



# What You Break

*Reed Farrel Coleman*

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**What You Break** Reed Farrel Coleman

**Former Suffolk County cop Gus Murphy returns to prowling the meaner streets of Long Island's darkest precincts with a Russian mercenary at his back in the stunning second installment of Reed Farrel Coleman's critically acclaimed series.**

Gus Murphy and his girlfriend, Magdalena, are put in harm's way when Gus is caught up in the distant aftershocks of heinous crimes committed decades ago in Vietnam and Russia. Gus's ex-priest pal, Bill Kilkenny, introduces him to a wealthy businessman anxious to have someone look more deeply into the brutal murder of his granddaughter. Though the police already have the girl's murderer in custody, they have been unable to provide a reason for the killing. The businessman, Spears, offers big incentives if Gus can supply him with what the cops cannot—a motive.

Later that same day, Gus witnesses the execution of a man who has just met with his friend Slava. As Gus looks into the girl's murder and tries to protect Slava from the executioner's bullet, he must navigate a minefield populated by hostile cops, street gangs, and a Russian mercenary who will stop at nothing to do his master's bidding. But in trying to solve the girl's murder and save his friend, Gus may be opening a door into a past that was best left forgotten. Can he fix the damage done, or is it true that what you break you own . . . forever?

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## What You Break Details

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# From Reader Review What You Break for online ebook

## Ellen says

What You Break by Reed Farrel Coleman.

Gus Murphy, a former cop, is caught up in a situation that has him on the alert and leery of everyone. He's been introduced to a wealthy man, Speares, whose granddaughter was murdered. The police say they have their man but is that the way Gus sees it?

At the same time Gus's employee and friend, Slava, has been targeted for a hit. Finally Slava comes clean and unloads all the hidden secrets in his past that has put his very life in jeopardy.

Gus understands his responsibility is to find the granddaughters killer and rescue his friend Salva from death. The question is how to do that without getting killed himself.

This author can write and write well...very well. Easy to follow story line that becomes more involved as the plot thickens. Good character development between Gus and Slava that was believable. This book enlightened me as to the reasoning that led up to Robert B. Parker leaving this author in his will to continue the Jesse Stone series. Highly recommended.

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## Sandy says

3.5 stars

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## Kelley says

ARC received courtesy of Goodreads.com First Reads Giveaway

I cannot believe that I haven't discovered Reed Farrel Coleman before now! What a talent! This novel is so well-written, I wish I could give it more than 5 stars!

Gus, the main character, is a retired cop working at a rundown hotel driving the courtesy van. His son died suddenly on the basketball court and out of that grief came a lack of faith, a divorce and brokenness. His brokenness is what drives this story. He has friends of questionable moral and ethics who have saved his life in the past. In short, he's trying to put his life back together in a new way.

In doing a favor for an ex-priest friend he is asked to look into the murder of a man's granddaughter. The cops have her murder in custody but the grandfather needs the why of the crime. While trying to give the man some answers, Gus is also drawn into tensions between his friend Slava and his enemies from the Motherland of Russia.

I find Coleman's writing compulsively readable, very realistic with a whole lot of cynics with a dash of hope that maybe things really aren't as bad as they seem. I found the law enforcement people just like the ones that I know. I'll be searching for the 1st book in this series and also for the books in Coleman's other 4 series.

What a talent!!

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### **Andrew Smith says**

I like the way Coleman writes: he consistently delivers no nonsense, hardboiled crime fiction. But following the conclusion of his successful Moe Prager series, I was slightly nervous as to how he would follow it up. I shouldn't have been. His first book introducing his new front man Gus Murphy, *Where It Hurts*, hit all the right notes and I instantly took a liking to (yet) another damaged ex-cop trying to eke out a living whilst continuing to entertain in the thought that he can still bust balls and see off the bad guys, sans uniform. Murphy struts his stuff on Long Island, New York – but not in the well-heeled parts. His manor is not The Hamptons, that summer destination for affluent New York City residents, but the more working class area of Suffolk County.

Gus lost his son in tragic circumstances and now lives in an airport motel, where he doubles as the in-house detective and the shuttle service driver. He's divorced, struggling to come to terms with the loss of his son but he has recently invited a new woman into his life. Could it be that after hitting rock bottom his life is on the upturn again? Well, that assessment might be challenged as he agrees to look into the death of a young woman as a favour for a friend of his.

The heart of the story is really Gus and his struggle with where he finds himself at this point in his life. The investigation is interesting enough and it does allow the author to introduce some colourful characters that certainly add spice to the tale, but for me it still boiled down to a question of whether our lead man was going to manage to shuffle his life in the right direction or if he was going to be forced back into the shadowlands of despair and regret, whence he came.

It's a well written and engaging story with a cast of characters that could have come straight out of a Dickens novel. It's great fun. If I have a complaint it's that the plot eventually becomes somewhat predictable, but what the hell. My enjoyment of books is mainly determined by whether I find myself able to invest something in the characters within. Here I have no problem adopting Gus Murphy as a damaged soul I'll be seeking every opportunity to share company with for some time to come.

My thanks to Penguin Group Purnam and NetGalley for providing an early copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Tim says**

*WHAT YOU BREAK* by Reed Farrel Coleman is the second book of the Gus Murphy series, and follows Gus in his attempts to move on with his life after the sudden death of his son followed by the break up of his marriage. Gus is a former police officer with several years on the force who never was a detective, but has experience & qualities that enable him to be effective as a private detective.

Gus has a relationship with Magdalena, who like him comes along with baggage, yet the two of them have a good relationship where there seems to be a foundation for a future together.

Slava is a friend of Gus who is a mysterious Russian with a past that they've agreed not to talk about, yet Slava lets Gus know in no uncertain terms that he lives in shame and will be haunted by his past, and feels

compelled to live since death would be too easy of a way out for him, he must live to suffer.

Bill McKinney is a former priest and is the only other close friend of Gus at this point in his life, and like Slava is someone that Gus trusts and feels indebted to since they both share the distinction of having saved his life.

Bill asks Gus to look into the death of the granddaughter of a business man named Spears, who Gus takes an immediate disliking to. Gus accepts only after Spears offers to set up a foundation in the name of his late son.

Gus questions his decision but vows to keep his word, and he is also caught up in his friend Slava's possible involving in an assassination that Gus has witnessed.

I've already given much away here, and adding more might spoil the rest of what takes place.

Recently I gave a less than glowing review of Robert B. Parker's Debt to Pay written by author Reed Farrel Coleman where I mentioned my disappointment with the book yet mentioned that the writer may be a fine writer and I that only had that book to judge him by. Soon after, I had the chance to be able to read this, and am glad I did as this is a very good book that is well written with strong characters and action to keep interest from start to finish. I need to go back and read Where It Hurts, the first book in the series, and will look forward to other books by this author in the future.

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## **Jeanette says**

After liking the first book, this one disappointed. Gus is such a downer. And the characters in this one, although well drawn (especially Slava and the Polish/Russian gang associates )- were cold. Merciless seems like a mantra.

There is such repeated talk of young death and endless back looking despair of void over his son, John Jr.- that it just lays like a pall over the whole. Not the new woman or the varied job flow even dents it, IMHO. Only technical or procedural movements and eats seem to mix the gloom for more than a page at a time.

There's just too much violence in this scenario, even Long Island is described by its dregs as much as its advantages, IMHO. And the Vietnam vet priest seems like a cartoon to me, especially in his speech patterns. He's dark too. The entire thing seems nearly joyless.

Mean, post-cop misery gets some answers. Not the ones I wanted or felt compelled to know by the 1/2 way point, that's for sure. I am disappointed because I liked the first one much better and it held tension. This one didn't for me.

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## **J.R. says**

The sudden death of his son ended the life Gus Murphy had as a husband/father and Suffolk County police officer. Now, besotted with grief and regrets, he ekes out a living as house dick/van driver for an airport hotel and bouncer at a sleazy club.

All that changes and not for the better when Gus reluctantly accepts a job looking into the brutal murder of Micah Spears' granddaughter. Police have the killer in custody, but Spears wants to know why he did it.

In the midst of resolving that mystery, Gus becomes entangled in another when his friend, Slava, the hotel's night bellman, is threatened because of secrets from the past.

These two entanglements put Gus and those close to him in danger from a Russian mercenary and street

gangs and put him in conflict with hostile cops.

I love Coleman's Moe Prager series and expected to enjoy this second in the Gus Murphy series. While it features Coleman's usual fine prose, good characterization, sense of place and gripping plot, the narrative plods along at times due to our still getting to know Gus. But, hey, I'm up to continuing the journey.

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## Art says

The second book in the Gus Murphy series is another dark take on life after loss. This regional series paints a very dim picture of life on the raw side of Long Island.

The death of his son has shattered Gus's life. His job, his wife, his family and his professional relationships as a former Suffolk County policeman have all been irreparably altered.

Just as he seems to be coming to the surface to catch a gulp of air, he finds himself involved in two cases that threaten his new love and his new best friend. And as the cases intersect, they may make him choose between the two people he holds dear.

Reed Farrel Coleman is an incredible talent. This series has legs!

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## Alex Cantone says

*With the El tracks, the little shops at street level, and two stories of rental apartments above them, the streets crowded with people, I felt I was looking into the past at old New York. But in the past, the signs would have been in English or maybe Italian or Yiddish. Not the signs here now, Not now. In Brighton Beach the signs were written in Russian. Maybe it was Ukrainian. How the hell would I know the difference?*

**What You Break** is the second in series of crime novels by Reed Farrel Coleman to feature former Suffolk County police officer, Gus Murphy, working as courtesy bus driver and sometime hotel security for the Paragon, airport hotel on the seamier side of Long Island, New York. The action takes place a few months after **Where It Hurts** and features many of the same characters, with frequent references to the often violent confrontations in the earlier book. His ex-wife features briefly and his blossoming affair with actress Magdalena is on hold when she goes to Detroit for rehearsals for a play.

The second book opens with Gus transferring two guests from the local airport, one chatty, the other silent, a "Michael Smith" who the night porter, Slava, recognises. Slava and Gus eat breakfast together each Saturday following the late shift, but have a gentlemen's agreement not to discuss their pasts. When Gus is attacked in his room at the hotel he follows Slava and the man to Coney Island in Brooklyn, where he is witness to an assassination and helps Slava go into hiding from the Russian mafia.

Running in parallel (Father) Bill Kilkenny introduces Gus to businessman Micah Spears, who he knew from Vietnam, and whose adopted granddaughter, Linh Trang, was brutally murdered by a member of one of the Hispanic gangs, who was arrested after a tipoff but refuses to talk. Spears wants answers, offering money to set up a charitable fund in memory of Gus' son John Jr to take up the case. Reluctantly Gus follows up leads, talking to family, friends and the factory where she worked as an accountant.

*The workers eyed me with suspicion. I didn't blame them. A lot of the people who worked the dirty, dangerous jobs on the island were illegals. If you deported all the illegals off Long Island, there'd be no open restaurants, our lawns would overwhelm us, and no one would be available to repave driveways or lay tiles.*

Like the first book this is a slow-burner initially, written in short chapters across the days, with Coleman deftly weaving the two stories in parallel, until they overlap...a master of the noir crime genre.

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## **Dave says**

I almost gave this one a "Two" star rating..

I LOVE Coleman's Moe Prager series. But one thing I didn't like about that series was that it seemed like he demanded that you remember EVERYTHING from the books before-and if you happened to miss a book in the series, too bad....

Even though this is just book 2 of his new series, it seems once again, Coleman wants you to recall his previous book-very well.

I enjoyed the 1st Gus book, though not as much as his Moe series. Book 2 has left me underwhelmed again. As others have said, it is very dark and gloomy. (as were the Moe Prager books at times) Maybe too much so.

And the mystery(ies) well it wasn't that much of a mystery. The big reveal scenes were ok, but nothing you didn't see coming (more so if you read the inside flap before starting the book..)

I will read #3 when it comes out.....I just hope I remember the events in 1 and 2... :)

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## **Heather Gadd says**

This past weekend I read *Where It Hurts* and *What You Break* and not only are they extremely involved stories with several cogs and moving parts, but they serve to get you thinking about a number of issues that you are currently seeing in the evening news. If I learned anything from reading this book, it is that I need to brush up on my history and current events. My favorite part about reading, even if it's fiction, is the knowledge you pick up as part of the story. So much of this story piqued my interest when it came to cultures and places I know very little about. . I look forward to when I don't have a tower of books awaiting to be read so that I can do some of my own research. Which also segues into why this is yet another book that you shouldn't read if you're hungry. Coleman is constantly describing delicious, regional fare, whether it be pizza or fast food wings, in addition to the constant stream of coffee that had me craving my cuppa joe, even in the middle of the night. I was a huge fan of the supporting cast, people so intricately described that I can vividly conjure them up in my imagination; Slava is definitely my favorite. I'll be honest, though, the main character is not my favorite person. His brusqueness and bitterness are a huge turnoff for me, and finishing these books was like coming out of a constant depression. However, I believe that is the point. The author is very successful in getting across Gus's state of mind, which is what makes Reed Farrel Coleman an excellent storyteller and why I enjoyed these books.

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## **Ross Cumming says**

This is the second and latest of the Gus Murphy series of novels and it's a cracker. Murphy is a retired Suffolk County cop whose world fell apart when his son died suddenly and now he works as a courtesy bus driver, bouncer and house detective at the Paragon Hotel in Long Island. He is also an unlicensed PI and in this latest novel he has to keep his Polish friend Slava safe from a Chechen hitman, while trying to discover the reason for a young Vietnamese girl's apparently motiveless death, at the hands of a local gangbanger. All this, while also trying to keep his relationship with Maggie from disintegrating, dealing with his ex-wife and trying to manage his own grief.

There is a small cast of recurring characters from the first novel of whom 'Father' Bill is the most prominent being a sort of mentor to Gus.

The writing is great and Gus's character has been developed further in this novel and although his back story is repeated, it's done in a way that it doesn't feel as though it's a retread of what was written in the first novel. I did think it was fairly easy to guess the source of the murder but not the reasons of why it was done. Also by the end of the novel Gus has potentially vowed to work with some questionable people in order to keep those around him safe and I suspect this may be laying the groundwork for the next instalment?

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## **Lori L (She Treads Softly) says**

What You Break by Reed Farrel Coleman is a very highly recommended second detective novel featuring ex-cop Gus Murphy.

Gus is still working as security for the Paragon Hotel in Suffolk County and part time courtesy driver to Long Island's MacArthur Airport. Gus is asked by his friend Bill Kilkenny, an ex-priest, to meet with Micah Spears and take on an investigation into why Spears granddaughter, Linh Trang, was brutally murdered. The cops have the man who did it, suspect, Asesinos gang member Rondo Salazar, but no one knows why he did it and he's not talking. Spears offers Gus two big incentives to find out the answers: 2 large check, one to fund a youth sports association in John Jr.'s name, his late son, and another to fund research at Stony Brook University Hospital.

At the same time it appears that his reticent friend who also works at the Paragon, Slava Podalak, is in trouble. A man with a Russian accent who appears to be on the run has arrived and he and Slava took off together. Gus followed, saw them pick up a third man, and go to his house. After Slava and the first man left, Gus saw the third man gunned down in front of his house. The cops are now questioning Gus when it's reported that his car was near the scene, but Gus doesn't give them any help while he's trying to protect Slava. But when a mysterious Russian hitman implies Maggie's (Gus's girlfriend) life is in danger if Gus doesn't provide him information, Gus needs to protect her too.

Gus Murphy is a great character and I'm pleased to see him back in this second novel. Again, the writing is great, the plot is tight, and the action fast-pace. While I didn't like What You Break quite as much as the first Gus Murphy novel, Where It Hurts, we're talking 4.5 to 5, so I still liked it quite a bit. It is just as engrossing as the first and yes, I stayed up way too late to finish it. There are two great factors that make Coleman's Gus Murphy novels so appealing. The first is the character of Gus, who is flawed. He's broken, still hurting, and it seems that memories and emotional minefields are everywhere for him.

Gus is smart, though, which leads to the second fact: they are well written and thoughtful. I like that we don't



always know what Gus is thinking, that he plays his cards close to his chest. I would expect that of him and appreciate it in the character. When the cases eventually, unexpectedly collide, it is very clever. The end is a bit of a shocker, but it leads to some serious anticipation for the next Gus Murphy novel. You kind of want to tell Gus, "Be careful, Boy-o, with your heart and yourself."

Disclosure: My review copy was courtesy of the Penguin Publishing Group.

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## **Karl says**

"What you break, you own ... forever"

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## **Gloria Feit says**

Michael Connolly has Los Angeles, Ian Rankin Edinburgh, Laura Lippman Baltimore; the late Robert Parker Boston; Tim Hallinan Bangkok. Others write about localities they know. And Reed Farrel Coleman not only lives in Suffolk County, Long Island, New York, but takes us on a guided tour, in this novel featuring his somewhat flawed ex-cop Gus Murphy, still suffering after the death of his 20-year-old son, John Jr. Gus, divorced after the death blew up his marriage, lives and works at a second-rate motel, driving a van to and from MacArthur airport and a LIRR station, picking up and dropping off passengers to and from the Paragon and providing security services in exchange for a free room.

The night bellman, Slava, who had once saved Gus's life, is a close friend. When his friend's past catches up with him and his life is threatened Gus is faced with a dilemma: sacrifice his friend or attempt to help him. Meanwhile, another of Gus's friends, the ex-priest Bill Kilkenny, asks him to take on finding out why wealthy Miceh Spears' granddaughter was murdered. The two plots move along simultaneously along the highways and byways stretching from Queens County and Brooklyn right across Long Island.

Coleman even delves into the social and economic differences between various localities, with the Long Island Expressway sort of dividing north (white and wealthy) and south (for the most part poorer) and how enclaves protect the richer from others. The novel takes a penetrating look at Gus, his personality and psyche, his assets and flaws.

A good read, the novel is recommended

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