



The Hanging Judge: A Novel (The Judge Norcross Novels)

By Michael Ponsor

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This *New York Times*—bestselling legal thriller offers an inside view of a federal death penalty trial from the rare perspective of the presiding judge.

When a drive-by shooting in Holyoke, Massachusetts, claims the lives of a drug dealer and a hockey mom volunteering at an inner-city clinic, the police arrest a rival gang member. With no death penalty in Massachusetts, the US attorney shifts the double homicide out of state jurisdiction into federal court so he can seek a death sentence.

The Honorable David S. Norcross, a federal judge with only two years on the bench, now presides over the first death penalty case in the state in decades. He must referee the clash between an ambitious female prosecutor and a brilliant veteran defense attorney in a high-stress environment of community outrage, media pressure, vengeful gang members, and a romantic entanglement that threatens to capsize his trial—not to mention the most dangerous force of all: the unexpected.

Written by judge Michael Ponsor, who presided over Massachusetts's first capital case in over fifty years, *The Hanging Judge* explores the controversial issue of capital punishment in a dramatic and thought-provoking way that will keep you on the edge of your seat. It is “a crackling court procedural” (Anita Shreve) and “gripping legal thriller” (*Booklist*) perfect for fans of Scott Turow.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

This gripping legal thriller is told from the unique perspective of the federal court judge presiding over the first death penalty case in Massachusetts in more than 50 years. The moral issue here is highlighted by an occasional chapter dedicated to the telling of the true story of an 1806 hanging, the result of a verdict that was reversed 200 years later. A drive-by shooting is at the root of the present-day case. A Hispanic drug dealer and an innocent bystander are killed, and a sharp cop ends up nabbing the getaway driver, who gives the name, Moon Hudson, as the shooter. Moon is a family man, married with a baby, but he also has a past that the jury will never hear about. The state's case hinges on the word of a gangbanger who has agreed to testify in exchange for a lighter sentence, and Moon's life hangs in the balance. The death penalty case is compelling, but Ponsor fails to fully develop his characters, leaving a bit of an emotional void. Richard North Patterson tackled a similar subject in *Conviction* (2005) with considerably more passion, but perhaps the lesser passion here stems from Ponsor's decision to use an impartial judge as his narrator. --Stacy Alesi

Review

“There are plenty of surprises to keep readers turning pages. Ponsor gives readers a unique look into the workings of a courtroom. But more than that, he demonstrates a feel for how ordinary families are affected by the legal system. Ponsor’s debut would make a great movie.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

“That rare gem: a crackling court procedural with authentic characters and beautiful prose.” —Anita Shreve, author of *The Pilot’s Wife*

“A masterful work that took me inside the courtroom, behind the bench, and into the hearts and minds of a cast of unforgettable characters. . . . Thrilling, perfectly paced, beautifully written, witty, so very smart and so satisfying.” —Elinor Lipman, author of *Then She Found Me*

“I thoroughly enjoyed *The Hanging Judge*. . . . Among its many virtues, the book will remind many readers that the judicial process is not infallible.” —Former associate justice John Paul Stevens

“A marvelous entertainment, a page-turning mystery full of romance and humor, which takes us inside the fraught and rather secretive world of a judge’s chambers. In the best way—that is, indirectly—Ponsor informs us about the facts that ought to inform debate on the death penalty. What impressed me most of all was the book’s authority; it has the heft of authenticity.” —Tracy Kidder, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Mountains Beyond Mountains*

“Novels have shown us what it’s like to be a juror, an attorney, even the defendant, but this is the first I’ve read that puts us up on the bench—a knowing, nuanced portrait of a judge and the often imperfect system he watches over.” —Joseph Kanon, author of *Istanbul Passage*

“A compelling tale, with a cast of vividly drawn characters and a plot that twists and turns—it entertains, as a good novel should, but even better, it also informs, as only the best ones do.” —Jonathan Harr, author of *A Civil Action*

“A debut that reads like the work of an accomplished master. A suspenseful page-turner written from the

unique perspective not of a lawyer or defendant, but of the judge. I've never before read a book—either fiction or non-fiction—that conveys the dilemma of the death penalty with such a combination of sophistication and humanity.” —Joe McGinniss, author of *Fatal Vision*

“Written with precision and heartfelt passion for the law, this riveting courtroom thriller brings the legal system to life. Filled with memorable characters, infused with a deep understanding of the death penalty and the complex interchange between crime, the police and the justice system, *The Hanging Judge* is an electric story, well told.” —John Katzenbach, author of *Hart's War*

“Both an ode to the law in all its glory and a reflection on its sometimes tragic limitations, Michael Ponsor’s *The Hanging Judge* will appeal to courtroom insiders as well as readers more generally drawn to a taut story well told. Set in western Massachusetts, at the center of the action is a series of trials, historic, present-day, and of the heart. The verdict: this debut author—a federal judge in his other life—is guilty of a tour de force and, we can only hope, the start of a rich new career.” —Madeleine Blais, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *In These Girls, Hope Is a Muscle*

“Ponsor is a talent to watch. . . . *The Hanging Judge* is that rarity: a story that grips the reader even as it teaches some fine points of criminal procedure.” —*The Washington Post*

About the Author

Michael Ponsor graduated from Harvard College and Yale Law School. In 1994, President Bill Clinton appointed him a life-tenured US district judge. From 2000 to 2001, he presided over a five-month death penalty trial, the first in Massachusetts in over fifty years. Judge Ponsor continues to serve as a senior US district judge in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, Western Division. *The Hanging Judge*, his first novel, is the winner of Massachusetts Bay’s 2015 OneBook Prize.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Juanita Jones:

This *The Hanging Judge: A Novel* (The Judge Norcross Novels) book is not ordinary book, you have it then the world is in your hands. The benefit you have by reading this book will be information inside this e-book incredible fresh, you will get details which is getting deeper a person read a lot of information you will get. This *The Hanging Judge: A Novel* (The Judge Norcross Novels) without we realize teach the one who examining it become critical in considering and analyzing. Don't become worry *The Hanging Judge: A Novel* (The Judge Norcross Novels) can bring once you are and not make your handbag space or bookshelves' become full because you can have it in the lovely laptop even phone. This *The Hanging Judge: A Novel* (The Judge Norcross Novels) having excellent arrangement in word and layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

Leif Gibbs:

Spent a free a chance to be fun activity to do! A lot of people spent their sparetime with their family, or their own friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, likely to beach, or picnic within

the park. They actually doing same every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your personal free time/ holiday? Can be reading a book can be option to fill your free time/ holiday. The first thing that you ask may be what kinds of e-book that you should read. If you want to try out look for book, may be the e-book untitled The Hanging Judge: A Novel (The Judge Norcross Novels) can be excellent book to read. May be it could be best activity to you.

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Lisa Keener:

On this era which is the greater man or woman or who has ability in doing something more are more precious than other. Do you want to become one of it? It is just simple solution to have that. What you are related is just spending your time very little but quite enough to have a look at some books. On the list of books in the top listing in your reading list is The Hanging Judge: A Novel (The Judge Norcross Novels). This book which is qualified as The Hungry Slopes can get you closer in growing to be precious person. By looking upwards and review this e-book you can get many advantages.

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