



## Best Intentions

*Erika Raskin*

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## **Best Intentions** Erika Raskin

Marti Trailor—social worker on hold, mother of three, wife of a successful obstetrician, daughter of a Congressman—is ready to go back to work. She’s thrilled when the perfect opportunity falls in her lap. The catch? The job is at her husband’s hospital and he seems not to share her enthusiasm. Undeterred, she takes the position counseling vulnerable young women as they prepare to give birth.

Marti quickly begins to feel like she is making a difference in the lives of her clients. Soon, though, she finds herself caught up in the dark side of the medical center—with its long hours, overworked doctors and entrenched practices. When she witnesses something she can’t unsee, Marti, who has always done her best to keep a low-profile, finds herself thrust under a dangerous spotlight with all of Richmond, Virginia watching.

In her captivating domestic suspense novel *Best Intentions*, Erika Raskin weaves together high stakes hospital politics, the pressures of family life, and the consequences of trying to do the right thing.

## **Best Intentions Details**

Date : Published August 15th 2017 by St. Martin's Press

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Author : Erika Raskin

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## From Reader Review Best Intentions for online ebook

### Zoe says

Intense, ominous, and engrossing!

Best Intentions is a character-driven thriller that highlights how easily someone's behaviour can be misconstrued, manipulated, and used against them.

It is, ultimately, a story about marriage, motherhood, friendship, social work, greed, deception, adultery, medical politics, and the legal process.

The writing is well done. The characters are complex and multilayered with some being loving, supportive, and kind and others being pompous and self-centered. And the plot, although sometimes a little hard to follow as it flips from the past to the present, has a nice balance of suspense, tension, character development, and surprises.

Overall I would have to say that Best Intentions is a compelling, well-written read that once started will keep you entertained and invested to the very end.

Thank you to St. Martin's Press for providing me with a copy in exchange for an honest review.

All my reviews can be found on my blog at <http://whatsbetterthanbooks.com>

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### Shruti Ramanujam says

*I received this book as an ARC via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. All thoughts and opinions expressed here are my own.*

I cannot stress this enough—I LOVED this book. It drove me crazy. It's been so long since I was this obsessed with a book. I command you to check this book out once it releases. I swear to all literary gods that you'll like this book!

#### **Review:**

As always, let's start with the characters. It's all the more relevant here because of how character-driven this book is. This book's rating is fully because of all the strong characters that are in it. They beautifully carry the story forward. I was rooting for the protagonist Marti throughout. I was even able to identify with Marti a lot! I took to calling some of my favorite lines as Marti-isms.

Because I was already in love with Marti, I reacted like all her downfalls were mine while reading this book. Like all thriller/suspense novels involving doctors, Marti and her husband have marital issues. This maybe a trope but it never gets old for me. I swear, all the medical thrillers I've read have turned me away from doctors forever. But, I digress. Marti's husband Elliot is an overworked doctor who's never around. When he is, he constantly snaps at Marti. Needless to say, I HATED him.

The world building is amazing. The story jumps between the past and the present and it beautifully merges at the 70% mark. What I really liked about the plot was how simple it was. It's not very cerebral but it has far-reaching consequences. And Ms. Raskin ties it all up neatly. There are no plot holes, this book ends perfectly. The writing is excellent and the story is extremely fast-paced. The fast-paced nature also made me blind to negatives, if any.

To summarize, this is the best in women's literary fiction I've read in a long time. If you enjoy women's fiction and suspense, please do read this book. I assure you you'll love it.

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### **Kristy says**

Marti Trailor is a beleaguered mother of three young children, struggling to hold on to any pieces of her own self as she takes care of her household and family while her husband, Elliot, works endless hours as an obstetrician. When her youngest daughter starts kindergarten, Marti, a former social worker, decides to go back to work. She gets a job, which, coincidentally happens to be in her husband's hospital--something he doesn't seem too thrilled about. Once there, Marti realizes just how overworked many of the doctors are. She also can't help but get a little too involved in the lives of her clients. It's while helping a client--and skirting that precarious line between social worker and friend--that Marti sees something horrible happen at the hospital. This event will change the course of her life forever and threaten everything she holds dear.

*This was an interesting novel, to say the least.* I was immediately drawn to it, as the author apparently lives in Charlottesville, my hometown. This book is set in Richmond, VA, and she certainly captures the area and the state quite well.

The book is told entirely from Marti's perspective and it takes a little while to fall into the pattern of reading, as present-tense and past-tense are presented together in the chapters without any break (at least they were in my ARC), leaving you a bit confused at first. The back and forth can be a little awkward and jarring in the beginning, though once you get used to it, it's a pretty compelling device. The novel isn't exactly exciting in a thriller-type way, but there's *a fascinating element to it that keeps you reading*.

There's a lot going on in this book--marital issues, a discussion on hospital policies, Marti juggling work and motherhood, investigative journalism, discussion into Richmond politics, etc. Sometimes it seems a little too much: did Marti really need to be the daughter of a Congressman, for instance?

Still, Raskin is a descriptive writer, and her prose is fairly easy to read, and again, as I mentioned, it's a hard-to-put down book. She had me from nearly the beginning, when she described one of the characters as "Tommy Lee Jones in his heyday cute." (She gets me, she really gets me, I thought!)

As the novel progresses, I found it almost Jodi Picoult-esque. There's a strong emphasis on character development, courtroom drama, and plot elements designed to make you think. Sure, the characters are drawn a bit black and white--Elliot bad, Marti good, but it works: Elliot is just so awful you cannot help but like Marti even more. Did I find the novel quite as persuasive and enjoyable as Picoult in her heyday? No. But that's pretty hard to do.

Overall, I enjoyed this one. It's descriptive, oddly compelling, and was a nice change of pace from the thrillers I've been reading lately. Definitely worth a read. I'd go with around 3.75 stars, rounded up to 4 here.

I received a copy of this novel from the publisher and Netgalley (thank you!); it is available everywhere as of 08/15/2017.

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## **Susanne Strong says**

4 Stars.

A Completely Compelling Character Driven Novel.

Best Intentions by Erica Raskin is the story of Marti Trailor. A woman. A stay at home mother of three. A wife. A best friend. And a woman accused of a horrific crime.

Best Intentions is a character driven novel. A novel about Relationships. Marriage. Family. And friendships. Friendships so deep that they take hold and don't let go. It is about a legal drama that threatens to destroy Marti Trailor's life and shakes her to her core. Yet in my opinion, the legal drama is secondary to the story about a woman whose relationships drive this novel.

Marti Trailor has three children. Nina, Simon and Poppy. They are her life. Marti's husband Elliot is a doctor: a very successful one at that, running the OB/GYN practice at the nearby Richmond Hospital, as well as being the head of the risk management program - thus he is never around. While at a social function, Marti gets offered the job of her dreams: helping to get a social work program up and running. Though she has taken years off to raise kids, social work is her specialty. The job? It just happens to be at the same hospital at which her husband works, which he isn't thrilled about. Marti excels however, and gets the program off to a fantastic start and forms an incredible bond with one of the young women who obtains assistance through the program: Tonya Maines. Marti even becomes Tonya's Lamaze coach.

While things are working out well for Marti professionally, her marriage suffers. Her husband Elliot is never home and works more and more. He is moody and snappish, leading to terse moments and little arguments. Even the kids notice. Unfortunately, an incident happens on the night Tonya gives birth, leaving Tonya's baby in a vegetative state. While the OB-GYN doctor appears to have made a grave error, things go from bad to worse and Marti is blamed and is charged for a crime.

Though the novel is about a legal battle, it is, in my opinion, a character driven novel. The author, Erica Raskin, does an excellent job at creating well rounded, multi-faceted characters. Marti Trailor, the main character drew me in immediately. Almost like glue.. I couldn't pull away. Marti's thoughts, and feelings, the way she interacted with her children, Nina, Simon and Poppy. Each child, so different, each interaction, so varied. So real. Her interactions with each client as a social worker – all so unique. None even remotely easy. Marti is strong when she needs to be strong and then, when things get tough? Well, she falls apart. Only to be picked up by her best friend, Colby. Who, in my mind is the most amazing best friend you could ever ask for. Fierce, funny, protective and extremely supportive. In short, Colby rocks. And Elliot - Marti's over worked husband? Self-centered, spineless and gutless. And that is a nice way of putting it. Ms. Raskin didn't give him any redeeming qualities. I would have kicked his butt to the curb in a heartbeat.

For me, the legal battle, almost took second place to the story of Marti Trailor and all of her various relationships. This, may perhaps be, because I work in the legal field and didn't find all aspects of the case to

completely realistic. I rated this novel 4 stars instead of 5, due to the structure of the chapters, and how each began by describing the status of the legal case and then went on to discuss how the rest of the story progressed, without breaking things up, which I found to be a little confusing. Further, I found that the ending and legal battle itself wrapped up a little too neatly for my liking, though all in all, I enjoyed the book immensely. Kudos to Erika Raskin for a job well done.

Thank you to NetGalley, St. Martin's Press and Erica Raskin for an ARC of this novel in exchange for an honest review.

Published on NetGalley and Goodreads on 3/9/17

Will be published on Amazon on 8/15/17.

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### **Sam (Clues and Reviews) says**

When I started reading Best Intentions, by Erika Raskin, I wasn't sure what to expect. I hadn't heard very much about this book. Now that I have finished, I must say, this one became the surprise hit of my summer. I cannot believe more people are not talking about this book!

The way Raskin chose to narrate the novel and roll out the plot was absolute literary brilliance. The novel opens with Marti, our narrator, looking back on the events of the story. Something bad has happened. She is facing charges. Her world has been torn apart. And, at this point, the reader has no idea why. Needless to say, I was hooked. Told through a back and forth type of narration, the reader is able to see how the events played out and the repercussions. At about the 60% point is where the reader is finally privy to the events that led Marti to her situation and I was actually shocked with how things played out; I had my suspicions and I had my theories but Raskin does a phenomenal job at leaving small breadcrumbs so the reader stays in the dark.

Marti was a complex and likeable character, a social worker and mother of three; she is living the "semi-perfect" life with her OBGYN husband. When she heads back to work and starts working at her husband's hospital, she is hesitant but eager to share her enthusiasm counseling young women as they prepare to give birth. As she gets closer to her patients and becomes involved emotionally, she finds herself caught up in the darker side of medicine and politics.

When I think domestic suspense, I usually find myself thinking of books like Behind Closed Doors by B.A Paris or The Couple Next Door by Shari Lepena. I was pleased to find that Raskin chooses to weave a completely different tale under this genre; a tale that looks at the high stakes of hospital politics, court proceedings, pressures of family life and balancing career and family and also the consequences of trying to do the right thing.

I absolutely loved Best Intentions; fast paced prose, complex characters and a plot that left me thinking, I would highly recommend this book to lovers of Jodi Picoult. It is up that same alley. 5/5 stars from me!

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## **Elizabeth of Silver's Reviews says**

Marti, the wife of a busy, important member of the OB/GYN hospital staff decides it is time for her to go back to work as a social worker.

Marti joins a new department at the hospital that helps unwed teenage mothers.

Marti gets completely involved in the lives of these girls and leaves her children's care to her mother-in-law.

Meanwhile, Marti's husband, Elliott isn't happy she is working at the same hospital as he is. Their marriage is a bit rocky to begin with, and this seems to cause more turmoil.

BEST INTENTIONS dragged for me for most of the book even though the writing was good. There was confusion for me about where I was in the story. One minute Marti was at a party or with her kids and the next minute she was with her attorney. I never was sure if she was in jail awaiting trial or out on bail talking to her attorney.

It was interesting, though, to get a glimpse into a doctor's life both at the hospital and at home. The insight into a social worker's life was an eye opener as well and frightening how medical mistakes could escalate into what happened in BEST INTENTIONS.

BEST INTENTIONS kept me reading because I wanted to see what the outcome of the trial would be, but I did have a lack of interest in the love affairs and other situations. The last 50 pages that covered the trial were the best part of the book.

BEST INTENTIONS had good intentions as a book, but it just wasn't a grab you story line for me. 3/5

This book was given to me free of charge and without compensation by the publisher in return for an honest review.

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## **Booksandchinooks (Laurie) says**

Thank you to St Martins Press for a free copy of this book for an honest review. I loved this book. The characters are well written so you have a great understanding of them. Marti is a social worker, a mom, and a wife. Her marriage has been slowly falling apart for quite some time from her doctor husband, Elliot. Marti has just returned to work as her youngest child heads to kindergarten. Marti works with pregnant unwed moms through a program run at the same hospital where her husband works. She gets very involved with one of the moms in her program and has agreed to be her labour coach. Marti has also just realized that her husband is having an affair and that her marriage is definitely over. As Tonya, the young mom, goes into labour and delivers her baby their is a catastrophic event and the baby is in a vegetative state with no hope of ever being able to live without being hooked up to various machines. The baby dies and there are many legal ramifications that affect Marti. This book is very suspenseful. It is also worth mentioning that this takes place in Richmond, Virginia and in light of things in the past week there are some moments interspersed in here that make you think it was written today. I definitely recommend this book especially if you like suspense because the style of writing the author has used definitely makes you want to keep reading.

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### **Laura Rash says**

PHENOMENAL!!!

It's been a long time since I became so absorbed in a book that I wanted the world to be respectful & leave me alone until I finished every delicious page!

Fast-paced, with wicked one liners that had me chuckling & rereading them repeatedly.

Thanks to St. Martins Press for this early copy in exchange for review.

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### **Tina says**

I really enjoyed this one. The character of Marti was well developed and I felt her sadness, hopelessness and anger. Her thoughts and feelings just enlightened the pages. The plot caught me off guard and went in a totally different direction than what I was expecting. Really love when this happens! Great writing and a joy to read.

Thank-you to St. Martin's Press and NetGalley for allowing me the opportunity to read this Advanced Reader Copy.

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### **Kayo says**

What an awesome book. I'm still reeling with what happened. The characters were real and had depth, making the story you would find in any news headline. I truly didn't want the book to end, it was THAT good.

I received this book thru Netgalley, but that had no bearing on the rating I gave it.

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### **Sarah Joint says**

**Great domestic suspense with compelling characters.** My review will contain no spoilers, but I must say I spent much of the book in the dark, not knowing exactly what was going on. I enjoyed the general confusion as I read, trying to figure things out as the book bounced back and forth between timelines. If knowing the main character is in trouble but not knowing details about why until the book is more than half over would irk you, steer clear. **It was making my head spin, but in a good way.**

**Marti** is the loving mother of three children. She gave up her career as a social worker to stay home with them, but toys with the idea of returning to the workforce as her youngest child starts kindergarten. Her husband is an overworked doctor, and their relationship is very clearly suffering from his long hours away from home. He is for some reason less than thrilled when Marti is offered a job at the very same hospital he works at, but she takes it anyway. She'll be supporting young women in different capacities as they prepare to become mothers. **She counsels these young ladies on decisions, helps them to find places to live with**

**the baby if necessary, points them in the right direction to get help they desperately need, and simply supports them in general.** She is a very empathetic person, extremely devoted to her work.

We're filled in on Marti's job and home life with great detail. Her kids are entertaining and interesting in their own rights, each with their own distinctive little personality. **This is interspersed with a different timeline, and this one is jarring: Marti is in trouble of the legal variety.** Huge trouble, the kind where she's vilified and reporters are camped out in front of her place. *Either she's done something dreadfully wrong or she's in danger of spending a long time in prison as punishment for something she didn't do.* We don't find out exactly what she's accused of until after the book is half over.

**Family drama, relationship trouble, legal issues, and hospital politics all blend together in this whopper of a book.** I didn't know which way was up sometimes, but I enjoyed the ride. I had some quibbles with the ending and would have liked the different timelines to be labeled, but I'd very much recommend giving this book a shot.

*I received an ARC of this book from Net Galley and St. Martin's Press, thank you! My review is honest and unbiased.*

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### **Deanna says**

My reviews can also be seen at: [www.deesradreadsandreviews.wordpress.com](http://www.deesradreadsandreviews.wordpress.com)

I've read some very good domestic suspense novels lately. After reading the description for "Best Intentions", I thought it sounded like another novel that I might enjoy....and I was right!

As the book opens, Marti Trailor is wondering how she ended up where she is. All she wanted was to make a difference. She feels like she's walking on a tightrope that's swinging out of control, but if she doesn't look down, then she'll be fine. If she doesn't think of "the case" or words like, malpractice, adultery, class, race, and murder, then she won't lose complete control. As someone who hates being scrutinized by the public, it's now common to hear her name on the nightly news, or from Nancy Grace.

We are aware that something has happened...something bad. But we don't know what it is. Marti is in trouble but we don't know why. I was anxious to find out what she had apparently done.

Marti tells us it all began the year before at an annual medical function. The "Spring Fling" was supposed to be a celebration of the start of her husband, Elliot's career as an obstetrician. Finally he was done with training. This was supposed to mean he would be more involved with their family. But as usual, her husband is late to the party. He tells her he'll meet her there, barely concealing his impatience and irritation at the fact that she is upset. Marti remembers the early days of marriage and Elliot's career. How exciting it was. But now....all of the emergencies, training, and meetings only meant that Elliot was never home and never available to her or the children.

As she waits for her husband, Marti heads to the bar where she meets Win Phillips. Win is also a social worker. He tells her about a *"New Moms"* program that he's going to be running at Richmond Medical (where her husband works). The program will offer counseling, job-training, among other things. Then he asks her if she'd like to help him get the program off the ground.

### ***Who knew that this offer of employment would change Marti's life so drastically?***

This was an intriguing story-line; one that grabbed my attention from the beginning. The story alternates between past and present. I did wish that the chapters had headings as there were times I wasn't sure which time-frame I was reading.

Reading about the aspects of social work as well as hospital politics was very interesting. Social work is obviously extremely difficult. You have so much responsibility but lack of resources. There are so many tragic stories. There were things that may never have crossed my mind. For example I know that diapers are expensive, but I didn't really think about what that not being able to afford them could mean....

Expensive diapers = trying to use less diapers=diaper rash=baby crying= increased family stress=possible abuse

Although this is a fiction novel, things like what happens in this book do happen. It's scary to think about. There is so much we don't know. How easily mistakes can be made when most of the nurses and doctors are exhausted. It was interesting to read what might happen when medical mistakes are made.

***"Despite good intentions there are honest mistakes. And systemic ones. And just gross incompetence."***

Marti is great at advocating for her patients but will she be able to stand up for herself when she needs too?

This was an emotional read and it deals with a lot of current issues but also had a strong story-line. This was a story of loyalty, betrayal, compassion, family and so much more. Well written, with well-developed and interesting characters, "**Best Intentions**" was a compelling and fascinating domestic suspense novel. I'm excited to read more from Erika Raskin.

Thank you NetGalley and St. Martin's Press for providing an advanced readers copy of this book for me to read in exchange for my honest review.

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### **AnisaAnne says**

A mother of three children. A wife of a successful husband. Marti Trailor feels like something is missing. She was a social worker in another life and want to return to this rewarding work. A chance meeting at a party leads to a job, and soon she is working along side her husband, an obstetrician at Richmond Hospital. Marti becomes involved in Tonya Maines's case, a pregnant mother whom she forges a bond. Marti becomes personally involved in Tonya's life, even being her birthing coach and godmother to the unborn child. At the delivery, something goes wrong, Marti witnesses an action and Tonya gives birth to a baby with hypoxic brain injury. A grave error by the obstetrical resident. But it is Marti who is charged and forced in the legal playground of criminal justice system.

What a great reading experience. Dramatic. Captivating. And witty. Erika Raskin weaves a clever plot in a well-written narrative that is fluid and easy to read. The book starts off with Marti meeting her lawyer for the first time. He asks her to tell him what happened from the beginning. Marti begins to recounts her story in between snippets of legal preparations. The narrative starts with a promise. "...the case that has it all. Malpractice. Adultery. Class. Race." The escalation of the story is slow but the when the tension peaks about the halfway mark, it catapults into a courtroom drama. The ending will leave you satisfied.

Best Intentions has well-developed character portrayals. The protagonist becomes more endearing as the story unfolds. We see Marti as a devoted mother, daughter of a congressman and a brilliant social worker with a focus on aiding single mothers. At times, Marti oversteps her boundaries in her job, leading to colliding roles. Her clients are unique and colorful, and Marti handles each one with grace. Marti's children, Poppy, Nina, and Sam, each have a distinct personality, and together the sibling interactions give the reader a glimpse into childhood. Nina is especially striking in the way she mothers her younger brother and sister. Elliot, the obstetrician, and husband, is self-absorbed and spends his waking moments in the hospital. Slowly into the book we gaze at a spouse who is slightly shy of abusive and repelling. The interactions between Marti and Elliot are tense, and we see a marriage fracturing apart. Marti's friend Colby, a constant source of entertainment and support, was a significant character in the novel. As a reporter, the interesting story she was working on wove seamlessly in and out of the narrative.

The legal story seemed to take a secondary role in this character driven story which was slightly disappointing. I wanted to bear witness to the medical system being tried in a courtroom, with a plethora of testimony upon expert witnesses. This medical-legal drama was a personal draw for my choosing to read this novel. But Raskin excels in describing the pulse of a University teaching hospital.

Being exposed for multiple years to obstetrics, hospital institutions, and brushes with legal upheavals, I found this novel to be extremely accurate and credible. Frequently, when an author writes about the medical profession, details are misconstrued. However, Raskin gets this right, especially the handling of the obstetrical emergency of prolapse cord. Overworked healthcare professionals and drug abuse are also undercurrents in the story. The nuances of the obstetrical side of medicine, from the job, the roles, the quandaries to the personal dispositions gives the reader a vivid gaze into the hospital.

Overall, an excellent read that held my interest until the very end. I would highly recommend Best Intentions.

Thank you, NetGalley, St. Martin's Press, and the author for this ARC in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Esil says**

3+ stars. I feel like it's time to be a bit more discriminating in my book choices, especially when it comes to mysteries, thrillers and lighter reads. I'm on vacation and have been purposefully reading a few lighter books but am reminded about how hard it is to find something truly satisfying. Best Intentions sounded promising and it wasn't a dud, but it could have been much better. Marti is a social worker, and she works in the same hospital where her husband works as an obgyn. From the beginning, we know that Marti has been charged with a crime, but the plot moves back and forth in time slowly revealing the circumstances leading up to the charges, and concluding with the trial. I liked the concept and the story actually draws on interesting issues surrounding how hospitals are run, but it felt like the plot and characters were missing some substance. For example, from the beginning, we know that things are rocky between Marti and her husband but he never comes through as three dimensional character. Also, Marti's father is a senator, yet very little of the plot plays on this fact. And I could name a few more misses. Promising but not entirely satisfying. Time to move on to something more serious -- although I know I'll be back to try to find an engrossing lighter read soon. Thanks to Netgalley and the publisher for an opportunity to read an advance copy.

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## **Olivia "Don't Blame Me I Voted for Hillary" says**

A social worker is accused of murdering a seriously disabled newborn, the daughter of one of her clients. This was an excellent read. ARC provided by the publisher.

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