



## Blind Moon Alley

*John Florio*

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## **Blind Moon Alley** John Florio

It's Prohibition. It's Philadelphia. And Jersey Leo doesn't fit in.

Jersey is an albino of mixed race. Known as "Snowball" on the street, he tends bar at a speakeasy the locals call the Ink Well. There, he's considered a hero for having saved the life of a young boy. But when his old grade school buddy, Aaron Garvey, calls from death row and asks for one last favor, all hell breaks loose.

Jersey finds himself running from a band of crooked cops, hiding an escaped convict in the Ink Well, and reuniting with his grammar school crush—the now sultry Myra Banks, who has shed a club foot and become a speakeasy siren. Through it all, Jersey tries to safeguard the Ink Well with no help other than his ragtag group of friends: his ex-boxing-champion father, Ernie Leo; the street-savvy Johalis; a dim-witted dockworker named Homer; and the dubious palm reader Madame Curio. With them, Jersey digs for the truth about his friend Aaron Garvey—and winds up discovering a few things about himself.

## **Blind Moon Alley Details**

Date : Published August 19th 2014 by Seventh Street Books (first published January 1st 2014)

ISBN : 9781616148874

Author : John Florio

Format : Paperback 223 pages

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Noir

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# From Reader Review Blind Moon Alley for online ebook

## Crystal Starr Light says

Pre-Reading: I won?! I won a Goodreads Giveaway?!

\*Faints\*

Bullet Review:

I'm bouncing between 3 and 4 stars. Rough around the edges in places, but it's got charm and atmosphere. Fails Bechdel Test unfortunately :/

Full Review:

Disclaimer: This book was provided free from Goodreads Giveaway. This has not influenced the rating of the book whatsoever. (Winning a Giveaway did influence the happiness of the reviewer, however.)

Jersey Leo is a bartender working a speakeasy (funneling money to his dad, The Champ, in New York to fund a kid's club called the Hy-Hat) when his old elementary school friend, Garvey, now on death row, ropes him into a twisted nest of booze, evil cops, greed, and violence.

I had never heard of John Florio, Jersey Leo, or Blind Moon Alley before I got a bug to finally win more than one Goodreads Giveaway in the almost 4 years I've been a member of this site. That, in a nutshell, is what led me to this book - well, also, I \*DO\* love stories set in the Roaring Twenties/Prohibition era.

NOTE: I jumped in at book 2 and had no problems getting up to speed. Kudos to the author there.

Unlike many historical fiction I've had the chance of reading, this book actually feels like the time period it's set in. It's dark and gritty; I almost felt like I was watching a black and white movie. We saw speakeasies, people were constantly drinking, it was all about dirty cops, gangs run by sociopaths and sensationalism. The voices of the characters felt very appropriate (no weird modern anachronisms in their speech that I noted, though I'm no expert to be sure).

I was also rather impressed with the character choice. Jersey Leo is a black albino. Number 1, HOORAH for a non-white character! Number 2, HOORAH for a character with a disability! Number 3, HOORAH for a character with a disability that isn't just mentioned once and disappears. (The albinism constantly is burning Leo or comes up in conversation.) So already, Leo, our viewpoint character, is off to a good start. It's nice to have a character who speaks like his background suggests, who is insecure, who cries (particularly guys!!), and who is a good balance of good and bad. Leo isn't perfect; he tries, he fails sometimes, he puts his trust in the wrong people, he is realistic.

A lot of the cast was indeed black. I mention this because I shamefully kept assuming white until I read something about "black kinky hair" or "black skin". I bring this up, not as a failure of the story (Philadelphia was a bit site of the Black Renaissance apparently - another plus for this book is that it made me look up more info on the era, always a +1 star in my book!), but as a failure of ME. A sign of my privilege. And a call to myself to stop assuming "white" when a character appears on set.

My biggest "problem" would be with the women. There are three - Angela, Myra, and Madame. They were written fine (maybe not so much Angela, as she's almost portrayed as a Madonna figure, but then, this IS written in Leo's POV, so YMMV), but none of them talk to each other, failing the Bechdel test. Sad, because the book came SO CLOSE. Also, there was quite a bit of slut-shaming, particularly of poor Madame. And yeah, it's the 20's/30's, but I can still comment on it.

The story has LOADS of twists and turns, some expected, some unexpected. And really, at the end of the day, it's quite entertaining. I enjoyed myself immensely, found myself very interested in the "whodunnit", even if I turned out to be partially right.

This is probably one of the best self-published (ETA: correction, indie published) books I've read. The writing is good, solid work - no boundless editing issues or problems with grammar. The historical setting is deftly employed, the characters are intriguing, the story interesting. My biggest disappointment comes from the treatment of women, but that is always something an author can tackle in future books.

Now that I've run through my thoughts and feelings on this book (and running through the books I've given 3 stars in the past), I'm bumping up to 4 stars.

Thank you, John Florio, for a chance to read your book.

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### **Olivia Stanton says**

I enjoyed this, the story line was tight and smooth. Thank-you for this one Mr. Florio.

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### **Kate says**

Nothing like reading a book when you know the author! John is a great guy and a great writer -- though I don't like reading series out of order, this second installment was easy enough to jump into without having read the first book! Fun, easy read with enjoyable language during a dramatic, interesting time in our history.

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### **Brenda says**

I received this book in exchange for an honest review I believe through Shelf Awareness. This was definitely the sort of book I would normally

pick up and read. I was surprised I actually enjoyed reading the book and wanted to finish it. This book is based during the time of Prohibition. It has a main character of a bar tender who is an albino, of mixed background, an escaped convict, members of the mob, policemen who are crooked the book is made up of everything I would ever read.

I did though read the book, and enjoyed it. It did seem a little rough around the edges some of the time. The story is interesting I would recommend it to anyone.

The description of the book as found here on Good Reads is:

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call the Ink Well. There, he's considered a hero for having saved the life of a young boy. But when his old grade school buddy, Aaron Garvey, calls from death row and asks for one last favor, all hell breaks loose.

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### **David Healey says**

An excellent follow-up to the first book, chock full of historical details that show painstaking research by the author. Highly recommended if you enjoy historical fiction and great writing!

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### **Ammy says**

Second book with the Jersey Leo character. Jersey is a mixed raced albino who works in a speakeasy in the 1930s. He finds himself involved with a band of crooked cops while hiding an escaped convict in his bar.

I like these books because of the colorful characters. In addition to Jersey, there is his father who is an ex-boxing champion and a number of street savvy friends. It's an easy and quick read but it's the people who populate this particular era that makes the story so gritty yet at times comical.

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### **Wendy Lear says**

Don't bother. It was very dry and depressing.

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### **Thomas F. Walls says**

#### **Enjoy Jersey**

I am a Philadelphian. I very much appreciate the accurate description of the city in this well written series. Thanks.

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### **Col says**

Synopsis/blurb....

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My take.....

My second time with John Florio and his mixed race albino Jersey "Snowball" Leo. Sugar Pop Moon, Florio's fiction debut was a pretty amazing read back in 2013 and this one has sat on the pile for a year or two simmering. High expectations then.

Slightly unfulfilled unfortunately. I didn't enjoy it quite so much as the last one. It's a fairly short book - around 230 pages long, but it still felt kind of saggy around the middle.

Jersey's childhood friend, Aaron Garvey is on death row awaiting execution. Jersey gets the phone call he's been dreading; Garvey wants Leo to join him for his last meal, a request that our man can't turn down. Garvey later escapes and seeks Jersey's help in shelter and also trying to recover some seed money invested in a nightclub. Money he needs to flee the country and start up elsewhere. As a convicted cop-killer he won't find any rest in America.

Therein follows our tale..... corrupt cops - vicious to boot, a speakeasy, nightclubs, gangsters, police raids, harbouring a fugitive, missing money, a playground romance rekindled, racism, shootouts, confrontation and death, prostitutes, a boxing club precious to Jersey and his father Ernie, dreams of a new life, a showdown, more death and an outcome and resolution.

I liked the setting with the seedy atmosphere of illegal drinking clubs in 30s Philadelphia. (World's apart from a recent book I read set in 30s Texas.) I liked the main character Jersey and his relationship with his father and his loyalty to his friends and his dreams of escape with childhood sweetheart Myra. His constant striving to do the right thing and his permanent fretting over money and his responsibilities. He has a good heart. Some of the supporting characters also had some depth and decency - Leo's father Ernie and the cop Thorndyke.

I think I just couldn't really get into the story. There seemed to be a lot of chasing around and to me at least repetition. We seemed to replay the same events a few times. Cops hunt Garvey, Jersey being watched and worrying etc etc. Maybe we needed to get to the point a bit quicker, which might be harsh on a book not especially long to begin with.

I enjoyed the ending and segments of the book. Just a bit of a disappointment when compared to the first in the series.

3 from 5

Thoughts on Sugar Pop Moon here.

<http://col2910.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11...>

John Florio shares his website with his wife, Ouisie Shapiro here.  
<https://www.florioshapiro.com/>

Read in November, 2017  
Published - 2014  
Page count - 226  
Source - review copy from publisher, Seventh Street Books  
Format - paperback.

<https://col2910.blogspot.co.uk/2017/1...>

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## **TL says**

A fine follow-up to Sugar Pop Moon :)

Wonderful visiting Jersey and the gang again... I wanted to sit down for some moon at the Ink Well and chat Jersey's ear off. We also got more time with Johalis and the Champ, plus meeting Homer... wanted to give that big guy a hug.

Jersey gets himself caught up in more trouble again when his soon-to-be executed friend asks him to be his guest at his last meal and asks him for a favor. Everything spirals out of control from there.

I continue to love how Mr. Florio really gives us the feel of the 30s here... as with the first book, you feel as if you're transported back to the grittiness of the time period. You can almost hear the moon being poured in the speakeasies and feel the bullets whiz through the air when shit starts flying.

A few times I did want to smack Jersey though... his heart's in the right place but I wouldn't have gone as far for Garvey as he did, not as brave as he was in some instances. Although brave but reckless would probably fit him better. Jersey knows what he must do and follows his gut.

Reeger was the perfect bad guy, slimy and vicious and bull-headed, the bastard.

Myra I wasn't sure about but she seemed alright at first, didn't entirely trust her throughout the narrative. (Johalis shared my concerns). Jersey seemed a little too lost in nostalgia when it came to his romance with her, not thinking clearly sometimes but don't blame him really.

There a few twists near and at the end that I didn't expect.... a couple provided new angles on situations and made you laugh and shake your head for the cleverness of it. I don't want to say more and spoil it haha.

All in all, highly recommend... eager for the next of Jersey's adventures :)

\*semi-crappy review but I'm tired, bear with me\*

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### **Wyckliffe Howland says**

1931 Leo Jersey, the albino protagonist and first person narrative, tending a speakeasy. Visual, tough, provocative, introspective. Noir classic style, good story with turns I did not predict. Bravo!

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### **Jessica Bronder says**

Jersey is an albino that runs a speakeasy. He is the recent newspaper star saving a kid, which he argues about being a hero. This leads a schoolyard friend giving him a call. Garvey used to stand up for Jersey when they were kids. They also used to hang around a girl with a club foot, Myra. Myra now owns a speakeasy where Garvey killed a cop. Garvey is calling to have his last meal with Jersey before being executed. He asks Jersey to stand up to a dirty cop that has been harassing Myra.

Jersey says he will think about it. Then the dirty cop shows up at the Ink Well demanding Garvey's location and decides to make his point by putting a hurting on Jersey. Jersey gets sucked into the whole mess when he discovery Garvey in the basement of the speakeasy.

I haven't read Sugar Pop Moon, but there was no reason to. There is a quick note about it but you get straight into the action of this book. Jersey is a great character, he has his flaws yet he is realistic. I felt like I was right there in the 20's as he was talking about the different speakeasies and the events happening around him.

This is a great story that makes you feel right in the 20's. It is one that I recommend for anyone that likes the noir stories.

I received this book for free in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Sean Cisneros says**

I liked this one just as much as the first book . A great storyline and good characters made this one of the best books I have read this year so far .

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