



What Doesn't Kill You

Aimee Hix

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A favor for a friend turns into a murder investigation, drawing apprentice PI Willa Pennington into a labyrinth of lies and deception in the shadows of Washington, D.C.

Willa Pennington thought that becoming a PI would be better than being a cop. She thought she'd never have to make another death notification or don a bulletproof vest again. She thought she could move past the pain of losing her best friend. She thought she'd be safe.

But she couldn't have been more wrong.

Now, agreeing to do a simple favor has brought her to a dead body, a missing person, and a battle of wits with an old friend who has dangerous secrets. If Willa can keep her focus, she could solve the murder, find the missing girl, and figure out if the person she's trusted with her life is the one trying to end it.

Praise:

"One of the best debut efforts I've ever seen. Tight plotting, edge-of-your-seat suspense and a protagonist in PI Willa Pennington you'll want to read about again and again. I couldn't put this book down."--Maggie Barbieri, author of *Once Upon a Lie*

"A debut that saddles tough-girl noir with the heart of a cozy."--*Kirkus Reviews*

"This is a solid beginning to a character and setting that could go on to very good things."--*RT Book Reviews*

"Aimee Hix is an up-and-coming author everyone should watch."--*Crimespree Magazine*

"The book has plenty of twists and surprises, but what stands out is the tight writing and fast narrative of the author's debut novel."--*Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*

What Doesn't Kill You Details

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From Reader Review What Doesn't Kill You for online ebook

Linda Strong says

Willa Pennington is an ex-cop, now in training to follow her father as a Private Investigator. She is asked to help a family friend's daughter. The daughter wants to leave the house she's been sharing with her abusive boyfriend ... and wants someone with her while she moves.

When Willa arrives at the house, the girl is nowhere to be found. However, the boyfriend is there ..and he's dead.

Doing her duty, she calls the police and reports. From there, what should have happened was for Willa to go about her own business. But Willa is not wired that way. She has a bad habit of sticking her nose in where it's not needed .. or wanted.

But then, this case becomes personal for her. Seth is an old flame, the older brother of her best friend who was killed overseas. The attraction has always been there, but there's only been a single one-night stand ...and that was years ago.

Seth appears out of nowhere and has an extremely high interest in the death of the man. While Willa is still attracted ... she doesn't trust easily. And when someone attempts to kill her .. twice .. she's wondering just who she can or cannot trust.

This is the author's debut novel and the beginning of what looks to be a terrific series. Willa is a wonderful character. She's young, she's feisty, headstrong & stubborn, and is still trying to come to terms with the loss of her best friend of many years. She has a younger brother that she adores and would protect with her life. And then there's Seth ... the man she's been attracted to forever. But he has secrets ... secrets that he's not sharing with Willa.

The book is suspenseful. There's a lot of action, some of it quite brutal. The author has done a fine job balancing Willa's professional life with her personal life. I look forward to seeing more of this author ... and Willa Pennington.

Many thanks to the author / Midnight Ink / Netgalley for the advanced digital copy. Opinions expressed here are unbiased and entirely my own.

Manon says

I was provided an ARC via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Willa Pennington left the police force to become a PI, but when she stumbles on a body, she realizes it might actually be harder than what she anticipated.

The cover doesn't tell it but this actually an amazing mystery that was also filled with a great romance.

I was captivated from beginning to end.

Willa was all kinds of great and I really liked the characters.
The mystery also had me on the edge of my seat the entire time.

This was a really good debut novel and I will be waiting for more from this author.

Jay says

The debut mystery novel from author Aimee Hix came to my attention via a blog post on the Jungle Red Writers site. After reading that post I was very intrigued and ordered the book the same day.

Now that I've been able to get around to reading it, I found it to be a solid book that serves a strong foundational launchpad for the series as a whole.

Willa Pennington is training to become a private investigator after having left the police force. She's apprenticing to her father. While he and her mother are out of town, she's called upon to help the granddaughter of a family friend move out on her abusive ex-boyfriend.

But that favor leads to the discovery of the dead body of said boyfriend and suddenly a relatively simple moving job transforms not into a murder investigation but finds Willa's life threatened. The girlfriend is in the wind and the inquiries Willa makes leads to an awkward reunion with the older brother of her deceased best friend.

As Willa continues to try and clear the granddaughter of suspicion in the death of the ex, she finds herself questioning if those around her might somehow be involved and looking to tie up any loose ends...including her.

The author does a nice job of establishing Willa as an unassuming badass without making her seem patently ridiculous or unbelievable. She's got actual training so she's no lightweight in either investigatory matters or when the situation calls for it, fighting off an attacker. But broadening the character by making her a devoted big sister to a computer genius younger brother and giving her the often joked about by others habit of being a junk food junkie was a nice, if a tad familiar, touch.

The supporting cast includes Seth Anderson, the older brother of Willa's late friend. They share a past of both happy and sad memories, all of which come rushing back at their reunion. His introduction immediately had me suspecting him of secrets which I was proved right upon as the story unfolded but rather than be disappointed in how easy that was to figure out, I went along for the ride as the truth was learned by Willa in due course.

I don't know if Detective Jan Boyd is planned to be a recurring character for the series, but I did enjoy her scenes in this book and would love to learn more about her in future books.

I will say that at times I wanted to see Willa ditch the internal dialogue and get on with things, but this being the first book in the series, it was necessary to give the readers as much of a full picture of the character and set things up for what I'm sure are to be great things to come.

For me, "What Doesn't Kill You" is a debut novel for both the author and the character that gives readers a strong feeling of what's to come for a bright new addition to the PI literary genre.

Richard says

Love Story. I received this book free from the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for a fair and honest review. Written by Aimee Hix, and published by Midnight Ink in Woodbury, Minnesota in 2018, the novel is purported to be a PI procedural murder investigation story. In fact, however, it is a thinly-disguised Romance story that is heavy on the hormones and sexual references, and light on the investigation. Wannabe private investigator, and ex-cop, Willa Pennington discovers a dead body when she goes to her neighbor's granddaughter's house to assist her in moving away from an abusive boyfriend. The body is that of the boyfriend. He had been shot twice through the chest. The granddaughter, Violet, is the immediate suspect, but Willa believes she is innocent.

Willa's father is a private investigator, and Willa wants desperately to join him in his practice. He is, however, now on a cruise in the Caribbean with his second wife and Willa's stepmother. Willa is on her own. Fearing nothing, and unable to control her impulses, she sets about starting her own murder investigation, even though she has no PI license, and even though it is not legal in Virginia for private citizens of any sort to conduct murder investigations. An old flame, Seth Anderson, soon enters the picture, and Willa's passions are immediately stirred, and stirred, and stirred . . . In fact, the stirring never seems to stop. She seems totally unable to control herself, anxious to jump into bed with Seth at every opportunity. I know what you're thinking. Somebody with such a total lack of self-control should never be an investigator of any kind, and I agree with you. The author, however, clearly does not.

At the beginning, the book seemed to have been written in 1930s-style detective noir, with a lot of sarcastic dialog and thinking-out-loud that seems a bit out of place in the 21st Century. It recurs periodically throughout the book, but is not constant, so the character of the protagonist seems to change from tough PI to vulnerable woman with romance on her mind as the story progresses.

From starting with a "bang" as Willa discovers a dead body, the story slows perceptibly. After a bit, one begins to wish the author would just get on with the story, and stop focusing on the romantic interests of Willa and Seth. It detracted greatly from what, otherwise, could have been a good story. By one-third of the way into the story, I had arrived at the conclusion that the story was "mushy," and that the character of Willa Pennington was also "mushy." The book really lacks crispness. After a while, reading it just became tedious, and I began to look forward to the ending so I could read a different book. Too bad. I thought it had a great beginning, but it just petered out . . .

By 60% into the story, I had begun to become tired and bored because this was some sort of Romance novel, filled with a lot of self-psychoanalysis about Willa and her romantic involvements with the men in her life, and with her relationship with her biological parents. Had I known in advance that this novel was a Romance, and not a PI police procedural, I would not have chosen to read it. I am quite disappointed.

There are a few inconsistencies in the story. At location #735 in the Kindle edition, Willa receives a telephone call from the missing Violet, who the police are searching for. She answers the call, trying to protect Violet by saying: "Willa Pennington here. I do not want you to tell me your name." Five paragraphs later, Willa says: "I need information only you have, Violet." What? Either she doesn't want to acknowledge who she is talking to, or she does. Which is it?

From the blurb at the beginning of the book, I did not expect it to be a love story at all. But it is. It more a love story than any other kind of story. I think this writer has talent, but if she wants to write Romance novels, she should make it clear that they are not detective, crime, murder mystery, or police procedural novels. I did not like this book and will not recommend it to others.

Eleanor Jones says

First offering from a new author who understands the word "suspense" to the core. Dark and mysterious, featuring characters who are struggling separately and together to find meaning and direction after a terrible tragedy. Nothing is what it seems and the author makes the most of that as the action and suspense builds from a dynamite opening scene. I enjoyed the characters as much as plot. I can't wait to find out what happens to Willa and Seth especially and I want to find out more about them both personally and professionally--always a good indicator that I'll be waiting impatiently for book two.

I won an early ARC review copy of this book, which I had preordered anyway. Lucky me, and thanks!

Cindy ~ says

I was impressed with this author's first book. She has a way with intermixing suspense with humor that has you on the edge of your seat while also hanging on to it from laughing.

What Doesn't Kill You kicks off a new series about a former police officer who quits to join her father's PI business. She hasn't gotten her license yet but when her next door neighbors ask her to help their granddaughter move out of an abusive situation she figures what's the harm. Well things take a big turn when she arrives to find said abusive boyfriend dead.

Willa is not one to just stand on the sidelines and let the police handle the situation. With her police training and tough as nails personality she is a force to be reckoned with.

While she is meddling where she shouldn't, she is also having to deal with the brother of her dead best friend who is back in town with whom she has a long history with and its looking like he might not be the good guy he once was.

There is so much going on through out this book – more than what I've noted in the review – that your never bored. I'm looking forward to more in this series.

LynDee says

The best debut I've read this year—I adored Willa Pennington and had a blast following her through this smart, well-plotted mystery. I can't wait for the next book in this series!

?Dani? ?Touch My Spine Book Reviews? says

I highly enjoyed this book and would recommend it to other mystery lovers! The only issue I had with this book was that it was a bit slow in places. In this book the MC is asked to help a girl leave her abusive boyfriend. I have been in this situation on both sides of it and in both situations it was scary. The characterisation in this book was great. This was definitely a good start to the series and I'm curious to see what the author has in store for us next.

Dana says

All debut novels should be as good as this one. It's a romantic thriller with a strong female protagonist, with enough romance for those that like that element in their novels, and enough solid thrills for those who want to be on the edge of their seat, dammit! I read it in one sitting, staying up well past my normal bedtime. It's a fast read -- the pacing is excellent and makes it a page-turner.

El's Book Reviews says

Willa Pennington, who is training to become a private inspector, comes across a dead body in someone else's house. Now what? She was only there to fulfill a favour requested by her family friends to help their daughter Violet leave this home in which she lives with her abusive boyfriend, who is now suddenly dead. With Violet nowhere to be found, Willa gets a creeping feeling that something is most definitely off. I mean, of course she would, she just found a dead man!

Pennington is an ex-cop, so naturally, she would do what she expects of any individual who comes across a dead body. She called the cops in her capacity as a citizen, as she was not on-duty as a PI when she was heading over to the home to help Violet move out. One would expect that once Willa called the cops and they took over the investigation, her involvement would be over, even though she was the only witness. But her inquisitive, curious nature ensures that this is most definitely not the case.

This novel follows Willa as she tries to figure out what led up to this man's death. Along the way, we see the recurrence of her good friend, Michael, who passed away while serving his country overseas. We also get to know Michael's brother, Seth, who has a significant interest in this case, along with a love interest for Willa.

Willa has a couple of near death experiences which makes her wonder who she can really trust and confide in. Will she decide to solve the man's mysterious death? Is everything truly as it seems, and should one always do favours for someone they know well? Read this novel for answers to all of these questions!

I loved Willa's sassy personality and how she prefers doing things on her own. I loved how much she cares for her younger, highly-intelligent brother Ben, as well as how much she thinks about her old friend, Michael. Her witty personality definitely adds to the novel and makes it far more enjoyable. Additionally, I really liked how all the characters in this novel have some sort of role in furthering the plot. At the end of this novel, I was not left with any unanswered questions!

What Doesn't Kill You is an impressive debut novel for the author, Aimee Hix, as I was intrigued from the start! This was my first digital copy reading, and I must admit that I truly enjoyed it. I know that after

reading this novel, I will most definitely be reading the rest of the PI Mystery series by Aimee Hix!

I want to extend a huge thank you to Netgalley and the publishers at Midnight Ink for allowing me to read an advanced copy of this novel, which in no way changes my views of this book! It was an excellent, suspenseful novel!

Keep an eye out for my review to be posted on my book reviews blog located at <https://elsbookreviews.blogspot.ca/> soon!

Sheryl says

What a knock out debut for Ms. Hix, I can't wait to see what else she has in store for us regarding the headstrong ex-cop, Willa Pennington, and her sexy childhood crush, Seth Anderson.

Willa left the local police department after a tragic event left her re-evaluating her career path. She had all the makings of being a great cop, but her heart wasn't in it anymore. She decides she'll go for her P.I. license and apprentice for her father until she can strike out on her own.

Her parents are away on an extended vacation, so she's holding down her father's agency as well as keeping her eye on her 17-year-old brother, Ben. Willa once introduced him as the only "forty-year-old newborn." He's a child genius, responsible and mindful of the family rules. Willa and Ben just pretend that since she's the oldest therefore that makes her the wisest.

Willa agrees to do a simple favor for her elderly next-door neighbors, which turns out to be anything but simple. She's not one to back away from trouble and boy does she ever find it. She finds herself slipping back into "cop mode," but that works both ways for her, she finds it helpful in some areas and others not so much.

While she's up to her eyeballs in trying to help her neighbors, she receives a mysterious call from her old friend, Seth Anderson, who wants to see her that evening. Willa's not sure where their relationship stands because when they were last together they left a lot of loose ends. She's not looking forward to the extremely awkward evening out with Seth, especially after the day she's had. Could Seth mysterious appearance while she's working on this case simply a coincidence or something much more menacing?

This is a fast-paced mystery with believable characters and witty dialogue. I liked the witty Willa; she's a strong woman who can hold her own and then some. As I stated earlier, I'm already looking forward to the next installment in the series.

DISCLOSURE: I received this e-galley from the publisher through NetGalley in exchange for my honest review. The opinions I've expressed above are my own.

Kathy says

What Doesn't Kill You is Aimee Hix's debut novel, but if you didn't know that, you'd be hard pressed to realize it. This novel reads as smooth and seasoned as the middle of a series, not the beginning. I was fortunate to read an early copy, and I remember being struck by the unfettered transitions from sentence to sentence and scene to scene. I just completed a second reading of the published novel so that my thoughts would be fresh on the content. I was as thoroughly thrilled with the second reading as the first, and one overriding thought was that Aimee Hix really knows how to write. As a former English teacher, I take great delight in her sentence structure, transitions, and command of the language. Her playful turn of phrase can surprise the reader with some gems, like "Even if he hadn't looked like a lying liar pants with his shifty lying

body language ..." Add the language mastery to the storytelling and character creation, and you have what is sure to be one of the best new books of 2018.

Willa Pendleton is an ex-cop who is in training to join her father's private investigating business. Still trying to recover from the loss of her best friend Michael, dead just four months, Willa stumbles into a murder scene when doing a favor for her neighbors, David and Susan Horowitz. Their granddaughter Violet is in an abusive relationship with a man, and Willa agrees to meet Violet at the place she shares with the abusive boyfriend to help move. But, when Willa arrives at the isolated house, no one is there, except the dead boyfriend. Violet takes a runner, and Willa, whose father is currently out of town on vacation, feels a responsibility to the Horowitzes to clear Violet of any suspicion in the murder.

When Willa's continued interest and investigation into the murder brings her dead friend's brother into the picture, Willa finds that loose ends to a murder are not all she has to figure out. Seth and Willa have a complicated relationship that provides backstory and sexual tension and witty dialogue and danger. Not bad for a couple of characters trying to figure out both their places in the world and each other's lives. It also is a bit of a problem with both of them having a vested interest in catching the killer. The case is, of course, bigger than a single murder of a loser boyfriend. And, yet, it becomes personal, too. Willa's doggedness to follow the threads and find answers takes a course of high drama and brutal action that endangers her life.

Suspense, action, great story, great structure, great characters. I can hardly wait for Book #2!

Alan says

A 28-year-old ex-cop, Willa Pennington, investigates a neighborhood murder only to discover an old flame, Seth, is also involved. A reluctant romance is rekindled with Seth. Willa's investigation soon goes beyond a simple murder and some truly sinister people become suspects. Then, as Willa develops more evidence, someone tries twice to kill her.

The characterizations in "What Doesn't Kill You" are realistic, deep and three-dimensional. Willa is strong, smart and witty. And she's grieving the combat death of her best friend. Seth is quiet, confident and charming. The plot is believable, fast-paced and appropriately complex. The writing is polished.

Highly recommended for readers of private investigator mysteries. Also recommended for readers of romantic suspense.

Julia says

I was provided with a copy of this book by the publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

I quite enjoyed this one!

I found the main character, a cool, 28-year-old ex-cop, quite relatable and I was really curious to see how her story is going, which was further encouraged by the really engaging writing style. Further, the comparatively small set of characters was fitting for the novel's length. This novel never got boring and I didn't mind the love story/crime mix up at all (which I usually do).

All in all, I highly recommend this novel to anyone who wants to enjoy some easy yet exciting bedside reading.

Dharma Kelleher says

While still reeling from the death of her best friend, aspiring private investigator Willa Pennington agrees to help the granddaughter of a neighbor move away from an abusive boyfriend. But when she gets to the house, she finds the boyfriend dead and the girl missing.

After calling the police, she decides to investigate herself, even though she is technically unlicensed. She has been apprenticing under of her private detective father, who is currently on vacation. Her attempts to solve the murder lead her to reconnect with her dead best friend's brother, with whom she develops complicated relationship.

I really wanted to like this book. Unfortunately it read more like an unpolished rough draft of Veronica Mars fan fiction rather than a finished novel. The way the police allow her to traipse through the crime scene unaccompanied was completely implausible. The protagonist as reckless damsel in distress trope got old quickly and she just comes off as immature and whiny. There are countless inexplicable leaps of logic and connections that appear randomly. Most of the novel is overly neurotic internalizations rather than action or dialogue with other characters.

The conclusion for the story was good and almost made up for the flaws of the rest of the novel. But then a new character (and potential threat) appeared near the end and then inexplicably disappeared. This ruined what could have been a solid ending.

To make matters worse, the ARC that I read was rife with countless typos and paragraph formatting so bad it was hard to tell who was speaking sometimes. I hope the publisher fixes these before it goes to print.

I think this author shows a lot of potential. It's just not fully realized in this novel.

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