



Judgment Call

J.A. Jance

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The *New York Times* bestselling master of mystery and suspense, J.A. Jance—whom the *Chattanooga Times* ranks “among the best, if not the best”—brings back her enormously popular series protagonist, Cochise County Sheriff Joanna Brady.

With *Judgment Call*, Jance achieves a new high in crime fiction, as Brady wrestles with her conflicting roles of law officer and mother when her daughter discovers the murdered body of the local high school principal, and the ensuing investigation reveals secrets no parent wants to hear. At once a breathtaking recreation of the rugged landscape of the American Southwest, a moving story of a mother’s concerns for her endangered child, and thrilling masterwork of brutal crime and expert detection, *Judgment Call* is prime J.A. Jance, a treat for anyone who loves a good cop story wrapped around a superior family drama.

Judgment Call Details

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Author : J.A. Jance

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From Reader Review Judgment Call for online ebook

Susan says

Sheriff Joanna is a pretty cool character and most of the characters in "Judgment Call" are well developed. Unfortunately the plot is pretty sophomoric. I stuck with it but wish I hadn't. The last quarter of the book was a true disappointment. Her brother was the killer? Give me a break. He was a Stanford prof specializing in facial recognition software because he was so obsessed with finding his sister who really didn't ever do anything to deserve any retribution for simply having observed her father with a Russian spy. Really weak. I'll say it again--really sophomoric. Doubtful that JA Jance gets another try from me.

Jackie says

I liked it.

I did read some of the criticisms leveled at the book here on Good Reads, and agree to some extent with some of them, but they are so trifling that I don't even want to bother addressing them. I know that when I finished the last page and closed the book it was with a sense of completion and enjoyment.

I liked the characters. I liked the way Joanna dealt with some of the issues facing her. I liked that her marriage was portrayed as strong and fulfilling. I liked that the family unit was upheld as desirable.

Overall, it was a book I thought was worth the time it took to read.

Joe says

Hard to believe this is #15 in the on going series about Sheriff Joanna Brady. Love coming back to visit her and family in Bisbee, Arizona. I am a huge fan of Ms. Jance and her different series, and I enjoyed this installment about Sheriff Brady very much. Great storytelling, complicated mystery/thriller that has you trying to figure it out until the very end. As Sheriff, Joanna is a "hard-ass" and I mean that as a compliment. She has paid her dues to be the first and only female sheriff in the county. She runs a tight "ship", after a long struggle that you learn about in previous installments. Her daughter stumbles upon a dead body while out on her horse and the story unfolds from there. Love how Ms. Jance brings in current day topics, such as Facebook and how they effect solving crimes, both good and bad. At times gruesome, but you know that Joanna Brady will do everything in her power to not only solve the murder but bring in everyone responsible. Great twist at the end, (not going to tell you what it is, but...) just when you think the original murder is solved, you realize there is still much left to read. Reaching back into the past, and linking it with "threads" from today, Joanna is able to solve a very personal issue that has far reaching consequences. Very much enjoyed this read!

Judy says

As usual, I enjoyed this installment in Jance's saga of Joanna Brady's work as sheriff of Cochise County, AZ. Jenny, Joanna's daughter, becomes involved as she finds the body of her high school principal. Also, Joanna must learn to deal with social media and its impact on the case. And she faces her past and the death of her father, which brings surprising facts to light.

Nancy says

Great book. Couldn't put it down. Love how we learn new pieces of Joanna's life.....

When Joanna Brady's daughter, Jenny, stumbles across the body of her high school principal, Debra Highsmith, in the desert, the Cochise County sheriff's personal and professional worlds collide, forcing her to tread the difficult middle ground between being an officer of the law and a mother. While investigating murders has always meant discovering unpleasant facts and disquieting truths, the experienced Joanna isn't prepared for the knowledge she's about to uncover. Though she's tried to protect her children from the dangers of the grown-up world, the search for justice leads straight to her own door and forces her to face the possibility that her beloved daughter may be less perfect than she seems--especially when a photo from the crime scene ends up on Facebook. A photo only one person close to the crime scene could have taken.

The gruesome picture is just the tip of the iceberg. Even a small, close-knit town like Bisbee has its secrets. Navigating her way through the unfamiliar world of social media, Joanna discovers shocking--and incriminating--information. The details build, from a hushed-up suspension, to a group of teenagers with a grudge against the late Ms. Highsmith, to a hateful video calling for the principal's death. The video evidence points to one particular privileged boy, who's already lawyered up thanks to his father, a well-to-do doctor determined to protect his son's reputation. Yet the deeper Joanna digs, the more complications she uncovers. It seems the quiet, upstanding principal had a hidden past, full of mysterious secrets she'd successfully kept buried for years.

As the seasoned sheriff juggles professional constraints and personal demands--budget cuts, new team members, an arrogant coroner, a confused teenager, a precocious toddler, and a high-maintenance mother--she finds herself walking a fine line between justice and family that has never been so blurred.

Barbara says

In this 15th book in the series High School principal Debra Highsmith is gruesomely murdered and her body is discovered by Jenny Brady, daughter of Cochise County Sheriff Joanna Brady. Jenny does a big no-no - she takes a photo of the corpse and sends it to a friend - and before you can blink the picture's all over the internet, along with nasty comments. Seems Ms. Highsmith was not popular among the high school crowd and some students seem to be likely suspects for her murder.

However, while looking for next of kin Sheriff Brady discovers that Ms. Highsmith was a mysterious person with an unknown past, and the investigation widens. As usual, nosy, interfering reporter Marliss Shackleford is making trouble; this time she's illicitly using social media to get news tips she shouldn't have.

Meanwhile, Joanna's critical, difficult mother, Eleanor Lathrop Winfield, is involved with an art auction

where another murder occurs. Are the murders connected? Joanna and detective colleagues investigate the crimes and find the culprit, whose motive seems a little far-fetched but believable enough. (After all, there are a lot of nuts out there.)

In a side story, Sheriff Joanna Brady re-examines the death of her father, also a sheriff, many years before. What was thought to be an accident caused by a drunk driver may have been murder. To me, this tangential story seemed unnecessary and could have been left out. All in all an okay mystery book.

You can follow my reviews at <http://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot.com/>

Marca says

Another home run for J. A. Jance's Sheriff Joanna Brady. Brady's daughter Jenny discovers the body of her high school principal during an early morning ride on her horse in the dessert. The Sheriff discovers that the principal has lived her life off-line. There is nearly no digital record of the principal online. The principal did not email or call her family – she communicated by snail mail to a third-party address. Joanna finds that the principal is also using an alias. The principal's few close friends told Joanna that the principal was paranoid that the Government was after her. Seemingly unrelated is the murder during a gala of a woman who heads the art league. At the same time, Joanna finds herself investigating the death of her father again. Her father was hit by a drunk driver when Joanna was nine – she witnessed the accident. The driver had been arrested and served his time. But there is new information that indicates all is not what it seemed at the time. Daughter Jenny also learns a hard lesson about the power of modern social media when she surreptitiously snaps a picture of the principal's body with her cell phone and forwards the picture to a friend. The picture ends up all over the internet, of course. Great read, as always.

Sue says

I've been reading this series set in Arizona for some time now and I find that my tastes seem to be changing. While the characters certainly are consistent with those of the books I've read before, they just don't seem multi-dimensional enough for me in this episode. The plot was interesting with some clever twists, but I found myself thinking about how I felt when reading James Lee Burke's Creole Belle just a week ago. Then I was excited and very engaged, wrapped up in the writing, plot and characters. Perhaps this is unfair---there is only one Burke. But my reading interests are changing and I'm afraid this series may not make the cut.

Oh well. I guess it's OK to outgrow some authors or styles as I take on new ones.

Now on to read the last 50 pages of Cloud Atlas, a very different novel in every sense.

Raring 3

Mylinda says

Overall, a good, servicable Joanna Brady story. 3.5/5.0

There's a murder, Joanna jumps in, and there is a battle in the desert. (Not really a spoiler since that's how all the books go.) Overall one of the better books, but spoiled by Joanna's apparent complete lack of knowledge of the new-fangled "internet".

Some spolers will follow...

My complaints, nitpicky all, but they bugged me:

As punishment for releasing a crime scene photo, Jenny loses her texting service. Fair enough, but then there is discussion between Joanna and Butch about how the two of them never text,(Never? Not even "I'm running late" or "Pls get milk" or "ILY"?) and Jenny didn't mind losing it. First, if she doesn't mind losing it, it's not much of a punishment, is it? And second, she's supposed to be 15 - you would have to pry the texting from the cold dead thumbs of most teen girls.

Joanna acts amazed by Facebook. Later she is surprised that Jenny has one. Um, hello? You have a teen daughter - you best be gettin' with the times.

Another plot point involves a character impersonating someone else on Facebook. Ok, that's totally creepy. But the explanation is that a visiting teen relative set up the FB account to friend the local teens and then abandoned the account when she went home, so the (creepy) adult relative lurks on there to get the local scoop. Again, have you MET a teen girl? They all have eleventy-billion friends and it seems unlikely that they would abandon their new AZ friends when they went home. That story line would have been better if the creepy relative had somehow gotten the password and used it to lurk...

I'm tired of hearing about how bad-slutty-Joanna got herself knocked up at 18 and had a shotgun wedding. Especially since that would make it 1994-ish, not the 1986-ish from the beginning of the series. It's just tired and dated at this point. Time to let it drop.

Two 17 yo characters are getting frisky out in the boondocks. Joanna is more concerned that telling the parents will result in the boy being charged with statutory rape than with telling the kids to stay home because there are *murderers* running around in the desert. (Lots of them, based on this series.) Just seemed like more moralizing. Maybe the Sheriff should just send some patrol cars through lovers lane more often.

More whining - a character was "sent a Twitter message" - um, ok. A text message maybe? Wikipedia is used as a reliable source of police investigation. And poor old Dennis is just a sad, lonely footnote.

Basically a good overall story, but the nit-picky stuff really bugged me and detracted from it.

Anastasia says

Judgment Call by J.A. Lance is the 15th book featuring sheriff Joanna Brady. Joanna Brady's daughter, Jenny comes across the body of her high school principal Debra Highsmith who has been shot dead. This is the first book that I have read by this author and did not realise that it was well into the series. I enjoyed it very much and it did not take long to become acquainted with the characters. I liked the way that the sheriff dealt with her family complications. Overall a solid mystery and investigation making me want to start from the beginning of the series and catch up.

Luanne Ollivier says

3.5/5

I've been following the trials and tribulations of Sheriff Joanna Brady of Cochise County, Arizona for many years. J.A. Jance released the first book in 1993 and the latest installment - Judgment Call - marks the 15th entry in this long running and much loved series.

Joanna's fifteen year old daughter Jenny stumbles upon a body while out for an early morning ride. It turns out to be the body of the local high school principal, who had been reported as missing. And with that discovery, her personal and professional lives collide. It seems that Principal Highsmith had some secrets....

What has kept me coming back to this series over the years? The strength is in the recurring characters. Sitting down to read a Brady book is like listening to an old friend tell a good story. Brady's life has continued to change and evolve over the years, in a believable manner. She's a character I've come to know and like. So, the personal story lines are always a draw. I always enjoy the setting descriptions as well. Jance owns a home in Arizona, so the descriptions are drawn from personal observation.

The mystery is solid in Judgment Call, as is Joanna's investigation of it. Nothing earth shattering, but again, it's all in the telling. This is the first time I've chosen to listen to a Brady book. I was quite concerned what the reader would sound like, as I have developed a mental image for Joanna over the years. The reader was Hilary Huber and she was an excellent choice. I have listened to her narrate other audio books and enjoyed them. She has a slightly gravelly tone to her voice that is quite unique. Her voice is very well modulated and conveys strength, purpose and urgency without being raised. It conveyed the calm confidence of Sheriff Brady easily. Different characters are portrayed using easily differentiated voices.

The only jarring note in The Judgment was the inclusion of a secondary plot involving the death of Joanna's father that seemed almost tacked on. It was another link in Joanna's story and I was glad of the revelations but it just felt a little clumsy.

All in all, another good solid read from Jance

Kristina says

Keep in mind, 3 Stars means, "I liked it" and I did, enough so that I may one day pick up any of the other 14 books in this series. Admittedly, I didn't realize until after the fact that this is the 15th book in an ongoing series about Sheriff Joanna Brady.

I thought this was a solid mystery novel and I like the characters and the story itself. Throughout though I though it was somewhat heavy on random information about characters, but like I said, I didn't realize at first that it was because it was the 15th book in a series. That being said, the background information was probably well placed, and was well enough explained that while I wondered why it was there, I wasn't left with any other questions. The characters were all well enough explained and developed that this book could easily be read without having read any of the other titles in the series.

There was also the issue of the last 20% or so of the book being about a case unrelated to the main story of the novel. Apparently this storyline started with the first book of the series, but it was unknown at the time

that is was a murder investigation. Although like I said it was all well enough explained that I wasn't left with questions, I was wondering why the arc didn't have it's own novella or something instead of being put into the storyline of an already well rounded mystery. Did the author just not have enough of a word count for the main story? I don't know.

All that being said, the three star rating may possibly be because a fault in my having not read the rest of the series rather than any fault of the author.

*** I received this book for free through Goodreads First Reads ***

Anthony says

J A Jance is one of my favorite mystery authors. She is known for two series, among others. The first is her Beaumont series set in Seattle. And this series, set in Bisbee, Arizona, featuring County Sheriff Joanna Brady and her rather interesting family and friends. These are definitely not "cozy mysteries." Jance can be pretty descriptive in her telling of a story. But she writes so well, with a mixture of humor and thrills. I have read every book in this series and I have enjoyed every one of them.

This story starts off with a rather vivid description of the murder of the high school principal in the desert surrounding Bisbee. Sheriff Brady's daughter happens to come upon the gruesome scene while out horseback riding and before notifying her mother, she takes a picture of the murder scene, which soon goes viral on the web. As Sheriff Brady and her team investigate, we learn that the high school principal was not who she said she was and was hiding some skeletons in her closet.

This novel, in addition to being a terrific mystery, also deals with the impact of social media on the efforts of police to investigate a crime, in both a positive and negative manner.

I thoroughly enjoyed the novel and having read the series from the first, it is fascinating to see how Jance has her characters grow and develop, and sometimes even take a step back. I can't wait for the next one in this series.

Thomas Edmund says

Judgment Call, finds recurring hero Joanna Brady investigating the shock killing of a local high-school principal, and also confronting some ghosts of mysteries past when new information about her father's death is revealed.

The strength of Jance's writing is in her believable and fleshed out characters. Jance does well in avoiding cliché and stereotype (mostly) aside from a few generalisations about teenagers and older folk, there wasn't one character I thought couldn't be a real person.

Judgment Call is ultimately a flawed piece however, the first weakness being the prose style. Jance adopts way too much 'tell' - her daughter is snarly, we're told about it, Brady manipulates a reporter, we're told everything, even the jokes are explained, very frustrating given many of them would otherwise be funny. The story would be much more enjoyable if people just did what they did, rather than listening to Brady just tell

us what was what.

The second major concern is the pacing, the prologue is familiar crime thriller territory, but probably contains the best action seen in the whole book. After the shocking murder we have to sit through around 200 pages of family dramas, media relations, and miscellaneous. Even when the murder plot starts to be revealed the pacing only picks up marginally, making the 400ish pages seem longer.

Jance is also clumsy in balancing the father's death plotline with the 'crime of the week'. Not that there is much tension to speak of, but my interest had totally waned by the time the main story was resolved, and I didn't appreciate needing to read through another several chapters of story. Whenever Brady looked into her father's death, it felt like a sudden unwelcome intrusion into the other storyline.

And what a storyline! Without spoiling anything lets just say "disbelief not suspended" the crime story did not gel well with the tone or side-plots of the story, leaving me wondering if I just missed the part where it was revealed the bad-guy was just crazy and all that elaborate plotting was just made-up.

One final hilarious bit which unfortunately completely undermined Brady as a authority was when they looked up a person of interests details on the web. Brady actually uses the line: (*** added to remove spoilers)

"If the guys at Wikipedia believed Gunnar Creswell was a ****, maybe there was something to the ***** story."

picky I know but how good is it to present your detective protagonist, not only showing no knowledge of how Wikipedia works, but also believing such a source to be reliable in a police investigation?

I recommend sticking to the Ali Reynolds series.

Dawn says

Book on tape

Jenny found a body while riding. It was the principle at her high school. Sheriff Brady was on the case early!
