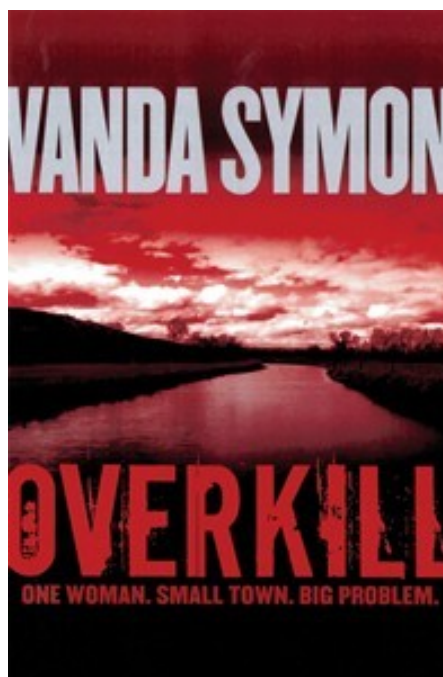




Overkill

Vanda Symon

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Sam Shephard, a young sole-charge police constable in Mataura, is the main character in a new series of crime novels set in New Zealand. When a young mother in the town is brutally murdered (it seems to be a professional job), Sam is at the heart of the police hunt to find the killer. But then Sam's past relationship with the dead woman's husband is revealed. Sam is stood down from the case and is now a prime murder suspect. Frustrated, Sam loses her cool. She can't stop herself making murder inquiries and gets into serious trouble with her police superiors. But then the young constable stumbles onto something. The murdered woman was working as a journalist and had uncovered a local scandal. She'd been killed to keep her quiet. When Sam enters this world she's in real physical danger, until at last a conspiracy is uncovered and the killer revealed. Disillusioned, Sam prepares to leave town. What will she do next?

Overkill Details

Date : Published 2007 by Penguin

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Author : Vanda Symon

Format : 324 pages

Genre : Mystery, Crime, Fiction, Thriller

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From Reader Review Overkill for online ebook

Thebooktrail says

Visit the settings in the book

An exciting new start to a new series set in New Zealand. Sam Shephard, is a young police constable in Maitauna with a lot on her plate. A young mother in the town is brutally murdered (and it seems to be a professional job), so she is part of the team who will find the killer. But what is Sam's past relationship with the dead woman's husband? Oh this just got twistier and twistier as I read. Evocative and memorable are not the words. Sam is a strong character and headstrong at times. She is very headstrong and stubborn which I liked. In a small town where everyone knows everyone else, it's going to be hard for her to get the results she needs. But that is the kind of challenge she thrives upon.

The cover of this book really made the whole reading experience more vivid. The flashes of red, the heat, the dark shadows, all wonderfully evoking time and place and mood in the novel. Bring on the next one!

Karen says

We've got this little dog... Jedda is a 3 year old Australian terrier female. She's short, red-golden haired, extremely independent, determined to the point of obsession, friendly but can switch quickly into extreme bolshie and she is absolutely and utterly incapable of stepping away from an argument. She's the sort of dog that will continue the fight after she's been physically picked up and carried away from the conflict point. I suspect if I'd read OVERKILL before we'd got that dog, there would have been a strong case put for naming her Sam.

OVERKILL is written from Sam's viewpoint. Which is a tricky approach as the reader is going to have to like Sam, or at least feel some sense of connection with her, and be comfortable that Sam is fairly investigating this death. Which is complicated because the grief-stricken widower is Sam's ex-lover. Somebody that you'd have to be dead or thick not have noticed Sam still holds quite a torch for. That, and some really ... well let's go with naive rather than stupid actions, means it's not a big step for the powers that be to suspend Sam from the investigation because she's made herself more than suspicious. Perhaps a little unfairly as it was Sam that first wonders if this death wasn't more than a tragic suicide and it's her sniffing around that finds the forged prescription that triggers the murder enquiry in the first place.

Needless to say, a piddling little technicality like "suspicion" and "suspended" isn't going to stop Sam, anymore than a cow manure shampoo or a few stitches in the head. (And that's got to be one of the funniest scenes I've read in years - thinking about it still made me cry with laughter when we were changing our own ute tyre the other day!)

Whilst there's always the exception to the rule, in the main there are some elements that are kind of expected in some forms of Crime Fiction. With your cop protagonist it doesn't hurt that they are a bit of a self-starter. It works well if there's conflict with higher authorities, and suspension allows your cop to head off into somewhat tricky "procedural" territory. There's really nothing wrong with using some formulaic elements in a book provided that they aren't one-dimensional and there's enough other elements for a reader to identify

with to allow you to forgive the occasional blatant setup. Where OVERKILL compensates in spades is in the main characters. Sam and her best friend, housemate Maggie are a good pairing - whilst Maggie takes no active part in the investigation part of the novel, she's the calm in Sam's chaos. And the affection, sarcasm, pithy commentary and observations between the two of them are frequently very very touching and funny.

Part of what I really liked about these books was that sense of humour. Frequently self-deprecating, the humorous touches are part of what makes the first-person voice work. At no stage is Sam overbearingly smug or self-serving. She's flawed and human and probably harder on herself than anybody around her could ever hope to be. OVERKILL is the first book in what is now a 4 book series, and having read the next two before I went back to re-read this one, I can see the developmental elements in this debut. Every series, after all, has to start somewhere and there's nothing worse than a debut book that says and does it all. Sam has places to go, people to annoy, problems to solve, ladders to climb, snakes to slide back down again. You just have to hope that 4 books isn't the end and there's a lot more of Sam in the future. (Expect a flurry of these reviews - I've been slack and need to catch up with talking about this terrific series!)

Laura Rash says

GIVE ME MORE!! I finished this book & literally ran to figure out how I could read more from VS! A great version of a police procedural with a different twist. The characterization was amazing! Once again, another no bookmark needed book from Orenda!

Thanks so much to Orenda for this free copy:)

LJ (On The Shelf Reviews) says

Rounded up from 4.5

Constable Sam Shephard is the sole police officer in the town of Mataura so when a young mum Gabriella Knowes goes missing it's up to her to find out what happened to her. One problem, the woman is the wife of her former boyfriend Lockie, a man who she still has feelings for.

When Gabriella's body is found at the side of the river, dead from an apparent suicide, something doesn't feel right to Sam. She soon finds evidence that Gabriella has been murdered and has to call in the police from the neighbouring town of Gore who quickly mark her as a suspect.

Sam stumbles upon a catastrophic conspiracy that will put her life in danger. Will she catch the killer and clear her name?

I found this to be a really quick read, gripping me from the very beginning. I devoured the three hundred or so pages in two sittings, which for me is super fast!

I loved Sam. She got a bit of a temper and can be a little sarcastic at times but she makes up for that by having a good heart. She puts aside her feelings, even though Lockie moved on so quickly after they broke up, to try and solve the case. The relationship between her and her best friend Maggie was also a joy to read. Maggie is straight talking and can always be counted on to bring Sam back down to Earth.

You really get a feel of New Zealand from the wildlife to the unusually named trees and plants. There's a nice smattering of local lingo and words native to New Zealand which give it that authentic feel. Even the

local food gets a look in. There's something called a Toffee pop which gets mentioned a fair bit and is Sam's favourite biscuit, I don't know what they are but I'd really like to try one!

While I did find the reasons behind the murder a little far fetched, the ending has left me wanting more!

Overkill is perfect if you're looking for a fast paced crime novel with a unique setting and a strong female lead.

Abbie says

Before I rave about the contents of Vanda Symon's Overkill I want to quickly mention the cover. I'm ashamed to admit that I often judge a book by its cover and Orenda are well known for their stunning book jackets. However, with Overkill they have really outdone themselves. I could look at it for hours it is just so stunning! I would happily have this on my wall. But I'm here to discuss the inside of the book, not the outside.

Without doubt Overkill will be on my final 'books of the year' list as it ticks so many crime fiction boxes and it is wonderfully written. Overkill is the first in Symon's PC Sam Shephard series and I am already eagerly anticipating the next book. Set in a rural community in New Zealand, the town is shocked when a young mother is found dead. It quickly becomes apparent to Matuara's only police constable, Sam, that this is not the suicide it originally appeared to be. Sam is soon suspended from her job when she is viewed as the prime suspect in the woman's murder due to the victim being the wife of her former partner. Sam sets out to clear her name and find the killer on her own.

The beginning of Overkill literally left me breathless. It is startling and I haven't had the reaction that I had to the start of Overkill for a long time. Brutally beautiful, Symon gets right to the emotional core of absolute fear and the writing is uncomfortably outstanding. It's clichéd to say, but I was immediately hooked.

Overkill continues to deliver on all fronts as the book progresses. Police Inspector Sam Shephard is a fantastic character and Symon has ensured that readers will want to meet her again in further books. While Overkill is crime fiction at its best, the sense of humour displayed by Sam adds an additional appeal. Sam's humour is sarcastic, dry and she is the kind of woman you want to go to the pub with. She is incredibly human and it was her honesty about her feelings along with her humour that really made me warm to her. I have no doubt that everyone who reads this book will love Sam. Symon's characterisation is second to none. The plot is perfectly paced with twists and turns that constantly keep you on the back foot. Prepare to be constantly second guessing and looking at everyone with suspicion. The small community setting aids this perfectly with a cast of characters who all potentially have something to hide. Secrets and lies abound as Sam tries to get to the bottom of the murder. Overkill is a real page turner with shocks and surprises throughout. The sense of place is created well and the reader is completely transported to New Zealand. The setting shines through via Symon's prose and it also ensures that the crime is unique in the reasons behind it, making it totally original.

With a twisty plot, a protagonist who shines and beautifully written observations of the cruellest things, Overkill is crime fiction at its best and this is an outstanding book. I predict that this series is going to soar here in the UK and it deserves to. I adored this book and can't wait for the next in the series. If you read and enjoy crime fiction, you will adore it too.

Sooz (P.Turners Book Blog) says

**** Full review to come as part of blog tour ****

Berit??? says

Atmospheric! Dark! Beautiful!

This is the first book in a crime thriller series that takes place in New Zealand... first off I loved the setting! The book made me feel as though I had journeyed to New Zealand, and was in this small rural village... The descriptions and vernacular seemed so authentic.... Love when a book takes you away from reality for a little while...

This book starts out with a huge BAM!!! A prologue that will leave you speechless and suck you completely into the story.... Sam Shepard is a constable in this small town where nothing ever happens, until now! A woman is found dead, is it suicide? Is it murder? After it is discovered that Sam is the victim's husband's ex lover she is dismissed from the case... but as an all good crime thrillers Sam is determined to find out the truth so she investigates on her own....

Sam was an extremely well crafted character... she had both a strong and soft side.... a friend you'd want in a fight who would also give you a shoulder to cry on! Love when there is a strong yet relatable female protagonist in a crime thriller book...

This book started out so fast paced I felt as though I was trying to catch my breath... the pace then slowed down so I could relax, it did slow down a bit too much for me for a brief period... but then it picked up again! I found the ending to be very satisfying and believable... cannot wait to see what we have in store for us in the next installment of this compelling crime thriller!

Recommend to fans of the crime thriller genre who enjoy a book with a captivating female protagonist...

*** many thanks to The publisher for my copy of this book ***

Donna Maguire says

<https://donnasbookblog.wordpress.com/...>

This was a really enjoyable story, I loved Sam as the lead character and I warmed to her straight away. I thought she was excellent and was rooting for her throughout the story as the developments came through in the case.

This book flowed really well for me and I was able to pick it up and jump straight back in to the story after leaving it for a few hours. I loved the writing style and how the story progressed to the ending.

Four stars from me for this one, definitely an author I'm going to be looking out for and I loved the insight in to New Zealand, a fabulous setting for the book and that cover is amazing!!

Karen says

I've read crime thrillers set in many different countries, but until now, none that have been set in New Zealand. Visiting the country has been on my bucket list forever but until I can achieve that, reading a book set there is the next best thing!

The prologue to Overkill had me in bits, it was just so chilling and calculated in its execution – literally! I just can't imagine what would go through your mind in those circumstances. That has to be one of the strongest beginnings to a crime story that I've read and I'm delighted to say that the rest of the story had me just as hooked.

The town of Matura is one of those places where everybody knows everyone else and their business. Until the death of Gaby Knowes the worst crime that police constable Sam Shephard had to deal with was cattle rustling. However the death of Gaby was devastating for the small-knit community and for Sam personally.

Sam's past association with Gaby's husband Lockie very much goes against her and although she tries to be impartial in her professional capacity, she can't help having preconceived ideas about Gaby's life and what led to her death. It was her reactions and feelings that made her so believable and more human than just a character on a page. Lockie may have been in her past but even though she is investigating his wife's death, she still can't just switch off her feelings for him. Unfortunately for her, her superiors believe her to be a suspect and she is treated like a pariah by most colleagues and many of the townspeople.

The one shining light in Sam's life was her friend and housemate Maggie. Maggie was an absolute star and gave Sam support and sympathy when she needed it and a kick up the bum at other times. We could all do with a friend like that!

Sam is a tenacious and stubborn character and despite being officially off the case, she wouldn't give up and decided to carry out her own investigations, feeling that as she knew the people and area, she would have an advantage over the neighbouring police team that had been brought in. There were times when I thought she was being especially reckless and foolish in pursuing a particular course of action and I was almost shouting "noooo don't do that you silly woman".

The characterisation was excellent – even for those playing a minor role and the sense of place was atmospheric and easily imagined. I could easily see in my mind the track roads leading to remote farms (– far too remote for my liking). After reading, I Googled 'Matura' and there are some fabulous images of the river and surrounding landscape.

As you would expect from a crime thriller, there are surprises in store and one or two wrong garden paths. I had a few suspects in mind at various times but there were certain areas where I was way off beam. I think it's fair to say that Overkill is not your run of the mill crime thriller!

Overkill was a fabulously gripping read and as the first in the series, it's got off to a fine start. This will be a series I will be keen to follow

Janel says

As soon as you read the first page, you're hooked! Overkill has a killer opening, emphasis on 'killer' – the prologue to this novel ensures it grabs your full attention, it emotionally involves you from the offset. It also excites you from the offset because it sets the scene for an interesting story, and you immediately find out

just how engaging Symon's writing is.

Let's talk setting, I haven't read a novel set in New Zealand before, let alone visited the country, but after finishing this novel, I feel like it's somewhere I've been, such is Symon's ability to place you in the location. Overkill encompasses all that you want from novels set in small towns, that almost claustrophobic feeling of everyone knowing everyone, the vivid details that will attack the senses, and I'm not just talking about the visuals – I promise that will make more sense once you've read this novel! And as with small towns, you have your tight-knit communities, but it also means rumours spread, and you find out how you can be surrounded by so many people, yet feel so alone.

Overkill is full of great characterisation, all the characters felt authentic. Sam, particularly, was a fantastic character, exactly what you want in a main protagonist – likeable, determined, someone you can get behind and root for. What I really liked was how real Sam felt, especially when you see her relationship with her best friend, Maggie – you can just picture it, the banter, the support, the genuine friendship.

The idea that a police officer has been taken off a case, but continues to investigate it, is not a new one. Yet, this novel felt entirely original. Partly due to the location, but what Symon did is take something we've seen before and make it her own, with the direction of the plot, and the characters, this novel has a fresh feel to it; different from the norm, in a way that makes you want more. Also, Overkill is such a fitting title. The originality also came from Symon's writing style, there's something so natural about it, nothing feels forced, it just works! A fresh, new [to me], and exciting voice in crime fiction!

I'm really excited for the future of this series, and looking forward to reading the next book

My thanks to Orenda Books for providing me with a copy of this book

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

First, I want to say that no, you shouldn't pick books because of covers. Second, I just LOVE this cover. So, ignore what I said first. Especially if you like a good crime novel because this is a book that has both a great story AND great cover!

OVERKILL is the first book in Sam Shephard series. Sam is a young cop that is called to a house in which a young woman has disappeared from. A suicide note has been found and soon after the body of the woman is found. An easy case, or not. Sam is not so sure and shortly after she discovers that it's, not suicide, it's murder. And, to top it all she's herself a suspect because of the dead woman is the wife of her old boyfriend. Now she has to both find the murderer and clear her name.

Sam Shepard is easy to like. A bit too outspoken now perhaps, which isn't good when her career and life in freedom is at risk. But, she's a good cop and she's hellbent on finding the killer. The question is why would anyone want to kill a nice young mother. Sam has to dig deep to get some answers and the truth is truly surprising. There are also some really hilarious moments in the book, like for instance when Sam is trying to change a tire. I love it when in all seriousness there is a moment like that. Moments that make you smile.

OVERKILL is a great book and I hope to get the chance of reading the rest of the books in the series.

Jacob Collins says

Sometimes a book comes along which you just want to shout from the rooftops about, and *Overkill* for me is that book. I'd heard many great things about it so my expectations were high and they were certainly met. I'm going to be pressing this book into the hands of everyone who I know who loves crime fiction. This is one of the best introductions to a new crime series that I have read. As I was reading the prologue, I was just staring wide-eyed at the page, completely engrossed by the character's dilemma and what she was facing at that moment. And I knew that this wasn't going to be an easy case for the police to investigate.

What first drew me to *Overkill* was the book's setting. The author, Vanda Symon, sets the novel in her home country, New Zealand. I haven't read any books set in this part of the world before. In her debut novel, Vanda Symon paints a portrait of a friendly, tight knit community and it seems an idyllic place to live, everyone knows each other's business. The crime rate appears to be low, and nothing untoward seems to happen, which is why the discovery of the body of one of their own, sends the community, and even the police working on the case into shock. I did wonder how the case was going to affect the town in the long run, especially if there wasn't a quick resolution. I was beginning to imagine that there would be many pointing the finger at each other and playing the blame game.

Detective Constable Sam Shepherd, who is on the team investigating the case, is acquainted with the woman who has been found and with the victim's husband as well. Her connection to the individuals at the heart of the crime is what makes this case particularly personal and difficult for her, even more so as she still has strong feelings for the victim's husband. But Sam tries her best to find out what happened, even when there are many obstacles thrown in her way. She certainly isn't given an easy time with this case, and this is what makes this book tense and exciting, I wanted to see how she was going to get out of the situation she was now in. But to find out what happens to Sam, you're going to have to pick up the book to find out as I won't be revealing anything here.

I did have a huge amount of empathy for Sam throughout the book. I think she is a character who fears change, and she is a person who becomes very attached to people who she knows well, particularly her friend Maggie. But when it comes down to the case, she is determined to get to the bottom of what has happened, and she is feisty in her determination to bring the perpetrators of the crime to justice.

I loved Vanda Symon's writing style. When I started reading the book, I knew that it wouldn't take me long to finish. I liked that every now and again there was a slice of humour, which really added to Sam's characterisation and the people around her.

After reading *Overkill* I'm really excited to read what Vanda writes next. *Overkill* is an immersive, page-turner that will have you gripped from the chilling opening right through to the heart pounding conclusion. Thank you to Anne Cater at Random Things Tours for inviting me to take part in the blog tour and to Karen Sullivan at Orenda Books for sending me a copy of the book to review.

Margitte says

Constable Sam Shepard had her sparkling dreams of becoming a detective one day and serve her small New Zealand community to the best of her abilities. That was, before her ex-boyfriend's wife was found on the banks of the Maitai River, and she herself became a suspect. She would soon discover that small communities had a mean streak with bigger, nasty nails than a Bengal tiger.

Standing slightly more than five feet in her shoes, she had a lot to prove, and had her innocence to rip from the cruel log books of history. With high-octane action and suspenseful drama, she proved her point. That is to be expected. She is our heroine, after all.

However, the book also had a deeper story about serious issues with international consequences woven into it, which I really appreciated. It rendered the book much more than a little bit of the usual chick-lit fluff. So, although it was a light murder mystery, it was also informative, and of course, highly entertaining. Loved it.

This is the first book in the [Sam Sheppard] series. It can be expected that the ending would be constructed to kick off the sequel, but for me it was a good ending if you would like to read it as a standalone. Chicken-soup-for-the-soul, relaxing read right from New Zealand. Go for it!

Steve says

I found this a rather enjoyable read about a small town policewoman being caught up in something much much larger. The plot twists came thick and fast, and while I questioned adding in a subplot, they came together deliciously in an explosive climax. I was saddened by the lack of any real resolution, but I will have to read the next in this series.

Liz Barnsley says

Atmospheric sense of place in this murder mystery which features an excellent main protagonist. Review for the tour.
