



Fatal Judgment

Irene Hannon

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"Extraordinary writing . . . a not-to-be-missed reading experience."-- *RT Book Reviews* on *Against All Odds* (4½ stars, Top Pick)

U.S. Marshal Jake Taylor has seen plenty of action during his years in law enforcement. But he'd rather go back to Iraq than face his next assignment: protection detail for federal judge Liz Michaels. His feelings toward the coldhearted workaholic haven't warmed in the five years since she drove her husband--and Jake's best friend--to despair . . . and possible suicide.

As the danger mounts and Jake gets to know Liz better, he's forced to revise his opinion of her. And when it becomes clear that an unknown enemy may want her dead, the stakes are raised. Because now both her life--and his heart--are in danger.

Full of suspense and romance, *Fatal Judgment* launches a thrilling series featuring three siblings bound by blood and a passion for justice.

Praise for the books of Irene Hannon

"Fast-paced crime drama with an aside of romance . . . [and] an ever-climactic mystery. Hannon's tale is engagingly sure-footed."--*Publishers Weekly*

"Hannon is a master at character development."--*Library Journal*

"Superbly written."--*Booklist*

RITA®-award-winner (and four-time finalist) **Irene Hannon** is the bestselling author of more than thirty-five novels, including *Against All Odds*, *An Eye for an Eye*, and *In Harm's Way*. A former corporate communications executive with a Fortune 500 company, Irene now writes full time from her home in Missouri.

Fatal Judgment Details

Date : Published January 1st 2011 by Revell (first published November 24th 2010)

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Author : Irene Hannon

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Genre : Romance, Christian, Suspense, Mystery, Romantic Suspense

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From Reader Review *Fatal Judgment* for online ebook

Ruth says

The last thing U.S. Marshal Jake Taylor wants is a high-profile protection case that places him anywhere in the vicinity of the widow of his best friend from college – the icy federal judge Elizabeth Michaels. Convinced that Elizabeth's single-minded drive to advance her career at the cost of her marriage destroyed her husband, leading to his untimely death, Jake determines to maintain a strict professional distance. But his resolve to maintain a cool detachment is tested when it quickly becomes apparent that Liz's sister was murdered in a tragic case of mistaken identity, and the judge herself was the intended victim.

Grief-stricken and vulnerable, the woman Jake gets to know while attempting to protect Liz from the unknown killer's second attempt is nothing like the prejudiced mental image he'd carried with him for years. Intensely private and dedicated to her work, Liz had never understood the animosity Jake had projected during their few brief encounters years earlier. As she struggles to cope with the guilt of a failed marriage, compounded by the brutal loss of her last surviving family member, Liz struggles to cling to her faith as her world seems to spiral increasingly out of control. When the murderer seizes a second chance to eliminate Liz, Jake finds himself in a race against time to save the life of the last woman he ever expected to invade his heart.

This is my second time to revisit the first installment of Hannon's series focusing on the U.S. Marshal Service. Matt and Nick, FBI agents previously featured in her debut series, *Heroes of Quantico*, make brief appearances – but whether one is a long-time fan of Hannon's work or new to her writing, revisiting *Fatal Judgment* has proven that Hannon's work stands the test of time. Rather than a feeling of déjà vu, revisiting Jake and Liz's story reminded me anew of Hannon's facility for penning a swoon-worthy romance wrapped up in a nail-biting storyline.

From the opening pages, it's clear that Hannon has done her homework into the protocols and logistics involved in a high-profile protection case. She excels at immersing the reader in the high-stakes, fast-paced world of the investigation, from evidence retrieval to the logistics of inter-agency cooperation. Hannon's storyline has a ripped-from-the-headlines appeal that feels more relevant now than when it was first published in 2011. Given the fractious nature of the current political cycle, *Fatal Judgment's* focus on a deranged individual's determination to make a misguided political statement wrapped in the guise of patriotism lends the novel a jolting sense of realism – a legitimacy that can often be lacking in romantic suspense. This realistic spark is one of the many reasons I love Hannon's suspense novels – the stories she crafts are compulsively readable because they are so incredibly well-researched and chillingly possible.

Irene Hannon is my go-to author for quality, un-put-downable romantic suspense, a distinction made even firmer by the happy realization that her novels stand the test of time and the often critical eye that can come from revisiting a favorite author's earlier work. I love her heroes – she's one of the best to write the male point-of-view in this or any genre, and U.S. Marshal Jake Taylor, a member of the service's elite Special Operations Group, is no exception. Hannon adds depth to her hero by delving into his relationships with his siblings, his dedication to his work and the members of his family adding heart-warming depth to his character as the relationships are sketched on the page.

But while I love a handsome, angst-ridden hero, perhaps best of all Hannon's heroines are no shy wallflowers that wilt in the face of danger. Despite the heartbreak of her failed marriage and the horror of her sister's murder, Liz is a fighter, smart and savvy in the face of danger. Passionate about her work and

dedicated to her faith, Liz's determination to excel in her field add a unique depth to the storyline. And I adore the fact that Jake and Liz had a complicated history of preconceptions to work through. Despite the accelerated pace of their developing relationship, the mere fact that they have shared "baggage" to work through is a refreshing change from stories where couples – imperiled or not – who've just met fall in love.

Despite knowing the story's outcome this time around, I found I still could not put this novel down. With a subtly woven faith element that feels completely organic to the storyline and characters' history and experiences, Jake and Liz's journey to overcome past scars in the face of life-threatening danger results in a compelling, page-turning read. Hannon delivers a tautly-plotted thriller with a swoon-worthy hero, sizzling moments of romantic tension, and a realistic, spine-chilling threat – all elements that have made her a star author of romantic suspense. I absolutely cannot wait one of her well-crafted worlds next!

Note: This is an edited and expanded version of my original review, first published in January 2011.

Katie says

I've heard good things about Irene Hannon's romantic suspense books...and it is all TRUE!! Wow! Fatal Judgment a wild ride!!

Both Jake and Liz were great characters. Brought to life through Irene's writing voice, I really connected with them.

And the whole adventure, with the wacko killer after Liz, was intense! Especially the very detailed, and brilliant, abduction. I was on the edge of my seat, rooting for Jake and his friends to find her in time. What a close call!!

All in all, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and will be diving into the next in the series, Deadly Pursuit, next!

Lorraine says

SUMMARY: U.S. Marshal Jake Taylor has seen plenty of action during his years in law enforcement. But he'd rather go back to Iraq than face his next assignment: protection detail for federal judge Liz Michaels. His feelings toward the coldhearted workaholic haven't warmed in the five years since she drove her husband--and Jake's best friend--to despair . . . and possible suicide.

As the danger mounts and Jake gets to know Liz better, he's forced to revise his opinion of her. And when it becomes clear that an unknown enemy may want her dead, the stakes are raised. Because now both her life--and his heart--are in danger.

Full of suspense and romance, Fatal Judgment launches a thrilling series featuring three siblings bound by blood and a passion for justice.

REVIEW: Written in the style of Robin Cook's medical thrillers, this fast-pace, suspense-ridden, romance with an interwoven thread of faith kept me reading from start to finish. The characters are well developed, and the romance between Jake and Liz is sweet without being mushy. Both Jake and Liz had previous

relationships that weighed heavy upon them for things that felt they had done wrong. Yet through faith and discussion they both were able to look more objectively at themselves and what had happened in their lives.

I did find it interesting that the author revealed early who the "bad guy" was and then used clues that were stumbled upon to lead the team of law enforcement to the conclusion of who it was. I also liked the scenario she used for directing Jake to clues about Liz.

I look forward to reading the next in this Guardian of Justice series.

FAVORITE QUOTES: "Faith is a funny thing. It's easy to believe while life is rolling merrily along. But in times of trial, it's tempting to turn away from God. Yet that's when we need him the most."

"In my experience, people MAKE time for the things that are important to them."

"There's a comfort in knowing God is always there, no matter how dark it gets."

Hannah says

[Also, it seems like s

Mike says

This is a run-of-the-mill story with no surprises. The writing flows along well enough, but not a lot is said and none of it fresh. The hero, Jake, has 'chiseled features' and a 'clean-shaven jaw.' She 'nestled against a broad, solid chest'. This is not essentially bad but when the same kind of formulaic description and incident occurs on every page it is hard to stay the course. The discovery of the villain's identity felt very contrived and the ending drags on far too long once the action is over.

There is no question Irene Hannon can write but you get the feeling she can do (or has done) far better.

Joleen says

Fatal Judgment by **Irene Hannon**

Genre: Drama, mystery, suspense

Format: Kindle

Published: 2011

Timeframe: Present Day

Location: St. Louis, MO

Main Characters:

Liz Michaels: Main Character, judge whose sister was just killed

Jake Taylor: US Marshal protecting Liz

Cole Taylor: Jake's brother, St. Louis PD detective

Alison: Jake's sister

I was a bit leery of getting into a suspense book right after the easy, sweet western romance I just finished. I have to say, *Fatal Judgment* went quick and was pretty good. But I have to look at it as a secular book, because if I read it as a Christian book, I'd be disappointed... explanation at the end.

It was indeed suspenseful in a number of parts. Couldn't put it down. And the author did a great job with characters and research in a number of areas, and it was well written! (I had to smile at all the references to Blackberries, but it was written in 2010 and published January 2011. Funny how seven years makes such a difference.)

As for the plot... It begins with Federal Judge Liz Michaels in the hospital praying her sister will survive the gunshot wound to the back of her head. US Marshal Jake Taylor has just been assigned protection duty for the judge. He knows her, and doesn't like her, so this was going to be an unpleasant assignment.

Taking her to a safe house for a while and spending time with her, along with other law enforcement personnel, Jake gets to know the real Liz Michaels, not the uncaring wife of his best friend he believed her to be.

But a killer must be found. They believe it's the husband because he was abusive to Liz's sister and she was in the process of leaving him. But we learn there's a lot more behind the shooting, and boy does the suspense notch up.

I can't decide if the author is against the second amendment so I'm vacillating on how I will rate this. One of the characters is a wacko member an anti-government group, going off the deep end and becoming violent. It either paints the use of guns in a bad light, or the use of guns in the hands of wackos in a bad light. I'm not a fan of guns, but I do believe a person has the right to bear arms to protect themselves, so I believe in the second amendment. I'm not a fan of wackos using guns, so that's my dilemma. Is the author making a point, or is it just a way to have a suspenseful plot using the fringe element from a group that only wants to make an issue relevant, and really means no harm?

Within the book there is an attraction between two people. One is a dedicated Christian who, despite the awful death of her husband, is still trusting God and believes He works all things together to those who love Him. The other also had a tragic death of a spouse and decided he was unhappy with God, questioning His sovereign will. Becoming friends with such a person and having a mission to help him back into a right relationship with God is acceptable. But falling in love with him without regard to his position in Christ is not. So, this is another reason I'm having a hard time with a rating.

Now, if I was to forget the fact that this is labeled as *Christian Fiction*, and just saw it as a secular book, it would be pretty good. Very well done, and one I stayed up until 1am reading. I'm just disappointed when authors veer away from God's perfect will for Christians.

Ah well, I'm going to go with 4-stars because of how entertaining it was, despite my personal preference of what should be said in a Christian book. (Normally I'm not as gracious.)

Alicia says

I appreciate that this was a clean book and wasn't just about shooting people. It was exciting at parts.

However, I found myself gagging on the lameness and dry-heaving on the cheesiness. I'm not an author, nor have I had any extensive training in writing, but I kept getting distracted by rewording really awkward sentences, unrealistic dialogue, and over-the-top interactions in my head. Doesn't the author have an editor that's supposed to help her out with that stuff? What about a writing group where people tell you when it sounds awful and help you fix it?

In all, I would say that if you don't want to think about anything, this could be a good read for you. Having too much going on in your head is a detriment to enjoying this book.

Ellen says

I have to say the cover is what made me check it out to begin with, it didn't hurt that I got it for free.

I have to say the author did a good job of creating characters that I could like. Their relationship developed over time instead of instantly which I liked.

This book didn't focus on sex, even though there was some sexual tension, there wasn't any foul language, and the story actually centered on the characters themselves.

I was not aware that this book was a Christian romance when I got it.

It did get a little preachy in a few places, but I have to say overall I really like the story and I couldn't put it down till I finished it.

Nora St Laurent says

Fatal Judgment is a chilling story that can be taken from today's headlines. Irene Hannon pens a realistic, intriguing, gripping story I couldn't put down. In light of a recent shooting that took place in Tucson, Arizona a month ago, of a female politician and a man in Florida who held a school board at gunpoint earlier this year, the situation in this book is very real. I was thankful to receive a review copy of a book where a federal judge's life is in danger. The FBI procedures Irene Hannon describes, add to the drama and realism of the story.

This book felt like a combination of the television shows CSI and Law and Order, without all the graphic photos, explicit violence and foul language. This author did extensive research on how U.S. Marshall's operate and the FBI agencies work together to protect the innocent. It was fascinating to see things from their point of view.

There was a believable spiritual thread throughout the book that I enjoyed. I also liked the authors' balance of violence and faith, too. The judge says, "Faith is a funny thing. It's easy to believe while life is rolling merrily along. But in times of trial, it's tempting to turn away from God. Yet, that's when we need him the most."

Judge Michaels had to think about her situation-there was no time to freak out.

"She had to keep her wits about her. Think clear. Her life depended on it. Who would try to kill her? She forced herself to examine the facts, just as she did in the courtroom, doing her best to take emotion out of the equation. The facts were straight forward...her stalker was committed in finishing the job he set out to do three weeks before." She realized she needed supernatural help.

The judge's life is turned upside-down and not in a good way-she craved her routine. Anything normal-she liked her organized, predictable life. She prays as she looks through case after case to see who could possibly want to kill her.

U. S. Marshal, Jake, had met Liz Michael's five years ago at her husband's funeral. Liz's husband was his close friend. Funny his friend didn't have nice things to say about his wife over the years. He had a good idea what this Liz was like and wanted nothing to do with a woman like her.. He'd do his job and be civil. The more interactions Jake with Liz the more he was surprised at what he discovered. He found a sensitive, broken woman in the middle of a crime scene, worried more about others than herself. She wasn't anything like his friend described. How could that be? Jake was uncomfortable with the feelings he felt in her presence and when he smelled her perfume, oh my—he had to stop this line of thinking? He was a professional and would separate his emotions from his work. He couldn't get distracted...the Judge's life depended him being focused on finding the killer.

I liked how this author took her time in having the reader get to know Federal Judge Liz and the U.S. Marshall Jake. Both parties had their own personal baggage to deal with, which affected how they operated in current time. Fatal Judgment is a captivating, romantic, suspense story that I was drawn into quickly and stayed up late reading. This is the first book in the Guardian of Justice series. I highly recommend this book. I can't wait to read the next installment.

Disclosure of Material Connection:

I received a complimentary copy of this book from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising"

The Book Club Network www.bookfun.org

The Book Club Network blog www.psalmt516.blogspot.com

Book Fun Magazine www.bookfunmagazine.com

Sarah Grace says

I haven't read many of Hannon's works, but I very much enjoyed this one! The characters were realistic and relatable, and the suspense kept me turning pages. The villain and his motive were well thought out and believable. Hannon's writing style is engaging and enjoyable and definitely left me wanting to read more.

The romance had me docking a star. A little overboard, for my personal tastes, but the story was intriguing enough that I just skimmed over the overly-descriptive parts.

Overall, another very engaging novel from Irene Hannon!

CONTENT NOTE: Recommended for ages 17+ for romance and violence. (view spoiler)

Lorraine Nunley says

You never know who you may make angry enough to kill you. That was the problem for Judge Liz Michaels. She didn't know that doing her job to the best of her ability would put her in the cross-hairs of someone who would take their anger to a terrifying level. Good suspense and I really enjoyed the romance. Full review at my website.

Dawn ♥ romance says

This Christian romantic suspense was okay with a strong beginning, good plot and exciting ending but most of it was slow going with lots of thoughts, misplaced guilt and religion. The heroine kept her past secret for so long I started not to care. Marshall Jake is unhappy to be assigned to protect judge Liz who is the widow of one of his best friends.

Cheryl says

Being a U.S. Marshal, Jake Taylor should be used to the lack of downtime but that does not mean that he has to like it. Jake is barely off the airplane, when his phone rings. It is his boss. He wants Jake to watch over Federal Judge, Elizabeth Michaels. Someone has shot Liz's sister. Jake reluctantly accepts the job. Jake has ill feelings towards Liz. She was married to his best friend Doug until he took his own life. Jake blames Liz for Doug's death. When Jake learns the real truth about Liz and Doug, will Jake's feelings towards Liz change?

Fatal Judgment is book one in the Guardians of Justice series. A new series from author, Irene Hannon. I have read a few prior novels from this author and liked them. Just like the others, I know that I can expect a quick paced story line, plenty of drama, action and some romance thrown into the mix. Though, I did like this book, I never fully committed to the characters. I don't know if it was because I was suppose to believe Jake didn't like Liz but than it was hard to get this feeling when from the first moment he saw her, he felt something for her. Overall, I do think that Fatal Judgment is a good start to this series.

Sarita says

This was my first book by Irene Hannon, and I am now a fan!

The writing: The story was so well written and I loved how the characters were portrayed. The writing made me love the characters and being drawn in to their story from the start. I felt compassion for both Liz and Jake and loved to see the love between them grow, as well as how they went through the healing process from their past.

The suspense story was also well written. The bad guy was revealed from the beginning, however, I liked this as it was different to see how the US Marshals are following the leads, as well as feel frustration when they were so close in identifying the culprit, but then life and events happen which throws them off. The

story also felt real, they didn't catch the guy right away and it took them a few days to follow the leads and find Liz versus immediately.

Everything about this book felt real, the suspense part, the way Liz and Jake interacted with each other and threat to Liz's life.

I will highly recommend this book to anyone who loves a great romantic suspense!

Maggie K says

I did manage to finish this book, mostly because it had so many good reviews, I thought it must be going to do something surprising. It didn't really, at least not plot-wise. This was the book that wasn't quite sure if it was about faith, or a mystery, or a romance. Yes, something can be all 3, I just don't think this came together.

So, Jake is a work-a-holic widower cop who lost his faith after his wife's death. He is assigned to do protective duty for a judge whose pregnant sister was shot in her home. It ends up she's the widow of his buddy who committed suicide after ranting to Jake about how his wife was so unsupportive.

Liz is a work-a-holic widow judge who found her faith after her husband's suicide. When her pregnant sister is shot at her home she is not happy to see her dead husband's aloof buddy as her protector.

So right there, 2 parts of the books tie-up are already exceedingly obvious. Liz just has to show a little emotion about her pregnant sister's serious situation for him to decide to be compassionate, and the next thing you know they are all hot for each other. Seriously, in about 5 seconds. Later when the suspect goes after Liz, Jake resorts to prayer, and finds his faith. In about 20 seconds.

ok-so the mystery takes a bit longer. Mostly because the suspect is so careful about forensics. Yet despite this, he manages to leave exactly one cat hair everywhere he goes. Really? you couldn't think of anything better than that?

But my biggest gripe of all is at the hospital in the first half. Although we are told the fetal heartbeat is still good and strong, when sister loses brain function, they make a big deal about donating all her organs right away so that they are viable. Excuse me, the baby? It might be using some of the organs here! NOT ONE WORD. I mean you could take care of this in one sentence, with a doctor saying the fetus was no longer viable or something, but NO ONE ASKS! This in a book where every bite of food is described and a fifteen minute nap takes up three pages!

I did like the cat, and was wondering what would happen to it. But as usual in these cookie-cutter type books, no one says a word. There is a whole epilogue about how proposal takes place months later but no more kitty. lolol--it was the only thing I cared about. Hey, she sounded like a cool cat.

PS-I just looked up the author's other series-and the first book starts off with a cop falling in love with his charge on a protection detail. Seriously? You couldn't think up a new plot? dang
