



The Candidate

Lis Wiehl

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How far would a candidate go to become President of the United States?

In covering the presidential election campaign, star newsmaker Erica Sparks notices that favored candidate Senator Mike Ortiz seems dependent on his wife to an unnatural degree. Celeste Ortiz is a brilliant and glamorous billionaire who—along with her best friend and confidant Lily Lau—has engineered her husband’s meteoric rise. The White House is within their reach. But the more Erica investigates the Ortizes’ strange relationship, the more intrigued she becomes.

Erica begins an investigation. But everyone material to her probe ends up dead. With each death, her foreboding grows. Is she next? And can she find out in time if the country’s beloved candidate is what he seems . . . or a threat to national security?

The Candidate Details

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From Reader Review The Candidate for online ebook

Vera Godley says

My thoughts: This was an interesting read for me. I found the author's style a bit different from that which I am most accustomed to but I soon became acclimated to it and from then on the story flowed quite well.

Being published by Thomas Nelson, a HarperCollins Christian Publishing imprint, I was surprised that there was virtually no element of Christianity. In fact the seductive thoughts of two of the female characters showing a creepy attraction to each other was a major put-off for me. There were not any actual scenes depicting behavior to which Christian audiences would object, but inference was there.

The story takes place during an election year in the USA. This is quite appropriate as I completed reading the book on the heels of the current USA Presidential election. The plot begins with the candidate for President with his wife at a rally at which there is a bomb explosion from a backpack squarely in the crowd of onlookers and officials. Several are immediately killed. When this happens and soon after, a successful newscaster, Erica, observes the strange demeanor of Senator Mike Ortiz, one of the presidential candidates, who seems to behave as though he was under the hypnotic control of someone else.

A number of events and tragedies occur which make for interesting, exciting, and even fearful reading as one considers, "Could this really happen" or "What if this should happen?" As the plot unfolds the deep depravity to which individuals could go in pursuit of the presidency is revealed.

What takes place? Actions of a female investigative journalist who has earned a position on the national stage. Conspiratorial mind control used by individuals and or internationals. Murderous goals and pursuant actions to achieve high political rank. And a believable presidential campaign rife with unbelievably criminal activities.

DISCLOSURE: I received a complimentary copy to facilitate a review of my opinions which are given without compensation.

Carol Boyer says

The Candidate is a book that has you rushing through the pages, feeling the excitement of news reporter Erica Sparks as she covers the story of Mike Ortiz, leading polls and running for President of the United States and his rich and powerful wife Celeste.. There is more than enough suspense, and drive to keep Erica hot on this story that eerily feels like conspiracy and shocking events that happen to derail her leads. There is a mysterious Chinese woman, Lily who is Celeste's very close friend, and is strangely suspicious in Erica's eyes. Erica's 11 year old daughter Jenny, just wants her mom to spend more time with her and is fearful for her, that something bad will happen but Erica is driven, and her job takes her away one too many times. Erica knows there is something not right with Mike Ortiz, he seems to literally be under his wife's thumb in an inappropriate way and completely devoted to her. Erica digs deep into his capture and imprisonment when Mike was in the military and terrorized by Al Queda, sensing there is a big story that has to be told to the American people who may elect him to become president. Erica meets many folks who might help her, but can they be trusted? And can she trust her own fiance who recently has betrayed her? This book is captivating, although a bit sensational and at times hard to fathom the reality of the very events that happen, it is a fast paced page turner and quite interesting specially given the political climate and media journalism

world we live in and read about. Thanks to Net Galley for sending me a copy of this book to review in exchange for an honest review.

Cheryl says

If you have never tried this author out, this is the perfect time. This book is book two of the Newsmakers series featuring Erica Sparks. Each book can be read as a stand alone novel. Yet, I can tell you now that this will not be the only book you will read from Ms. Wiehl. I am a big fan of Ms. Wiehl and her books. I can easily read them in one sitting. I have yet to find one I did not enjoy.

This new series is a good one. Erica Sparks' last name really fits her as she is a real "spark". She is a go getting and not afraid of some danger. This book has action, intrigue, and a few surprises. In addition, with this being election year, this is the perfect time to read this book. Hoping that what happens in this book the candidates don't take it this far in real life. I hope that Erica's relationship with her daughter, Jenny does mature more as the books continue. Also, hoping that Erica and Greg can make it work with their relationship as well. The perfect nominee this election session is The Candidate!

Staci says

In this second book of the Newsmakers Series, Erica continues to shine as a cable news host. In addition to her career achievements, she's also been awarded sole custody of her daughter Jenny. One of the things I enjoyed most about this novel was the growth between mother and daughter.

In book one, I was not a fan of the romance with Greg. I warmed up to him more in The Candidate.

The overall story line was both creepy and sadly plausible.

I look forward to the next in the series and recommend this novel to fans of thrillers. My gratitude to the publisher for a complimentary copy of the novel. I was not required to post a review and the opinions expressed are my own.

Monnie says

Count me as one who's never been a fan of the political scene; I'd sooner pull my fingernails out one by one than watch more than a few minutes of a debate (never more true than in this election year). Still, the process is interesting to me if only because of my background in journalism and psychology, so the description of this book was too intriguing to pass up when I was offered the opportunity to read it in exchange for an honest review.

And my honest opinion is this: While the plot doesn't rank at the top of my believability scale, it's a fast-paced, suspenseful and well-written story that I had trouble putting down and polished off in a day-and-a-half of spare time. It is, I should add, the second featuring network news host Erica Sparks (it follows *The Newsmakers*). But while there are a few references here to events in the other one - and it's probably a good idea to read it first - this book stands on its own quite well.

Erica, it seems, is in the throes of a rather conflicted life. She loves her job, but her significant other is off building a TV network in a faraway country. Erica's 11-year-old daughter Jenny has agreed to leave her father and come to live with her, but especially because Erica's work takes her away so often, the two are having a tough time really bonding. That issue is exacerbated when, faced with a ratings drop and the need to land a really big story, Erica turns her attention to the Presidential election. Mostly to help with Jenny, she hires Becky, a young aspiring journalist, as her personal assistant.

One of the two candidates, Mike Ortiz, has capitalized on his war hero status to become the favorite. He's got a gorgeous, wealthy and never far from his side wife, Celeste, who in turn has a beautiful, powerful close friend and adviser, Lily Lau, who's a real piece of work (in the authors' words, "her sangfroid has sangfroid").

As the final debate of the campaign approaches, Erica begins to notice that something may be amiss in the interaction between Ortiz, his wife and Ms. Lau. As she investigates, questions also arise about what really happened to the candidate during the nine months he claims to have spent in the Al Qaeda prison. But as Erica lines up people who might offer insights, her efforts are thwarted by a string of unexpected deaths and questions about who can be trusted. In between are hints of media manipulation, mind control, conspiracy theories and, of course, the threat of personal danger to Erica and those she loves.

It's a thoroughly captivating story, though as I mentioned before, more than a little far-fetched. Erica's powers of perception go far beyond those of mere humans (even those of a seasoned journalist), and others around her are far too quick to buy into her suppositions. Toward the end, the pace picks up to get to the finish but crosses the line of credibility (well heck, this *is* a work of fiction, after all). The bottom line is it's a fun, enjoyable way to spend a few hours, and I look forward to the next installment.

Erika says

Awful. This book was just awful. The **ONLY** reason I finished was because I got it from Netgalley and I wanted to be able to write a complete review, but I had to rethink that decision about a billion times because it felt like I was reading for an interminable amount of time. It never got any better.

I think I was partly a target audience for this book because I love politics and mystery and I don't know quite how it all went wrong.

The dialogue was so unrealistic to me, and I remember reading a specific part during a date with the main character and a new guy and thinking that's what I thought people sounded like when I was thirteen and I hadn't been in a relationship. The main character had just found out from a Tweet that she thought her fiancé was cheating on her by the way he looked in a picture. The next week she's out with Mr. New Guy and thinking, well I still have some feelings for Ex Fiancé but there is real potential here with New Guy and he seems even better. And I should just let Ex Fiancé go, he cheated. This is a very specific example but there were a lot of situations like this that didn't ring at all true in my eyes.

The main character is an alcoholic, but she's got her shit together, she's sober and she has a big job and a kid and she does well with it. At one point she's having a hard time and she decides to take a Xanax to help her sleep. She thinks about it and is considering not taking it because it seems like a stepping stone to a drink but in the end decides it's just to make her sleep and there isn't anything wrong with that. There are **SO** many things wrong with that I don't even know where to start. I guess I won't.

There are some interesting things in here but they get dropped by the wayside in the conflict of the main character's personal life. I hate giving reviews that are this bad, but I just hated this book. I thought this was a debut and I was shocked when I saw that she has written a few books before this. Maybe I should just blame it on Christmas?

Sharee says

The Candidate by Lis Wiehl and Sebastian Stuart is book two in the Newsmakers Series. The story was fast-paced and intriguing. I must admit, I wasn't a huge fan of the first book in the series and was apprehensive about reading the second but it was very well done and I thoroughly enjoyed it. The present tense writing is a little strange for me and at times, distracting, but I found the story to be compelling and interesting. Erica Sparks is a brave woman unwilling to go down without a fight. She's determined to figure out what makes the presidential candidate so strange. Digging deeper into the man's past, Erica finds herself entangled in Ancient Chinese brainwashing techniques and powers that stretch around the globe. The Candidate is a fascinating read and I would absolutely recommend it. I received this book from the Fiction Guild and Thomas Nelson Publishers and have provided my honest opinion of the book here.

BrotherSkip says

Could not get into this book. Too many chapters start like it's a summary not a novel (It's one week later....). I will read other novels by Ms. Wiehl, but this one was too far fetched for me.

Rebecca says

"There are five core steps to gaining control of someone's mind: isolation, sensory deprivation, fear, indoctrination, love."

In this political thriller, news anchor Erica Sparks finds herself fighting ratings, experiencing tragedy, and suspecting foul play at the highest level; all in a matter of hours.

Her producer sends Erica to the front row of the upcoming presidential elections by allowing her to interview opposing candidates in their home environment, thus niggling a suspicion that something about the seemingly perfect candidate Mike Ortiz and his glamorous wife Celeste, begs a deeper view. Deeper in this case means sinister, and Erica is about to find out first hand that "playing hardball can be very dangerous".

Immediately engaging, Lis Wiehl's second book in the "Newmakers Novels" series is certainly suspenseful and border-line creepy with its psycho under tones, leaving readers hanging on by a thread, until the very end.

I received a copy of this book from the publisher. The opinions state are entirely my own.

Kara says

I have heard of this author and wanted to give the book a try. With the current politics going on, I was intrigued by this story and wanted to see if there was anything relevant to learn from it. However, MOST of this book is about investigative reporting, mind control, and conspiracy. It was disturbing and creepy. Even though the entire book is taken from Erica's perspective (the reporter), there are a few scenes which feature Celeste and Lily's scheming ways up close.

I also found most of the book to be summarized, not experienced, from Erica's perspective as she desperately tries to balance being a successful workaholic and giving her heart to be a good mom. She has trouble balancing these roles and can't seem to get a break being with her daughter. Normally I enjoy kids being in a story, but her daughter came off as angry and annoying during most of the book. I was surprised that even though the book is detailed and well written, I just didn't feel like I was there with Erica until the last 20% of the plot when the action REALLY picks up.

The violence is another element that caught me off guard. There is no profanity or sexual content (Celeste uses sex to manipulate her husband but nothing is described), but innocent people do get killed and two of the scenes described in the plot are very graphic. I understand that Christian fiction has violence in it, but the content in The Candidate was more disturbing than I anticipated. Sensitive readers, be cautioned.

I honestly didn't even expect a happy ending from the way the story felt, too many things go wrong and Erica takes INCREDIBLE risks to get to the truth of the matter before America has voted for president. From the start of the story, it's obvious that Celeste controls her husband and that their relationship is unnatural. However, when revelations and evidence are discovered, the story takes a much darker turn than I believed was possible.

I also felt uncertain about the relationship between Celeste and Lily. They are best friends from college, but there are a few scenes that it seemed like they were lovers based on Celeste's obsession with the woman. Again, that was weird considering this is Christian fiction. The ending did not impress me one way or another, there was a villain who takes their life and their last words were an insult. Considering how intelligent and driven this person is, I thought for sure their last words would be better spoken than that.

In one of the violent scenes of the story, Erica is reporting live when someone is killed in front of her. The plot explains later that the footage won't be played on the news because it's too grisly for viewing. I really wish that were true in real life, but it didn't feel authentic to me.

I did love two parts of the book, one was a phone conversation with celebrity Bob De Niro and one was meeting celebrity Julianne Moore.

Overall, an interesting book, but it felt more robotic and disturbing than anything else. Maybe I'm not the intended audience for this author. I liked it, but it wasn't the pleasant read I was going for.

I want to thank Netgalley and Thomas Nelson for the review copy provided. I was not required to write a positive review. The thoughts expressed are my own.

Hristina says

I've been staring at this for about ten minutes, and I don't know what to say. So I found a gif:

It's not a horrible book, it's okay. It's just... In a way it took back all the progress Erica made in book one, and that really pissed me off. I hope book three will be better.

Gary says

This is the follow up book in the 'Newsmakers' series by Lis Wiehl, the first one 'Newsmakers' I had previously read and enjoyed.

The book and series is a little different to the usual whodunit genre I normally read but comes as a pleasant change.

The series follows the life of successful News reporter Erica Sparks who in this book is covering the USA Presidential election. She decides to follow leading candidate Senator Mike Ortiz who seems dependent on his wife to an unnatural degree. The Senators wife Celeste Ortiz is a brilliant and glamorous billionaire who has engineered her husband's meteoric rise. The White House is within their reach but the more Erica investigates the stranger their relationship appears.

I would like to thank Net Galley and Thomas Nelson Fiction for supplying me with a copy of this novel in exchange for a honest review.

Joni Dee says

I've been given the opportunity to read and review Lis Wiehl & Sebastian Stuart second Erica Sparks novel: "The Candidate".

As a lover of political thrillers, I must say that this novel disappointed me, I will explain why soon after the summary of the plot.

Sparks is a rising star in GNN, a fictional CNN like network, after apparently exposing a shocking plot related to Nylan Hastings GNN's tycoon owner, in the first book (I have not read the first book of the series so excuse me if this is a poor account of the events).

In "The Candidate" the rising star covers the presidential campaign, with the elections only a few weeks away. With a catastrophe hitting the democratic summit, it looks like Sen. Ortiz - the movie star like war hero - is on his sure path to the presidency. But in Erica's book something's amiss: is it Ortiz mechanic like conduct? His wife Celeste who seems to be holding a tight leash? or the Ortizes' all mysterious advisor and friend Lily Lau? While struggling with her own personal life: custody of her daughter and distance relationship with her fiancée, Sparks will stop at nothing to get to the bottom of the case!

In short (why I was disappointed): The characters are weak, I could not connect with anyone, especially not with Erica Sparks, not to mention the bond villain like Lily Lau. The plot is farfetched, and implausible. The writing is too fast paced for my liking and lacks needed imagery. On the bright side: it's a gripping tale, which would make a good Hollywood movie someday.

I was especially put off with the recurring references to the first novel, I deemed it unnecessary to establish Spark's current stardom, nor was I impressed with Sparks love-life: she "falls" for one of her daughter's friend's dad, then takes back her alleged cheating fiancée... uncharacteristically!

I awarded the novel 2 star, which is somewhat lower than my usual ratings, and had it not been flowing and thrilling despite its problems - It would have gotten an even lower score. Lis Wiehl is a very talented writer, and I feel that the pressure of publishing a second Sparks book in due deadline took the better of her here.

Kelly Bridgewater says

I have enjoyed Lis Wiehl's novels in the past. Her novels feature relatable characters, an unique mystery that is usually somewhat related to what is going on in the world today. With her newest release, *The Candidate*, Wiehl really jumps into the mind and playing field of the presidential campaign. *The Candidate* is a realistic view of what could go on behind the scenes, but with a character that I have come to empathize with.

The writing is strong and concise. I had no problem following Erica, the heroine and reporter, as she told the story. The subplot was told by Celeste, Mike Ortiz's wife. Mike Ortiz is the presidential candidate the story reveals around. While the tension involves Erica trying to figure out more about Ortiz's background before he became a candidate, the story's tension is much deeper than Erica or I truly imagine. The pace kept me engrossed in the story. I really enjoyed how much research Wiehl put into the story by discovering and making an Al-Qaeda prison come to life. It was a horrible setting to be held hostage in for a couple of months. I cringed as I watched Erica travel through the prison walls in Iraq.

As for the characters, I really empathized with Erica. All she has ever wanted to do was be a top-notch reporter, and it appears all her dreams are coming true, but she also wants to be a great mother to her eleven-year-old daughter Jenny. This struggle is real with every working parent in today's culture, so it was easy to come alongside Erica and feel her pain. Wiehl does a good job at delving into the worries and thoughts of Erica as she decides between hunting a new lead or spending time with Jenny. On the other hand, Celeste, the second viewpoint, is a multi-complicated character. She wants higher power and pushes her husband, Mike to reach the pentacle of his career. I had a hard time liking her as a character because she was too "perfect."

With this novel published by Thomas Nelson, a leading Christian publishing company, there really wasn't a lot of spiritual elements in the story, so fans of the ABA market could enjoy this book just for the mystery. Fans of James Patterson and J. B Robb might devour *The Candidate*.

A word of caution . . . Wiehl does include a relationship between two women that made me cringe and flip through a number of pages. The perspective of the character had her lusting after the other woman with the other woman responding to that lust. While ABA readers probably won't mind it, but since this book is published by Thomas Nelson, Christian readers will probably turned away by this element of the story. I wouldn't recommend passing this book off to young mystery readers, only mature audiences.

The Candidate by Lis Wiehl has a realistic heroine who struggles between motherhood and her career, a mystery that is necessary for today, but there is a scene between two women that really made me want to put the novel down.

I received a complimentary copy of *The Candidate* from Thomas Nelson publishing and the opinions stated are all my own.

Judy Collins says

A special thank you to Thomas Nelson and NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Lis Wiehl returns following *The Newsmakers*, (2014) with **THE CANDIDATE**, a continuation of her

riveting series featuring an unstoppable heroine, *Newscaster Erica Sparks*, we met in *Newmakers #1*; Blonde, beautiful, driven and sharp. A mother. A haunted past. A daughter. A second chance.

A journalist who wants to be her best. Uncovering the truth, no matter where it leads. To shine the light of fairness on injustice and inequality. At the same time stand up to the high and mighty.

This time, around, Erica is powerful and respected- she's the host of the highest rated news show in the country. Someone is watching her. Where things are not as they seem. The Presidential campaign. *How far will a candidate go to become president?*

Erica has a nightly news show, *The Erica Sparks Effect*, with a superior reputation. From book one we catch up with Greg, the man she loves, currently in Australia, working crazy hours to help launch a cable news network. She misses him – they have been apart for three months. There is also her best friend, Moira Connelly, a fellow reporter – now an evening co- anchor on a local LA station.

Previously, Erica exposed Nylan Hastings, the psychopath in *The Newmakers* and now her new boss, Mort Silver wants to see her show on top. He is not pleased with the numbers.

The presidential campaign is heating up and Erica wants to be a part of it. She needs to keep her career certain at GNN. She needs a big story.

We also catch up with Jenny, Erica's daughter, now a pre-teen. Jenny feels neglected and sometimes can be resentful, but Erica has to work hard in order to pay for her school and their apartment. She recently transitioned from her father and friends in Massachusetts to New York. The demands of her job are staggering, a pressure cooker. She has to find more time for Jenny. She has an excellent staff but needs a personal assistant.

There are also the dark things. When introduced to Erica in the first book, she continues to hear haunting mocking voices from her mother. It spreads like a toxic spill deep into her psyche. She always feels like something terrible is going to happen. The slip in her ratings and the driving pressure she feels to deliver a big story has only exacerbated her night terrors.

Celeste went to Stanford and then Stanford law, and then the Harvard B-school, and then into international banking where she became Wall Street's go-to person (with friend Lily Lau) making her own vast fortune.

And now she is married to **California Senator Mike Ortiz**, who stands a very good chance of becoming the next president of the United States. Which of course, will make Celeste the most powerful person in the world. With Lily Lau—who will be named President Ortiz's chief of staff by her side.

Celeste is a powerful an intriguing woman in her own right—heiress to a car dealership, and international banker specializing in China markets. She has put her own career on hold to work for her husband's campaign to which she has donated twenty million dollars. The couple is glamorous and powerful.

Mike is a war hero, a marine in Iraq and was elected to Congress. Determined to return to Iraq and was kidnapped. He escaped. He has enormous political talent.

A bomb. Erica was there. Dead and injured. Evil in the world. Fifteen people died in the Buchanan bomber attack, forty-two injured, eight in critical condition. The country is reeling. She flashes back to the Staten Island ferry crashed that launched her career. Is it possible this horrific act was also orchestrated by unseen forces who want Erica to be on the scene? Can she trust the people at GNN?

Something happened before the bomb blast, she cannot put her finger on it. She can't remember. Something is not right. She tries to recall what stuck in her mind. Something to do with Mike Ortiz. But, what? It was also like the possible next President of the US needed his wife's permission to speak.

She hates the network's obsession with ratings at a time like this. She is ambitious but she never wants it to cross the line into ruthless. The Erica Sparks Effect is treated with respect and integrity. No games.

The bombing upended the presidential campaign and needs to be ready to hop on a plane at a moment's notice. The FBI, CIA, and Department of Justice are trying to identify the bomber. Who stands to gain the most from the Buchanan's death?

What is with Celeste and Lau's relationship? Power? Erica knows evil and power from nailing Nylan Hastings. She is having trouble sleeping and jumps at every noise, worried about Jenny's safety on the streets of New York.

Erica begins studying her file on Mike Ortiz. His working class upbringing, an activist, community organizer, his tour duty in the second Iraq War, his subsequent election to Congress and marriage to heiress and banker Celeste Pierce.

Also his capture and incarceration by Al-Qaeda while on a humanitarian mission to Iraq. His subsequent escape made him a national hero and propelled him into the Senate. A compelling story – *one which may carry him to the White House.*

She still is fascinated with the power dynamics with his wife. His wife seems to have a great deal of control over him. She seems strange. Brilliant and driven but Erica senses rage lurking behind the polished surface.

Mike says he was tortured and threatened and once he escaped made the decision to fight. A purpose, a mission. To inspire every American to join him in the fight to make their country a more, perfect union. What really happened when he was held, prisoner? Who is in control? Why? *Erica is determined to find answers.*

Someone is threatened by her investigation, as Erica closes in. The debate. The moderator. A race against the clock.

With the nation's future at stake, Erica is determined to bring down the conspiracy, and psychopath attempting to take over the presidency, and at the same time puts herself and her daughter in danger, while her own past threatens her. Will she be able to outsmart them before it is too late, *and bring the truth to light?*

An action-packed political suspense thriller of power, and intrigue! A nice balance of personal/professional with Greg and Erica's relationship. (a happy ending). She has grown tremendously since the last book with her demons and enjoyed the mother/daughter dynamics with Jenny. Also, fun catching up with BFF, Moira. *A smart chilling suspense series with a dynamic protagonist!*

An avid fan of Lis Wiehl, and Wiehl of Justice FOX News Radio- One of the nation's most prominent trial lawyers and highly regarded commentators, she is also the host of the podcast which is always fun and juicy--featuring other crimes, and crime authors.

In addition, I have enjoyed reading **Wiehl's previous books:** Mia Quinn mystery series, and Snapshot an enthralling tale of good versus evil, inspired by actual historical events, civil rights movement and injustice--landing on my Top Books of 2014 —while anxiously awaiting her next upcoming new release.

Wiehl's books are plot-driven, edgy, fast-paced suspense; featuring strong yet, flawed heroines, faced with numerous obstacles, striving for justice. From lies, deceit, menace, corruption, and power. *You can come to expect to meet an evil twisted villain.*

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