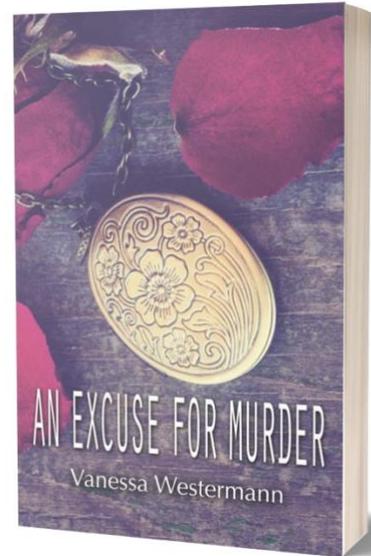




AN EXCUSE FOR MURDER
By Vanessa Westermann

As a former bodyguard, it should be easy for Gary Fenris to kill, especially when the motive is revenge. But Gary has made two mistakes in his life. The first was letting the woman he loved die on his watch. The second was thinking vengeance could bring him peace.

Local bookstore owner and amateur lock pick Kate Rowan loves nothing more than a good mystery. Her curiosity soon leads her down a trail of blackmail, obsession and death. Despite the risk - or maybe because of it - Gary finds himself drawn to Kate. When danger strikes, Gary is forced to face the fact that he used love as an excuse for murder. And he's got one last score to settle.



SHORT SYNOPSIS (47 words):

The motive is revenge; it should be easy for Gary to kill. But when bookstore owner Kate finds the body, her sleuthing takes them down a trail of blackmail, obsession and death. And Gary must face the fact that he used love as an excuse for murder...

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Tagline: She died on his watch. Now he'd take his revenge...
#AnExcuseForMurder

AN EXCUSE FOR MURDER by Vanessa Westermann
[The Wild Rose Press](#)

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www.vanessa-westermann.info

PRAISE FOR AN EXCUSE FOR MURDER:

“A riveting introduction to a charming, smart bookstore owner... *An Excuse for Murder* is original, compelling, and a lovely launch for a great new sleuth.” - ***Carolyn Hart***

“*An Excuse for Murder* skillfully interweaves the elements of spy thriller and cozy to create an engaging story with emotional resonance.” - ***M. H. Callway***

“A mesmerizing page-turner... Westermann is a talent to watch!” - ***Rosemary McCracken***

“Engaging characters, and an intriguing take on a classic murder mystery.” - ***Sleuth of Baker Street Mystery Bookstore***

“A lyrical thriller that crackles with defiance, danger, and uncertain romance. Kate Rowan is the perfect heroine for our times; wit, charm, and spirit balanced by impressive skills in self-defense and lock-picking.” – ***Barbara Fradkin***

★★★★★ “Be prepared to spend all day reading this amazing book, because you will not want to put it down until the very end!” – [I Won't Say I'm In Love With Reading](#)

★★★★★ “It's not very often that a mystery novel is a great mix of tension, romanticism, and dark fae-like etherealness. Westermann weaves a delicate narrative full of love, assassinations, revenge, dusty book shops, and ghosts in white.” – [The Itinerarian](#)

ADDITIONAL MEDIA:

ITW Elena Hartwell: [Debut Novel From Canadian Author Vanessa Westermann](#)

BOOK EXCERPTS

EXCERPT #1 (224 words):

The ghost of her laughter teased across his skin, raising the hairs on his arms.

There she was, vibrant as though she was in the room with him. "Don't tell me you don't like it." She gave her new dress a twirl, barefoot and beautiful, all ready for a night out but for the heels she would wait to put on to the last. Her toe-nails were painted red. The arch of her foot flexed strong and graceful with the movement. Her blonde hair shone in the light of memory. She stopped short, the soft blue fabric swinging against her legs, and grinned at him.

It went straight through him. He raised the bottle of Scotch to his lips, holding on to the vision. It wavered beneath the intensity of his gaze.

Then there was nothing on the floor but scuff marks and the shimmer of dust. His trainers, mud-caked from that morning's eight kilometer run, took up the space where her heels should have been. He had almost forgotten the way she used to toe her shoes off, always sliding the left one off first for some inexplicable reason.

The wall was cold and hard against his back, the Scotch smooth and warm.

There was no other choice. He'd made his decision two years ago. It was time.

Tomorrow, he would commit murder.

EXCERPT #2 (819 words):

For a man who knew how to handle his liquor, Gary was two pints the worse for wear and on his way to finish off the job. His apartment was only a fifteen minute walk from the pub. Cold night air rushed past him, a sudden gust that whistled down the alley farther ahead and had his ears buzzing. A cluster of teenagers jostled their way down the other side of the street. Gary heard a shout, followed by loud laughter as the tallest boy finished the joke he'd been telling, hitting the punch-line.

The shops in the pedestrian area were closed, the windows shuttered, while the pubs were coming to life. An empty crisp packet drifted past on a current of air. The wooden sign of the bookstore at the end of the street swung on rusted hinges. He was still too far away to read the sign, but it didn't matter. He'd seen it before, many times. Fortune's Cove Books. Kate Rowan, proprietor.

Adriana could never walk past a bookstore without going in. Hard to believe it was two years to the day since she died. He could almost hear her heels ringing against the pavement, feel her silver ring cold against his skin when he slipped his fingers through hers.

It would be easier to leave Caulden, but he doubted he'd be able to build another company as successful as Fenris Securities somewhere else. He had put everything he had into planning his revenge.

There was still a choice. He could stay home tomorrow instead. Listen to a live album, speakers turned up too loud, the bass pounding through the walls. Or he could go out, have a good time. Forget Adriana.

A door banged in the distance. A car drove past slowly, the tires rasping over the pavement.

A step fell in pace with his own.

Gary glanced over his shoulder but said nothing. He wasn't in the mood for company.

They continued in silence, the rhythm of their steps matched perfectly over the years. The man beside him began to whistle a minuet by Mozart. The sound was clear as glass. Gary's fingers tensed on a flash of irritation. He dug his hands into his pockets.

"Nice night, boss," Percival remarked in his rumbling baritone.

"Go away, Perce."

"Had a pint in the pub, eh?" The tone was easy, conversational.

It didn't take Sherlock Holmes to make that deduction. He hadn't hidden the fact that he had been drinking. Still, it seemed like Percy had spotted a weakness.

The familiar sizzle of violence began at the base of his skull and spread down his arms, through the tendons in his hands. His nostrils flared, his breath came fast. He was itching for a fight. "I mean it, Percival." His voice was dangerously calm.

Other men might have sensed something off, a quiver of tension in the air and nothing more, but Percival knew the warning signs. He could read them like no one else could. He should have walked away. "Buy you a coffee?"

Gary spun and dragged the man toward him by the collar until he could see the whites of Percival's eyes. The crisp fabric strained under his grip and cut into his palm. Percival outweighed him by a good two stones, but what Gary lacked in size he made up for in skill and the sheer muscle to back it. Percival was impassive, infuriatingly patient. He grinned. "Round of chess, then?"

Gary let him go, exasperated. "Friday night maybe, but not now."

"All right then." Percival shrugged, his massive width straining at the shoulders of his tweed jacket. "A client came in today. Didn't like the security system we installed. Said it didn't suit his needs. I thought we'd covered all the bases, but people hide things, boss." It was said casually. "Sometimes you have to dig up the truth, no matter how deep it's buried."

Gary ignored the sharp taste of adrenaline at the back of his mouth. It could be small talk. There was a fine line between cautious and paranoid. Still, the shock of that one sentence almost had him sobered. He should have been prepared but, here he was, caught off guard. Another man might have come up with lies. Gary waited.

Percival looked up at the sky, now a bruised purple and dark with the promise of rain. "Then again, sometimes it's better if things stay hidden."

"So long as the client's happy. We'll draft an alternative system for him." Gary watched the bookstore's sign swing in the breeze, and he knew. He'd made a mistake somewhere along the line. "See you in the office Monday."

Sir." Percival walked away, whistling softly to himself.

He had to be more careful. Even if he changed his mind, decided to wait again before making his move. He couldn't afford another mistake. Not before it was done and over.

[BOOK EXCERPT #3 \(1285 words\)](#)

SAMPLE Q&A

What inspired you to write *An Excuse For Murder*?

I wanted to write a traditional village mystery, with its puzzles and quirky characters, but include the forwards momentum of a thriller. In order to accomplish this, the novel is told from two points of view: from the perspective of Gary Fenris, a haunted former bodyguard who commits murder and then has to live with the consequences, and from the perspective of Kate Rowan, a bookstore owner who discovers the body. The characters are linked by danger and uncertain romance.

Who are your influences?

I'm continuously impressed by Tana French's lyricism and the way that Louise Penny can reveal the emotions lurking beneath a deceptively tranquil surface. Dorothy L. Sayers, Margery Allingham and Ngaio Marsh have influenced my approach to writing dialogue. I love the wit and banter that predominates in British Golden Age detective fiction.

Why crime fiction?

I've always been an avid reader of crime fiction, starting with Nancy Drew mysteries to Agatha Christie and Benjamin Black. It's not the violence of the crime, but the emotion that motivated it that intrigues me.

Why is *An Excuse For Murder* set in England?

I decided to set *An Excuse For Murder* in England, partially as an homage to classic British crime novels, but also so that I could make use of the rich architectural history that exists there. Kate Rowan is a tenant in a rambling Victorian home that has witnessed generations come and go, and now harbors its own secrets.

What advice would you give to aspiring writers?

Be the writer who keeps writing. Be willing to learn from others and edit your work relentlessly. Your writing will be the better for it.

As with most writers, it took me quite some time to sell my book to a publisher – 6 years, in fact. A fellow Arthur Ellis Awards judge was kind enough to read through my manuscript and gave me constructive criticism. She pointed out that I was making the mistake that many new writers make: my writing was too flowery. I spent a year editing *An Excuse For Murder*. I stripped down the prose, taking out excess adjectives and metaphors, and developed Gary's character. The manuscript went from 128,000 words to 75,000 and I learned so much in the process. Keep persevering!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Vanessa Westermann's debut crime novel, *An Excuse For Murder*, was published in March 2019 by The Wild Rose Press.

Vanessa is a former Arthur Ellis Awards judge, and has given a talk on the evolution of women's crime writing, at the Toronto Chapter of Sisters in Crime.

Her book review column entitled "Vanessa's Picks" was published in the monthly newsletter of a popular Toronto mystery-specialty bookstore, from 2012 to 2016.

While living in Munich, Germany, Vanessa attained an M.A. in English Literature and went on to teach creative writing.

Vanessa currently lives in Canada and is working on her next novel, while drinking copious amounts of tea.

Readers can find her blog at www.vanessa-westermann.info and follow her on Twitter @VanessasPicks.



SHORT BIO (49 words):

Vanessa Westermann is the author of *An Excuse For Murder*. Vanessa is a former Arthur Ellis Awards judge, and has given a talk on the evolution of women's crime writing, at the Toronto Chapter of Sisters in Crime. Visit Vanessa online at www.vanessa-westermann.info, and find her on Twitter: @VanessasPicks.

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**For additional information or to schedule an interview, please contact
Vanessa Westermann at vwestermann.contact@gmail.com.**