about their lives — everyone here is pretty dysfunctional — but there seems to be a bit more action.

I remember Turow as writing — essentially — the courtroom attorney's version of a police procedural. Instead of casting some overweight and emotionally broken cop and watching how he thinks and obsesses about solving some puzzling crime, you'd have an assistant DA doing the work.

The chapters that focus on that part of the story were the best part, and the only reason it kept two stars. But I couldn't skip the boring parts, or I'd spend too much time backtracking to fill in the missing pieces.

So I ended it. Too bad; I used to have great memories of Turow's novels, and now I wonder if I re-read them whether I'd re-like 'em.

Anne (Booklady) Molinarolo says

I remember reading Presumed Innocent twenty years ago, and I thought "wow!" So when its sequel *Innocent* came out, I waited to read it. Presumed Innocent was, and still is, one of the best legal thrillers I've ever read. It exuded psychological suspense and the courtroom drama still is some of the best writing I've ever encountered.

Then, around Turow's 5th novel I stopped reading Scott Turow all together. I can't remember why, until I labored through *Innocent*. Whom ever Turow's Editor is now should be fired. The characters all are whiny; "all about ME!" I feel, I, I, I. And Rusty Sabitch makes two really dumb mistakes (or moves, if you will) that seem really unrealistic especially for Chief Appellate Court Justice and someone who had been tried and acquitted for murder once. But without these silly mistakes, there wouldn't have been a story.

And the courtroom scenes didn't seem urgent. Just going through the motions, tensions somewhat lacking. I believe it is time for this reader to say farewell to Scot Turow.

Candy says

My recollection of the 1987 blockbuster Presumed Innocent was being totally thrown off guard by the resolution of that wonderful legal thriller/murder mystery. I loved it. And now Scott Turow is back among those same Kindle County characters 20 years later in Innocent. And wouldn't you know it, he had me guessing and kept surprises hidden all over again as there may or may not have been a murder, a suicide, a conspiracy, a love triangle and/or a psychological chess game. It's another smart plot, flushed-out characters, keep-your-synapses-snapping clues and courtroom one upmanship. This one may be Innocent, but Turow's guilty of one riveting read!

Amy says

This book was intriguing at first but by the end I was just wanting to know how Barbara Sabich died. I felt like Turow was trying to put so many twists in the plot that after a while I didn't care anymore. I just wanted the book to end.

Having not read the previous book, I think I might've been more upset that Rusty Sabich wasn't convicted of murder-- even though he didn't kill his wife. I felt like his infidelity and such didn't help Barbara's decision to overdose. What was most upsetting was when Anna, who he had an affair with, ended up dating Rusty's son Nat. It was too much. I was disappointed that neither Anna nor Rusty ever told Nat. But I guess I don't have that kind of restraint. I understood they loved Nat enough they didn't want to possibly ruin things between Anna & Nat, but I don't know that I, myself, could live with myself if I didn't tell.

I was impressed by Tommy Molto's character. He was definitely a man of moral character that added some balance to Rusty's. In the end, it was a disappointing read and the story went on too long.

Annie says

It took me quite a while to finish this one. It just didn't grab me, but at the same time, because I knew some of the characters from the book Presumed Innocent, I really wanted to see how this would play out. Part of the problem for me was that the main character made another really stupid mistake like he did in the previous book. It effected how much I enjoyed this one. I did like the last part of the book for the most part, but not as much as I had hoped.

HBalikov says

Innocent is not the first Turow book you should read. I know. I have read all his novels about "Kindle County." The first book has to be "Presumed Innocent" since that book concerns Rusty Sabich and many of the same characters 20 years earlier.

Turow is a brilliant writer whose style is a joy to experience. Though this book is not about happy topics -It is about affairs of the heart. It is about how the police and the prosecutors think about crime and their jobs. It is about the dark side of growing older and less optimistic about the way life works out.

The story is played out in court and around lawyers in a way that shows how intimately Turow understands

all he has assembled. And, I guess, I agree with some other reviewers that it reflects on Turow's own aging process and what he has gleaned from it.

Dimitris Passas says

ἵνα αξιοπρεπῶς δικαστικῶ θρῶλερ ἀπὸ τον μετρ του εἶδους Scott Turow που διειτῶλεσε για περῶπου 10 χρῶνια βοηθῶς εισαγγελῶα στις Η.Π.Α. και εἶναι ο συγγραφῶας ενῶς ἀπὸ τα πιο δημοφιλῶ βιβλῶα του εἶδους, με τῶτλο "Presumed Innocent". Το βιβλῶο αυτῶ ῶγινε ευρῶτερα γνωστῶ ἀπὸ την κινηματογραφικῶ μεταφορῶ το 1990 με πρωταγωνιστῶς τον Χῶρισον Φῶρντ και την Γκρῶτα Σκῶκι. Στο "Αθῶος", συναντῶμε και πῶλι τον κεντρικῶ χαρακτῶρα του "Presumed Innocent", τον Ρῶστι Σῶμπιτς που αυτῶ τη φορῶ κατηγορεῶται ῶτι δολοφῶνησε τη γυνῶκα του. Δημῶσιος κατῶγορος στην υπῶθεση του εἶναι μια νῶμεση ἀπὸ το παρελθῶν, ο ικανῶτατος και πανῶξυπνος Τῶμι Μῶλτο. Η ιστορῶα κυλῶει με γρῶγορους ρυθμοῶς, μῶσα ἀπὸ τις εναλασσῶμενες ἀφηγῶσεις του Ρῶστι, του γιοῶ Νατ και του Τῶμι χωρῶς να κῶνει "κοιλιῶ" σε οποιοδῶποτε σημεῶο της εἶξῶλιξης της πλοκῶς του. Σῶγουρα δεν εἶναι ἵνα βιβλῶο που μῶνει ἀἶχαστο, ωστῶσο ἀἶζει τον κῶπο να αφιερῶσει κανεῶς μερικῶς ῶρες στην ἀνῶγνωση του καθῶς πῶρα ἀπὸ το μυστῶριο της ιστορῶας και την ικανοποιητικῶ ἀνῶπτυξη των χαρακτῶρων, μπορεῶ κανεῶς να εξοικειωθεῶ με τις δικανικῶς διαδικασῶες για τις οποῶες ελῶχιστοι, πῶρα των νομικῶν, γνωρῶζουν πολλῶ. Να σημειωθεῶ ῶτι και το εν λῶγω βιβλῶο ῶχει μεταφερθεῶ στη μεγῶλη οθῶνη με τῶτλο "innocent" και πρωταγωνιστῶ τον Bill Pullman.

Una Tiers says

Disappointing. The audio version has errors, e.g. daughter in law instead of daughter. The plot meandered, really cheating the reader with red herrings. The ending had a slight twist, but Turow didn't leave well enough alone but launched into a romance train of thought ending that was dull at best.

Larry Bassett says

This is my sixth Scott Turow book but my first in a while. I had a few Turow books on my bookshelf when I began to have problems visually tracking the lines in printed books and ultimately switch to audible books. So this is my first Turow audible.

I like Scott Turow a lot and I'm not going to spend much time retelling the story here. He is not a mystery writer with a lot of action or violence or gun powder. His stories are mostly dialogs and interior conversations. This book has a father and son aspect and his ability to write about long time relationships is superb. His ability to write about what people are thinking and feeling and experiencing is excellent. He can draw complex characters in a most understandable way.

This book has one of those traditional mystery aspects. It's not quite a whodunit. But it is a how did the woman die? The courtroom scenes are pretty extensive. You pretty much get to know what everybody in a courtroom is thinking. All very well done.

Brian Bess says

My initial thought when I heard that Scott Turow had written a sequel to his breakthrough novel, *Presumed Innocent*, was that he must have run out of new ideas or sales had dropped for his recent novels and he needed a low risk hit i.e. a sequel to his most famous and successful novel. The setup is similar—now a district judge, Rusty Sabich is implicated in the murder of another woman with whom he shared a romantic bond—in this case, his own wife. Rusty has the clearest motive for murder, when the original pronouncement of ‘death by natural causes’ is brought into question. His old adversary, now acting PA Tommy Molto prosecutes him again and Sandy Stern, his defender from the previous novel, though receiving cancer treatment and not faring very well from it, steps forward again as his lawyer. It seems like a guaranteed recipe for substantial success—present familiar characters in a familiar setting, look in on them twenty years later, use the formula that worked before in a slightly different context and see how it spins itself out.

As I read the novel, I began to give Turow the benefit of the doubt for using the same character and some of the same plot devices he used before, primarily because I saw this novel as unfinished business from the previous novel. Rusty is caught in a cycle he set in motion for himself many years earlier. He didn’t fully learn the lessons from the earlier drama so he must re-enact the same scenario with slight variations from the perspective of an older and, one would hope, wiser man. He has brought all of this on himself, both the events from the previous novel as well as this sequel. Other characters have their flaws, of course, and do less than admirable things; however, without Rusty’s initial course of action none of this would have happened. He cleverly refrains from revealing the answer to the ‘whodunit’ question from the earlier novel. He is saying to any reader unfamiliar with the earlier novel or its film adaptation, “Want to find the answer to the mystery at the heart of *Presumed Innocent*? Read the book.”

Turow writes adequate dialogue in general, on the level of a journeyman TV script writer. The dialogue between characters substantially younger than himself, such as Rusty’s young law student son Nat and his former law clerk Anna, is certainly the stuff of average network TV drama. Characterization is somewhat better, although Nat never comes across as anything but a sensitive, self-absorbed, earnest young Adonis. His portrayal of Rusty might have been influenced by Harrison Ford’s performance in the film of *Presumed Innocent*. I can visualize the elder Harrison Ford playing the Rusty of *Innocent* more than I could the character from the earlier novel.

Turow is at his best when depicting lawyers talking to other lawyers or others peripheral to the legal profession about legal matters. This seems to be where he has the most secure footing. The courtroom scenes are always involving and remarkably free of courtroom clichés. His thematic specialty is depicting when and how ethical and legal issues converge and diverge. He is a lawyer explaining legal matters in ways that convey the bizarre convolutions and contortions that legal gymnasts must enact as they play a game to arrive at something Society can accept as Truth. He leaves no doubt that behind the scenes nearly everyone involved with the case harbors some sliver of doubt. Absolute Truth can never be established, he seems to be saying. One can only make one’s best attempt and accept the consequences of his and others’ actions, whatever they may be.

Jay Connor says

Maybe this is the best way to do a sequel! Wait two decades. Though Linda Greenlaw's "Seaworthy"

(reviewed here last month) was only a decade after "Hungry Ocean," whereas "Innocent" is the two decade removed follow-up to Turow's powerful fictional premiere - "Presumed Innocent" - both share a maturity and life-worthy POV that sets them apart from the deluge of tag-along stories from lesser authors.

"Innocent" is a wonderful, and better than the first, successor to "Presumed Innocent." (Remember Harrison Ford in the movie version?) Though neither challenge Turow's best -- Burden of Proof -- both share with "Burden" one of the most compelling characters this side of Lisbeth Salander. Sandy Stern. While ostensibly a supporting character, Sandy and his daughter, Marta, grab our attention more than the flinty main character. Sandy, now in failing health, brought on by all those Cubanos, is the moral center of "Innocent." If he can believe in Rusty's innocence then perhaps we should, as well.

Bolstered by a strong and VERY revealing ending, Turow forces us to continue our examination of our basic concepts of guilt and innocence. Instead of opposite threads, perhaps they are more intimately woven.

If you want a strong good read, but are looking for something shorter than the 1500 page Larsson Millennium Trilogy, you can't go wrong with this sequel, which requires no prior knowledge of the original, "Presumed Innocent," to fully enjoy.

Amel El idrissi says

החלטתי לקרוא את הספר הזה – "Innocent" של John Grisham – כי רציתי לקרוא סדרה של ספרים על משפט דיוני. הספר הזה הוא סדרה של 200 עמודים, וזהו ספר קצר וקל לקריאה. הספר הזה הוא סדרה של 200 עמודים, וזהו ספר קצר וקל לקריאה. הספר הזה הוא סדרה של 200 עמודים, וזהו ספר קצר וקל לקריאה.

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P,S :

החלטתי לקרוא את הספר הזה – "Innocent" של John Grisham – כי רציתי לקרוא סדרה של ספרים על משפט דיוני.

Michael says

While he may not have invented the legal thriller, Scott Turow certainly helped usher in the era of the legal thriller twenty years ago with his best-seller "Presumed Innocent." And while Turow has revisited some of the supporting characters of "Presumed Innocent" in his subsequent novels, he's always avoided a direct sequel to the book that put him and the legal thriller on the map.

Until now.

I'll have to admit I was dubious about "Innocent." I've been burned too often by sequels written years later that come off as less like a natural continuation of a story and more like a money grab based on a familiar name or property.

All of those fears and doubts were dispelled within the first ten pages of "Innocent." The novel did exactly what "Presumed" did twenty years ago--pulled me and didn't let go until the last page was turned.

"Innocent" picks up 20 years after the events of "Presumed Innocent." Rusty Sabich is back, serving on the appeals court and running for state supreme court. His professional life is going well and things with his wife Barbara are back on a more solid ground, though there's an undercurrent of tension due to her on-going issues with depression. Rusty is tempted by his law clerk, Anna, who clearly flirts with him and makes it clear she'd like to see their relationship be something more. On the final day of her time as his clerk, Rusty and Anna begin a short-lived affair, with Rusty considering divorce from Barbara. However, Rusty eventually decides against it and ends the affair after a few weeks.

A few months later, Rusty's son Nat contacts Anna about leasing her old apartment while he's serving as a law clerk. Through a string of e-mails and meetings, the two have a chemistry and despite reservations from Anna, the two eventually become romantically involved. After several months, Barbara invites the couple to dinner. But are her motives as innocent as they appear? Has she discovered the link between Rusty and Anna and what will she do about it?

The next day, Barbara dies of what appears to be natural causes. Rusty waits 24 hours to notify the police and authorities, raising the suspicions of Tommy Molto. Molto is still stinging from the fact that Rusty was acquitted at the end of "Presumed" and is cautious about pursuing the case, for fear of looking like he's out for revenge. Eventually, too much evidence turns up and it appears that Rusty may be getting away with murder twice. Rusty is arrested for murder and put back on trial for the death of Barbara.

Told from varying points of view, "Innocent" is a fascinating and compelling legal thriller, not only for the mystery of how and why Barbara died but also some of the ethical implications. The specter of Anna and Rusty's short-lived affair as well as a slip by Rusty to a defendant in an appeals trial, hover over the entire book, driving the narrative forward. The question of it Nat will find out about his father and Anna's affair keeps the tension going. Turow also trades off between point-of-view in the story--we get first-person perspectives from Rusty, Anna and Nat while we get third-person from the legal team of Molto and company.

As with the first book, it's clear that Rusty has made some mistakes but whether or not he's a murderer isn't made clear until the final stages of the story. And even after that has been resolved, the implications of things

and their impact on the characters is examined.

In short, it's everything that made "Presumed Innocent" a classic of the genre. Not just the legal aspect, but also the character aspect. A superb follow-up.

Ed says

This courtroom psychological drama involves sixty-year-old Rusty Sabich, a chief judge of the appellate court, fighting to beat the homicide charge of doing in his bipolar but brilliant wife Barbara. The intrigue is thickened by infidelity, evidence-tampering, ambitious prosecutors, and family secrets. The brisk back-and-forth in the courtroom scenes were the most entertaining parts for me. Judge Rusty emerges as a flawed, complex man, and I was never quite sure if I liked him or not. At any rate, don't let the 400-page length daunt you since the plot clips along at a heady pace. Mr. Turow writes with clarity and subtlety. This read is a treat.

Nancy says

Rarely is a sequel equal to the original. *Innocent* takes place 20 years after "Presumed Innocent" and, while it can be read alone, is much better if you read "Presumed Innocent" first.

Scott Turow pulls off the difficult task of telling the story from various viewpoints in the present tense. In addition to a good mystery, he captures the issues, physical and mental, of those of us passing sixty.

James Thane says

Scott Turow's *Presumed Innocent* has always been one of my favorite books, and I still think that it's the best legal thriller I've ever read. I've also enjoyed the novels that Turow has written since *Presumed Innocent*, but I approached this sequel with reservations. I wasn't sure why Turow would resurrect these characters and attempt to write a sequel to a virtually perfect book. Why not leave well enough alone?

In the end, I wish he would have. That is not to say that I didn't enjoy *Innocent*; it's generally a good read, and if I had never read *Presumed Innocent*, I probably would have been perfectly content with the time I spent with the book. But I *have* read the first book I couldn't help comparing *Innocent* to the original virtually page-by-page, and the newer book constantly came up short.

In *Presumed Innocent*, Kindle County prosecutor Rusty Sabitch was accused of the brutal murder of a female colleague with whom he was having an affair. Tommy Molto, another prosecutor, fanatically pursued the case against Sabitch in a book that grabs your attention from the first line and refuses to let go. The plot is brilliantly conceived with shocking twists and turns, all of which are totally plausible and convincing.

Now, twenty-two years later, Sabitch is an appellate judge and is running for election to the Illinois State Supreme Court when his wife suddenly dies under mysterious circumstances. His old nemesis, Molto, is now

acting prosecuting attorney, and his ambitious chief deputy goads Molto into pursuing murder charges against Rusty Sabitch once again.

The story is told from a variety of different viewpoints, principally those of Sabitch, Molto, and Rusty's son, Nat. As in the first case, Sabitch hires a brilliant attorney, Sandy Stern, to represent him, and the second half of the book focuses on Rusty's trial. In this case, though, the tension is not as high as in the first book, and the courtroom scenes, while gripping at times, lack the spark of the first case. In the first case, the protagonists on both sides seemed to be caught up in a life and death struggle with everything on the line. Here they seem to be going through the motions, as if they don't have nearly as much at stake.

My real problem with this book, though, is that at the beginning Sabitch does two incredibly stupid things, which seem totally out of character for someone as smart as he is, and especially for someone who has previously been tried by fire. To be sure, if he doesn't do these things, there is no story here. But still, I couldn't help feeling throughout the book that the whole plot rested on the shakiest of foundations, and it never grabbed me the way that *Presumed Innocent* did.

In fairness, few books have ever grabbed me as *Presumed Innocent* did and, as I suggested above, had I never read the first book, I would probably have been perfectly content with this one which, for all its faults, is still better than a lot of other legal thrillers that one might read. But *Innocent* attempts to stand on the shoulders of one of the best books I've ever read. It's hardly surprising that it falls a bit short.

Kemper says

At some point we're all going to have to agree on a statute of limitation on spoilers. When is it fair game to give away an ending? Because *Presumed Innocent* was published in 1988 and a pretty popular movie version with Harrison Ford came out in 1990. It's almost impossible to summarize the sequel *Innocent* without giving at least some of the first one away. On the other hand, you've had 20 years to read the book or see the movie. Don't blame me for your laziness.

So in the interest of going spoiler-free for any who might be interested, here's a quickie round-up of the book. Scott Turow basically invented the modern legal thriller in *Presumed Innocent*, opening the door for John Grisham and *Law & Order* to turn us all into amateur lawyers. Turow is less concerned with the tricks of the trade for criminal law in this one, and focuses even more on characters. Once again, he tells the story of a trial while revealing much but letting us know that there's more to the story than we're seeing in the court room. If you're in the mood for a legal whodunit with strong characters struggling with the consequences of their secrets, this is the book for you.

If you don't mind some mild spoilers of the first book, you can keep reading. I'm not giving away anything that isn't on the *Innocent* book jacket. Otherwise, stop here if you want to remain 100% spoiler free.

Twenty years after being accused of raping and killing the lover he was cheating on his wife with, Rusty Sabich has managed to put a respectable life back together. He is still with his wife, and is the chief justice for a court of appeals. You'd think that having one affair that nearly resulted in him being convicted of murder would have taught Rusty a lesson, but turning 60 and being unhappy with the state of his marriage to his bi-polar wife leads him to an affair with a much younger woman who worked for him. Eighteen months

later, Rusty's wife dies in her sleep, but Rusty is behaving strangely. Soon, the prosecuting attorney is trying to figure out if he should charge Rusty with murder.

The story shifts through several viewpoints from Rusty, his mistress Anna, his son Nat, and the prosecutor. As in *Presumed Innocent*, Turow does a great job of letting us get to know the characters while keeping the central mystery intact. Even though Rusty is the narrator for a large portion of the book, we know that he isn't telling the whole story, and it's quality writing that makes you sympathize with him even as you're not entirely sure what kind of man he really is.

I also loved how Turow never gives away the biggest secret revealed in the first book while letting it hang over this one. You could read this without having read *Presumed Innocent* and still enjoy it quite a bit. However, knowing that ending while reading this puts a whole other dimension into the story.

This was a sequel worth waiting over 20 years for.

wally says

just finished this one, five forty-one pee em, the 29th of december 2017, friday evening, already dark, been dark for some time. kindle, library loaner, good read, i liked it. three stars. didn't quite get what was happening, what it is, somewhere around the 1/3-mark, rusty and his computer...but that fell into place later on in the story. could that have been written better? or a better reader, one? one or the other.

Carol says

Do you ever wonder why you pick up a book? I had put Innocent on my list when it was first published. I had really liked Presumed Innocent when I read it in the 80's. The more I thought about it the more reluctant I became to read this sequel. I think I worried it would ruin my love of the first. Did I really care what happened to Rusty Sabich? Cheez, that was twenty years ago. As fate would have it while visiting our library, there was the audiobook, staring me smack in the face and I needed something to listen too so home it came with me.

At first, my initial concerns were confirmed. Rusty is in trouble again. His wife Barbara is dead, seemingly a suicide. Rusty waits more than a day to report this death, some suspect murder and as in Presumed Innocent, he becomes the logical suspect. Old hat. Then something changed and as I listened to Innocent I quickly became engrossed in the story, the plotting, the thrill of the hunt for the truth. I couldn't walk long enough or listen fast enough so dumped the audio and got the book. Finished it in a day and would rate it right up there with Rusty's first appearance.

I think you could easily read either as a stand-alone but having the background (though sketched in Innocent) does make for a better read. I loved the characters, particularly those that reappeared from Presumed Innocent. It was good to see their growth or not. As I turned the last page I was glad I fit this book into my reading schedule and enjoyed Turow's expertise in Turow bringing the plot twists together. Though some found improbabilities, none stood out enough to bother me. The courtroom scenes are informative and up there with the best of the lawyers who are writers. What really made Innocent for me was that most of my theories were wrong, never figuring it out and was surprised by the ending. I like that!

The Girl By the Sea of Cortez says

I know this review is too long, but it is free of spoilers.

I read Scott Turow's debut novel, *Presumed Innocent* about ten or twelve years ago, after watching the movie on DVD. I was impressed with Turow's writing. I found him both intelligent and stylish. At times, I wasn't too fond of the book's protagonist, Rozak K. "Rusty" Sabich, and I was thoroughly disgusted by his wife, Barbara, but I did find Rusty a fascinating character. In *Presumed Innocent*, Rusty seemed a little too passive for a man whose career and freedom are on the line. Rusty, who was an amazing trial attorney in the first book and is an amazing appellate judge in this one, apparently lacks self-discipline when it comes to indulging his desires, and that lack gets him in big trouble. In *Presumed Innocent*, as a young prosecuting attorney, Rusty is charged with the murder of his lover and colleague, Carolyn Polhemus, a murder he didn't commit. Most of the book deals with finding out who really did kill Carolyn and how to get the charges against Rusty dismissed. In *Innocent*, Rusty is once again charged with murder, but this time, it's not a lover whose been found dead.

The Barbara and Rusty Sabich we meet in *Innocent* are, in many ways, the same Barbara and Rusty Sabich we met in Turow's debut novel, and in other ways, they are very different. They're older. Rusty is now sixty, and Barbara, still attractive, due in part to a fanatic exercise regimen (two hours a day, five days a week), is in her late fifties. Rusty is now the Chief Judge of the Third District Court of Appeals in Turow's fictional Kindle County, which is much like Illinois' Cook County, and he hopes to win a seat on the State Supreme Court in the upcoming November election. Both parents still adore their son, Nat, who is now nearly thirty, however both Barbara and Rusty still haven't managed to overcome some very difficult situations in life and flaws in his/her character.

Barbara is severely bipolar, agoraphobic, and though she takes medication (she'll try anything), she is, more often than not, an unhappy, screaming harridan. Rusty, though highly respected in his capacity as a judge, still has trouble looking the other way when young, beautiful women are around. This is a little surprising, at least initially. It's been twenty-two years since charges that he murdered Carolyn were dismissed, and he says those charges and their subsequent dismissal taught him to "show some gratitude to whatever force allowed me to skate across the thinnest ice and make it."

Maybe that "gratitude" is why Rusty chose to remain married to a person as purely evil as Barbara. I don't know, and Turow doesn't give us much of a reason other than the fact that Rusty was concerned about the emotionally fragile and impressionable Nat, the Sabichs only child, and the effect on Nat should his mother not be in his day-to-day life.

Those of us who've read *Presumed Innocent* and know what kind of woman Barbara Sabich is and what she's capable of will have to strain our suspension of disbelief a little in order to accept the fact that any man, any man at all, would just pick up life with Barbara where it left off after Carolyn Polhemus' murder, thinking Barbara, mother though she be, would be good for a highly impressionable four-year-old child, a delicate child in need of extensive psychotherapy. Even more shocking is the fact that Rusty resumes a "two to three times a week" intimate relationship with his wife. Readers who've read *Presumed Innocent* want to hit Rusty over the head with both that book and this one and say something like, "Dude! Look what she did! Wake up!" However, if you want to enjoy *Innocent*, and it is highly enjoyable, then you just have to accept Rusty's decision to remain married to and intimate with Barbara, improbable though it be.

Innocent begins with an attention grabbing scene, and a bit of dialogue that show us what a master writer Turow is:

A man is sitting on a bed. He is my father.

The body of a woman is beneath the covers. She was my mother.

Turow is sensitive to verb tenses. I greatly appreciated that because many of today's writers are not. I appreciate the care with which this author wrote his story.

Since the above dialogue occurs on page one, it's not a spoiler to tell you that it's Barbara who is dead, and it's Rusty who is sitting on the bed. The chapter is narrated by Nat, of course. Right away, the central mystery of the book is set up: Did Barbara die a natural death, or did someone kill her? If someone killed her, who? Rusty? Nat? Someone else? And why, for goodness sake, did Rusty wait twenty-four hours to phone the police? Why did he rearrange the bedroom? He is, after all, a judge, a legal professional, and he knows the implications of sitting with a corpse for a day rather than calling for help.

When the coroner's initial report shows that Barbara likely died of hypertensive heart failure, Rusty's old nemesis, attorney, Tommy Molto, now Kindle County's prosecuting attorney, is satisfied. "I can't go near this," Tommy says of allegations that Rusty might be responsible for Barbara's death. "Too much history." Tommy remembers all too well the perils of indicting on flimsy evidence, since it had been Tommy Molto who was certain Rusty had been responsible for Carolyn Polhemus' murder. In fact, even though he was sanctioned for deliberately mishandling evidence at Rusty's trial, Tommy remains convinced of Rusty's guilt where Carolyn is concerned. He has, however, learned to be cautious, and he bears Rusty no grudge for what happened nearly twenty-five years ago. "A grudge," Tommy says, "was a badge of the dishonest, who could not face the truth, including a truth that was unflattering to them."

Tommy's young chief deputy, Jim Brand, however, is a different story. Brand is convinced that Rusty did kill Barbara, and when events finally persuade Tommy of Rusty's guilt yet a second time, Rusty is arrested and charged.

If you read *Presumed Innocent* (you really don't have to in order to enjoy this book, though I recommend it highly), you'll know when Rusty Sabich is in trouble, he calls on stellar criminal defense attorney, Sandy Stern. It was a young and elegant Sandy Stern who defended Rusty when he was on trial two decades ago, and it's an aged and cancer stricken, but still elegant, Sandy Stern, along with daughter Marta, who defends Rusty yet again. Sandy Stern was one of my favorite characters in *Presumed Innocent*, and I was glad to see him again in this book.

A prominent character in *Innocent*, who we didn't meet in the earlier book, is Anna Vostic, Rusty's thirty-four year old former law clerk. Curvaceous and intelligent, on the surface Anna seems a lot like Carolyn, and both Rusty and Nat take an interest in her.

I found Anna's characterization to be complex. Though she seems, at first glance, to be so wild and free, when we look more closely, the reader finds she's a very dark and troubled young woman. Maybe not wholly likable, but still, understandable. I did think she was totally wrong for both Rusty and Nat. These are both men who really can't deal properly with a troubled partner.

I really didn't like Nat in *Presumed Innocent*, because he seemed pampered and spoiled, and I didn't care for him in *Innocent*, either. The problem for me was that Nat cried and broke down far too much. Yes, I know he

was an emotionally fragile young man, and I know he'd been through a lot, having a mother like Barbara. And I know men really should get in touch with their feminine side. But breaking into tears ten or fifteen times during the course of the book was just a bit too much for me. The fact that Nat was a man had no effect on my dislike. A female character who broke down that many times would have irked me as well. Readers are attracted to strong and competent characters. Sure, they can be terribly flawed, they just can't be weak, and Nat, I'm afraid, is weak.

While Rusty and Barbara are, for the most part, unchanged from the earlier novel, Tommy Molto, on the other hand, is greatly changed. A firebrand in *Presumed Innocent*, Tommy Molto has mellowed with the years and with the love he feels for his young son, the only child of his late-in-life marriage. While Rusty might believe he remained with Barbara out of love for Nat, it's Tommy Molto who, surprisingly, proves to be the dedicated family man as well as the novel's moral center.

Innocent is told from the points of view of Rusty, Nat, and Anna, while omniscient narration functions to tell Tommy Molto's side of things. There are many shifts back and forth in time, which several readers I know did not like. I, myself, found the structure of *Innocent* very sophisticated, and I felt oriented at all times. Turow masterfully sets up two story threads – in the first, he recounts, little by little, the events that led up to Barbara's death, while the second encompasses Rusty's second murder trial, with Sandy Stern at the helm. I love multiple points of view, but those readers who really dislike them probably won't like *Innocent*, even though Turow handled viewpoint wonderfully.

Rusty, of course, is a deeply flawed human being. We can understand him, we can feel sympathy for him, but we don't always like him or agree with his choices. I think the key to understanding Rusty is to realize that he's terribly masochistic. While I couldn't help but absolutely despise Barbara, any man who would remain married to her knowing what Rusty knows has to be masochistic. And once a reader grasps the full extent of that masochism, he or she will no longer say that Rusty's actions do not ring true. They do. Given Nat's ability for self-deception, readers have to wonder if Rusty passed this negative trait to his only child, and if we'll encounter Nat in a future book.

There are readers who criticized this book for not being a "legal thriller," and yes, Turow did invent the genre with *Presumed Innocent*, paving the way for more prolific, but less careful and deliberate writers like John Grisham. But expecting *Innocent* to be a "thriller" is, I think, to miss the book's point. This book is a more reflective character study than a plot driven thriller. It's a melancholic and elegiac book that explores serious issues like aging, marriage, and death. And yes, innocence.

The writing in *Innocent*, like all the writing in all of Turow's books, is sophisticated and mature. Turow is at his best, I think, when describing the courtroom scenes (Rusty's trial encompasses the second half of the book) and the meanderings of the legal system he knows so well.

While there are no "I can't believe it!" moments in *Innocent*, the book does, I think, capture so well the darkness and failings to which most human beings at time succumb. And that, I think, is this novel's whole *raison d'être*.

4.5/5

Recommended: If you like character studies of deeply flawed human beings and are not expecting a "legal thriller" you'll probably enjoy this book. Rusty's trial for murder does encompass almost the entire second half of the book, so be prepared to learn quite a bit about the US legal system. The book is rather slow paced and melancholic, and at times, you have to dig deep to understand the characters and their motivations,

however it's all worth it.

You can find my reviews, writing tips, etc. at literarycornercafe.blogspot.com
