



A Fool and His Monet

Sandra Orchard

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Serena Jones has a passion for recovering lost and stolen art--one that's surpassed only by her zeal to uncover the truth about the art thief who murdered her grandfather. She's joined the FBI Art Crime Team with the secret hope that one of her cases will lead to his killer. Now, despite her mother's pleas to do something safer--like get married--Serena's learning how to go undercover to catch thieves and black market traders.

When a local museum discovers an irreplaceable Monet missing, Jones leaps into action. The clues point in different directions, and her boss orders her to cease investigating her most promising suspect. But determined to solve the case and perhaps discover another clue in her grandfather's murder, she pushes ahead, regardless of the danger.

With spunk, humor, and plenty of heart-stopping moments, Sandra Orchard gives readers an exciting string of cases to crack and a character they'll love to watch solve them.

A Fool and His Monet Details

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Author : Sandra Orchard

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From Reader Review A Fool and His Monet for online ebook

Kara says

Read in March 2016, Re reading in Sept. 2016 *my rating goes up to 4.5 stars, loved this the second time better! actors mentioned are Richard Gere, Jeffrey Dean Morgan, and Vin Diesel*

Go Serena, what a great book! Special Agent Serena Jones is on a case to find two stolen art paintings from her best friend's museum. Should've been simple and effortless, but it becomes much more complicated than Serena anticipates and we end up with a great page turner with lots of humor mixed in!

Loved Aunt Martha and Harold the cat; Billy, Zoe's cousin and their bodyguard for one great scene; LOTS of movie references that were so fun, and Serena's personality all the while balancing her personal life with her job finding the bad guys kept me WELL entertained the entire time :) Orchard has brilliantly compared Serena Jones as a "cross between Miss Congeniality and Stephanie Plum" and I agree with that PERFECTLY! *I'm also a movie buff and loved the actors Serena comes up with in every clue of the case*

"Harold!" I strode to the bedroom and found the freeloader curled up in the middle of my bed. I scooped him up and carried him back with me to the kitchen. "Here's the deal. I ward off two-legged intruders. You handle the four-legged ones. Okay?"

Harold meowed, but it didn't sound like he agreed.

Too bad. I was trained to take down two-hundred-pound men, not two-ounce rodents. I held Harold up to the cupboard and gingerly opened the door.

This is definitely Orchard's best book to date and NOT to be missed! Also, the author has included a survey on her website for readers to decide which of the two guys Serena should end up with for the series making this even MORE fun. Don't miss out, see where Serena's case leads her in this clean action story!

I want to thank the author for the gift copy I was given for review purposes. These comments are my honest opinion.

Kellyn Roth says

That was pretty good! Funny and exciting.

I was annoyed by the love triangle/every guy in the world being into Serena even though she claims to be some forgotten old maid, though. SERIOUSLY. Is there a guy in this book that is not attracted to Serena? So tempted to rate it three stars just for that except it was super low-key and romance was not the focus.

Other than that, it was fun.

My favorite character was probably Serena's grandmother. She was just awesome. I actually didn't find her that annoying at all? I mean, yes, she does some stupid, annoying things, but ...? Didn't annoy me so much as make me crack up. I just have a high tolerance for stupid characters as long as they're matchmaking-stupid-characters. Don't ask me why. :P

I'm definitely prefer Tanner over Nate if I must make a choice in another stupid love triangle which I don't give a monkey's pajamas about. Tanner is the obvious choice. He's awesome and relates to Serena's work. Nate is plainly just handsome and handsome and ... what else is he, really? Likes painting and old movies? Uh-uh.

Tanner is hardcore. He's FBI. That alone makes him the Top Pick. Who cares about some dumb guy who owns an apartment building? That job isn't glamorous at all! *would totally pick her husband based on job alone* *is going to eat crow someday* *will probably marry a hobo* *except I would never do that* *says the liar* *I don't even know what the point of this is anymore*

And ... that is all.

Because I read this so long ago (well, a little over a month, but whatever) that I can't remember it, and reviewing is really falling to the side this year.

~Kellyn Roth, Reveries Reviews

Eva says

Two thumbs up!

Allison Tebo says

It's been a long time since I read a contemporary book - I usually stick with 'dead authors' - and I was surprised by how much I enjoyed this.

What I Liked:

Christian without being shoehorned in or preachy. I guess people would probably characterize it more as 'religious' than Christian - because other a brief references to pray or being grateful to God or going to Church, not a lot of Christianity. But for me, Christianity in a book is a lot about what an author DOESN'T write about and this authoress kept things much more clean than most 'Christian authors'.

The story: Though I could get a little bit lost sometimes, this book was actually clearly written and really kept me guessing throughout. For the most part I was able to follow all the 'knowing that he knew that we knew what he knew' plot twists. And then it's about the FBI - what's not to like? - and that fact that it is about art recovery makes it even more fascinating. That's a sub-genre of thrillers that (I think?) is rarely delved into, plus as an artist, I found it cool.

The Narrative: Though I felt like there could have been more 'voice' (sometimes it felt like a long recitation of every single step in Serena's investigative process - like a field agents report, than a field narrative) - still - it was quiet funny and easy to read.

Serena: It was nice to read about a female FBI agent who was so human - instead of being an ice maiden, she is just a normal, intelligent person who has struggles and quirks like everyone else. And any parts where she

had to fight where much more believable as well, none of that absurd "kick your teeth in" stuff - but more of her catching people off guard and relying on training and speed.

Carmen: The sweet, surprising and sympathetic mafia guy. <3 <3 Hilarious and intriguing.

Her Neighbors: I just wish there had been MORE about these quirky individuals.

What I Was 'Meh' About:

Her Family: I really had the feeling of 'seen this before' with the parents and aunt.

What I Didn't Like:

Neither of the guys in the book have any faults. I really hate this 'perfect guy syndrome' - it's a lie. Nate conveniently pops up to make her heart race, get ride of mice, fix her tea, quote poetry and basically check all the boxes for "dream guy". I personally found him annoying to begin with and I kept getting more and more annoyed with him throughout.

Tanner is a smidge better - at least we see him working and doing something with his life instead of living to for Serena - but again, other than being teasing, he doesn't have any faults either.

Which brings me to the love triangle; didn't like it. I could have liked Serena's character more if there hadn't been constant comments from her friends like: "You have to beat off guys with a stick." And it was kind of true - random guys on a park bench had a romantic interest in her, basically.

I would have preferred no romance AT ALL. For once, I would like to read a book where the main girl is content and focused and has an arc that doesn't involve a guy. She has only just begun her career as an agent, it seems a shame that she would give it up so quickly.

WHAT I HOPE HAPPENS IN BOOK 2:

I hope Serena remains an agent - for a long time.

I hope she remains SINGLE - but since that isn't like to happen, I would have to pick Tanner.

But she'll probably get Nate - those types are usually the ones that "win". 'grinds teeth'

In Summary: I'm impatiently waiting for Book 2 to become available at my library!

Content: Very brief references about suspects living together. One motel owner makes an insinuation about this subject. Very brief references from a guy about a girl being hot or describing her physique. Some brief violence but not extreme.

Gabriellyn says

Three words. Serena and Nate.

Sarah Grace says

Wow. Gobsmacked is a good word for what I'm feeling right now. I initially wasn't super interested in this book, but saw some of my GR friends reading it, and it was free on Amazon kindle, so I thought, why not?

And boy am I glad I did! This is pretty high up there with my favorite mystery series!

For me, I find it especially hard to find clean, innocent, 'light-hearted' mysteries that suit my standard of "cleanliness". And this one totally did. I even handed it off to my little sister with no hesitation. There wasn't anything overly violent, no sexual content, romance was EXTREMELY low-key, and there is zero swearing.

I think what makes Orchard's novels is her fantastical characters. I know that's what made the book for me. Serena Jones, the MC, is completely unlike any other character or person I have ever known. With so many hilarious and endearing quirks and idiosyncrasies, I just couldn't get enough of her! Everything from her claustrophobia, to her ignorance of any romantic attention given her just makes her character so amazing. Even the secondary characters. Was there any cookie-cutter secondary characters for Orchard? No. From crazy Aunt Martha, to tough FBI agent Tanner, to apartment super Nate, to Zoe, head security at an art museum. All are so unique and fascinating.

Sandra Orchard's writing style is the other thing that makes these books for me. Incredibly witty and hilarious in her dialogue and descriptions, I found myself in stitches more than once! I could happily lose myself in a million books like this one. She balances humor, action, and heartwarming story lines all in an intriguing, captivating way.

All in all, I am so glad I picked this up, and can't wait to finish the series! I'd gladly recommend this to ages 14-15+.

CONTENT NOTE: While I would gladly recommend this for mid-teens and up, there is some things that would make me hesitate to hand this to a younger child or suggest it as a family read. Serena is an FBI agent, so there is a fair-to-middling amount of violence, gunplay, not-described-barely-mentioned murder, etc, etc. Also there is technically a love triangle throughout the series, but really, the romance is SO on the back burner, it's really not an issue. And as I said previously, even the violence isn't described hardly at all.

Kate Willis says

This looked like a pretty fun concept, so I decided to borrow it from my library and give it a try. As, I mentioned in my original "I-just-finished-this-let-me-think" mini-review, my star ratings and I are still pretty confused. ;)

I loved the theme of art crime investigation. I liked the movie "Woman in Gold", and while this was a little different side of things, it was along the same lines and pretty interesting. I got really happy when she was actually handling the art. Definitely made me want to study up on all the different artists!

Serena was fun. Not your usual heroine (although, extraordinarily clueless?), kinda a klutz, and pretty down-

to-earth. Especially when talking to her cat or being jumpy. XD At least in this first book, I did like Aunt Martha. She reminded me a lot of someone I've known before, and it was fun when she was innocently curious and trying to help. (view spoiler) :D Zoe was also a great side character. I think she's actually the character I'm most like, to be honest. :D My favorite scene was when (view spoiler). It was really realistic, a culmination of everyone's fears actually, and the aftermath was really sweet.

I actually didn't enjoy the mystery that much, though. Because Serena herself was so scattered, I couldn't do much theorizing which took some of the joy out of it for me. I like being the detective along with the book detective. It always blows my mind and thrills me when the author lets me in on things, then sweeps the rug out from under me with the "big reveal". I almost felt as if, in this book, I was kept too much in the dark to enjoy the big reveal.

There were also some pretty dark crimes I was uncomfortable with even being mentioned. I'm gonna mark them as a spoiler, so you don't have to read them unless you want to. ;) Supposedly (view spoiler) Also, I was shocked and disturbed that the villain (view spoiler) Like I get that the villain is reeeeaaallly evil, especially after (view spoiler) but I picked this book up for entertainment. So I found that disturbing.

There were also a lot of jokes or hints at impurity. There were times I'd see it coming, but other times I was just blindsided by someone thinking about another person physically or something really awkward being said. Not my favorite. ;)

I saved the best for last--the love triangle. I appreciated how lowkey it was in this book. Like it was barely even one. ;) It did find it semi-irritating that Serena had guys falling for her right and left, was clueless, and could possibly lead all of them on. But besides that, it was pretty good. I liked Tanner a lot. He was really matter-of-fact, loyal, and went out of his way to protect her. There were mentions of him being good-looking, but my mind was drawn more toward the easy banter between them and the loyalty. That was nice. ;) (Also, they have a nice age gap. :D And it was really cute that her daddy likes him. Daddies for the win!) Nate, not so much. I realize he was meant to be just a normal, sweet guy, but I felt like that was a bit overdone what with the baking, classic movies, and pet-sitting and all. And, maybe because Serena is so career-oriented (also not my favorite), he doesn't seem to fit into her life at all. I did think he was *somewhat* cool in his own way, but I drew back from liking him just because it felt like I as the reader was being pushed toward him. (I'm ornery like that.)

I did enjoy this book though. It was a light read (most of the time) and kept my interest! I skimmed the second book and decided against reviewing it, but I may try the third book sometime. One of the elements I've been most interested in is the investigation of her grandfather's murder ((view spoiler)), and it sounds like that comes to a head in the last one. ;)

Anyways, my thoughts.

Lindsey (Books for Christian Girls) says

{{This is an updated review. Originally posted March 14th, 2016, it was updated on July 1st, 2017 to the Official Rating System.}}

About this book:

“Serena Jones has a passion for recovering lost and stolen art--one that's surpassed only by her zeal to uncover the truth about the art thief who murdered her grandfather. She's joined the FBI Art Crime Team with the secret hope that one of her cases will lead to his killer. Now, despite her mother's pleas to do something safer--like get married--Serena's learning how to go undercover to catch thieves and black market traders.

When a local museum discovers an irreplaceable Monet missing, Serena leaps into action—and a whole lot of trouble.”

Series: Book #1 in the “*Serena Jones Mystery*” series. Review of Book #2 Here!

Spiritual Content- Prayers; A Scripture is quoted and mentioned; Mentions of prayers, praying, bargaining with God, thanking God, & blessings over food; Mentions of church, church going, & church members; A few mentions of God; A few mentions of those in the Bible; A couple mentions of worship bands; A few mentions of nuns; A mention of a church's youth group; A mention of divine judgement; A mention of Mother Teresa;

*Note: the phase “guilty as sin” is said once.

Negative Content- Minor cussing including: a ‘blast’, a ‘deep doo-doo’, a ‘kick-butt’, a ‘moron’, a ‘shut up’, a ‘what a crock’, a ‘wuss’, two ‘crud’s, four ‘stupid’s, eight forms of ‘idiot’s; A mention of a curse (said, not written); A mention of a rude gesture; Some eye rolling; Fighting, Pain & Blood/Bleeding (up to semi-detailed): Guns are aimed & fists are thrown (up to semi-detailed); All about mentions of felonies, stolen art, stealing, thieves & burglaries; Many mentions of murders, attempted murders, killing a partner, dead bodies, shooting, deaths, criminals, kidnapping, blood, knives & threats (up to semi-detailed); Mentions of pain, blood, injuries, & stitches; Mentions of hit-and-runs & setups; Mentions of fighting, fights, hitting, abuse, & bullies; Mentions of (what looks like) suicides, overdosing, & carbon monoxide poisoning; Mentions of drugs, dealers, & users (up to semi-detailed); Mentions of the Mafia, mobsters, mob hits, & loan sharks (and one that is rumored to have killed those who owe him); Mentions of people selling & buying organs illegally (barely-above-not-detailed); Mentions of a black market adoption agency; Mentions of being run off the road; Mentions of break-ins & stealing; Mentions of blackmail & threats; Mentions of prisons; Mentions of debts & gambling; Mentions of bars/pubs, bottles of alcohol, drinking, drinkers, & parties; Mentions of lies, lying, & liars; Mentions of divorces; Mentions of gossip; Mentions of rotting meat, blood & a butcher (some of it is from a nightmare); Mentions of cat catching mice (barely-above-not-detailed); A couple mentions of gangs; A couple mentions of passing out; A couple mentions of tattoos; A couple mentions of piercings; A couple mentions of smokers & smoking; A couple mentions of throwing up; A couple mentions of a knitting needle in someone’s eye; A mention of horror movies;

*Note: Mentions of actors, actresses, singers, & movies; Mentions of brands (Gucci, Prada, Armani, Boglioli,); A mention of Sears; A mention of the Boy Scouts.

Sexual Content- Remembering a kiss (up to semi-detailed); Touches & Embraces (up to semi-detailed); Noticing & Nearness; Blushes, Flutters, & Winks; Serena says, of course, to getting married first, then having kids; Many mentions of dating, dates, exes, girlfriends, boyfriends, wannabe-boyfriends, & being interested in someone; Mentions of unmarried couples living together; Mentions of winks, flirting, touches, & blushes; Mentions of crush & a Casanova; A few mentions of gold diggers; A few mentions of young girls getting giddy over the thought of holding hands with a crush; A couple mentions of smelling someone; A mention of a hint that a man had company part of the night; A mention of a (single) pastor running off with

his (married) secretary; A mention of women getting off on guys with accents;

*Note: A couple mentions of shirtless men; A mention of testosterone; A mention of a man zipping his pants after using the bathroom; A mention of a dead naked body (no details); A mention of a man paying attention to a woman's curvy body; A mention of a "friendly" woman in a skimpy outfit; A mention of a long-legged woman.

-Serena Jones, age 28

1st person P.O.V. of Serena

323 pages

Pre Teens- One Star

New Teens- One Star (and a half)

Early High School Teens- Three Stars

Older High School Teens- Four Stars

My personal Rating- Four Stars

Okay, that was fun. Can I say that about a murder mystery? Hang on, let me explain: the back cover makes it sound like her grandfather's murder is a large part of this book. While it shaped Serena's career choice and is mentioned a handful of times, I wouldn't say it was the main part of this story. Truly, the murder parts and such were really light and pretty clean...more about the art thieves & paintings. It was really interesting with neat tidbits thrown in. I really enjoyed the first person POV and humor. I'm definitely looking forward to the rest of the series! Also, #TeamNate all the way! Hahaha! ;)

Link to review:

<https://booksforchristiangirls.blogspot.com>

*BFCG may (Read the review to see) recommend this book by this author. It does not mean I recommend all the books by this author.

*I received this book for free from the Publisher (Revell) for this honest review.

Staci says

Wow! Is this the same author?

I've also read *Deadly Devotion* by Sandra Orchard and found that suspense novel to be just o.k. Clearly, she has found her sweet spot in comedic mystery. *A Fool and His Monet* was super cute.

Main character Serena Jones is an FBI Agent that specializes in art crimes. While solving the mystery was a strong part of the novel, the characters were even stronger. Serena's mom just wants her to be safe and get married. Serena's Aunt Martha is a hoot. She involves herself how she can in solving crimes. And then there were the numerous men in Serena's life that could be viable mates for her.

It was just plain fun to read this novel and I highly recommend it.

Kav says

Campy and fun and chock-full of mystery -- an incredible beginning to a new series. And I just love this retro-style cover. Fits the book's ambiance to a T.

Serena has enough quirks to keep a reader smiling in the midst of an intense art theft investigation. The perfect blend of action, suspense and the hint of romantic entanglement...only, oh dear, there seem to be a number of eligible candidates. Time...and a few more books should set us straight on that score.

And her family likes to stir things up a bit -- especially Aunt Martha who has an interesting past. Orchard hasn't shared it yet, but I'm betting on something knock-your-socks-off surprising. There's another character, Nate, who is much more than he seems -- I'm sure of it. Two subtle clues set my reader spidey senses on edge and I can't wait to see if I'm right. Another reason to anxiously await the next installment which comes out in September.

Like most cozy mysteries, *A Fool & His Monet* is written in first person point of view. We're in Serena's headspace all the way. I know a lot of people don't like this POV, but I think it worked really well in this case. It's kind of fun to see everything through Serena's eyes only, including some interesting men who just might be thinking of her as more than a friend.

And I could tell the author really did her research when it comes to police and FBI procedure and that results in a fascinating journey into the inner workings of an investigation. Honestly, I don't know how Orchard kept all the intricate nuances straight! Spectacularly done.

I have only one complaint and that is the lack of any kind of faith thread. I know this is becoming more commonplace among Christian publishers but it still makes my heart hurt. Especially from a big name publisher like Revell. It is clear that Serena is a Christian through simple things like blessing the food at a family meal but an actual inspirational thread just isn't there. :-(

Still, this is a splendid start to a promising new series -- witty, upbeat and full of the unexpected. Sweet perfection for the avid cozy mystery fan.

Book has been provided courtesy of Baker Publishing Group and Graf-Martin Communications, Inc. in exchange for my honest review.

Hannah says

This one had me from the title...and then the cover was irresistible, too. I'm trying not to buy any more books for a couple of months to catch up on my to-be-read stack, but I requested this from the library and they bought the ebook the very day it came out (See how I get around my own rules? TBR stack still huge.)! So, naturally, I had to read it right away. I actually got to the end of this with my phone propped up on a chair while I ran a bunch of copies at work--it is hard to put down! I'll definitely be reading the rest of the series and have already recommended it to others.

The writing style is easy to read and flows well, along with characters that pop off the page and a plot with more twists than a roller coaster. However Orchard managed to dream up such a complex crime I don't

know, but I am impressed. Normally I can figure out the crime, but this one had me baffled.

Serena is dealing with issues from her past...severe claustrophobia from watching her grandfather's murder from a secret passage is the first we encounter. She's a new FBI agent hoping to use her job and her art knowledge to finally solve her grandfather's cold case. She's still figuring out the job, trying to decide how paranoid she ought to be, trying to find her place in her new team and how she feels about her nice, protective, brusque partner Tanner. She isn't fearless, but she is brave, and she views life with a pleasant vein of humor.

*This is not a book saturated with Christian talk. It is clean and Serena is patently a moral woman who believes in the God of the Bible. Don't expect a Bible study here...this one's a good solid clean mystery.

Heidi Robbins (Heidi Reads...) says

I was in the mood for something light and quippy, not too much angst, and boy did this book deliver! I never would have thought I'd call a suspense novel "delightful" but the main character Serena sure makes it that way! She's the type that you'd love to have for a best friend. She's a perfect blend of intelligence and naivete. Even though she's an FBI special agent, you see the details of how she works the case and doesn't always get things right or perfect- which made it so much more realistic. It was fun to follow the clues with her, and even though I tend to prefer more romance, the plot held its own and the quick pace kept me reading. Interspersed are cute and fun moments with different men in her life that interact with her in ways where the reader can see that they like her, but she's rather oblivious to it... most of the time ;) Such a great dynamic between Serena and Tanner, and also Serena and Nate. But there's no love triangle drama here, which I was relieved to avoid. It may come to that in later books but this was a perfect introduction to characters that I'm happy to read more of! Serena's meddlesome great-aunt was another favorite that provided some more quirky humor... and you can see where Serena gets hers :)

(I received a complimentary copy of the book; all opinions in this review are my own)

Mikayla says

I love mystery's, so I was really happy when I had the chance to get one my friends had raved about so much.

What I liked:

1. Serena being an FBI agent made it super believable how she gets cases. And the way this author showed her job made it seem more real than how most people portray the FBI.
2. The mystery was well done. I only had a couple points that I had trouble following, but I caught on pretty quickly.
3. Nate, he was very nice.
4. The book was really clean. There are some things mentioned in passing, but they are so small that I really don't even notice them to much.

What I didn't like:

1. There was a lot of tension built all the time, and it always dissipated really fast. It was like nothing was ever really a reason to worry.

2. Her aunt. Goodness she was beyond annoying, and I thought she was a little over the top.
3. Everyone loves Serena. Every guy flirts with her, but she doesn't want to date. And for not wanting to date, she sure does hang out with guys a lot.

What I laughed super hard at:

I'm going to start with a disclaimer. This was not something I thought was really wrong with the book, just the more I thought about it, the more I laughed.

Serena has four guys. Yes, four. Two that she likes, and two that like her. Since this is not a love triangle I have daubed it a love fan.

We've got the hot FBI agent who is mysterious and super charming. We've got the pretty normal guy who suns her apartment, and he is swoon worthy to Serena. We've got the guy she jogs with who likes her. We've got her best friend's cousin who was her childhood crush. All of which have some weird habits which might include watching Serena's apartment to make sure she's safe. Also they all trip over each other trying to keep her safe.

Overall, this was a cute book, I liked the mystery. I am not a fan of the love-triangle (Or fan) element and the characters were not my favorite. If I am given the chance, I might finish the series, but I'm not sure yet.

Jason McIntire says

This is the kind of book I would only read if it was on a free Kindle promotion, which it was. It was generally well-written and entertaining, and I liked the realistic, informative aspects of the FBI story element. I agree with previous reviewers that the infamous love triangle is unrealistic, contrived, and distracting - nothing but a cheesy device to dress up the story, as evidenced by the fact that the book closes with an opportunity for readers to vote on whom Serena will marry(!).

"A Fool and his Monet" is fairly clean, with the exception of a few thoughts Serena has about her multiple would-be boyfriends that I do not think should be spelled out.

I found the plot confusing at times, but I was following along okay by the end and went away feeling like it made sense. As others have noted previously, Aunt Martha is indescribably over the top and irritating.

If you liked "Sue Thomas, F.B. Eye" - especially if you liked the episodes featuring more romance and less law enforcement - you'll probably enjoy this book.

Rachel McMillan says

A zippy, unique spin on the CBA mystery genre, Orchard uses her romantic suspense chops for lighter fare. An intriguing premise sees Serena Jones tackle the art world with two (or more) eligible men in her near periphery.

I hope Serena decides to go it alone and rise to the top of the FBI scene -- men will only hold a girl with her pluck back ;)

An engaging, quick read that will definitely whet the appetite of fans of White Collar :)
