

Book Review: Ambush
By Colleen Coble

In 1967, Paul Simon wrote, “Someone told me it’s all happening at the zoo. I do believe it. I do believe it’s true.”

In Colleen Coble’s latest novel, “Ambush,” I believe it’s true as well. Though in this case the story centers on a Sanctuary – close cousin to the zoo.

Regardless, there’s a lot going on in this first book in Coble’s Sanctuary Series. The result is an entertaining, easy read that might also prove educational.

Paradise Alden is returning to her hometown of Nova Cambridge, Alabama after fifteen years. In doing so, she must not only conquer the demons that have plagued her since the night her parents were murdered, but also reconnecting with the first and true love of her life, Blake Lawson, who helps his mother run The Sanctuary where Paradise has taken a veterinarian job.

Almost immediately things come off the rails. There’s a murder, animals get loose from their enclosures, shots are fired at Blake, and his family (mother and two younger brothers) is threatened.

And almost as quickly it’s easy to figure that with Sanctuary gates left unlocked, this must be an inside job. So, from a mystery standpoint, there isn’t too much mystery. But there is action and the pacing is lively, and that keeps the pages turning.

There’s also romance (as you might have guessed) as Blake’s torch for Paradise has never been extinguished, and Paradise realizes that she has missed him all the years she’s been away. There are also a few discoveries along the way that help foreshadow storylines for books two and three in the series.

The last few chapters flip into high gear as the mystery climaxes, and in some respects read like an action movie script.

The dialogue throughout, however, tends to be a bit clunky, especially as it's filtered with Christian religious references. For example:

“If The Sanctuary failed, where would they go? He had to do everything he could to save this special place.”

“I believe God was loving you, steering you, even when you didn't sense him there.”

Otherwise, I found “Ambush” to be an enjoyable, quick read that set the table for the next two books in the series: “Prowl” due out in November 2025, and “Descent” due in July 2026. For this first installment, four out of five stars.

Enjoy it ... but please don't feed the animals.