



## The Woman in the Dark

*Vanessa Savage*

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# **The Woman in the Dark**

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**A chilling psychological thriller about dark family dysfunction and the secrets that haunt us - perfect for fans of BEHIND CLOSED DOORS and THE COUPLE NEXT DOOR.**

For Sarah and Patrick, family life has always been easy. But when Sarah's mother dies, it sends Sarah into a downwards spiral. Knowing they need a fresh start, Patrick moves the family to the beachside house he grew up in.

But there is a catch: while their new home carries only happy memories for Patrick, to everyone else it's known as the Murder House - named for the family that was killed there.

Patrick is adamant they can make it perfect again, though with their children plagued by nightmares and a constant sense they're being watched, Sarah's not so sure. Because the longer they live in their 'dream home', the more different her loving husband becomes . . .

## **The Woman in the Dark Details**

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## From Reader Review The Woman in the Dark for online ebook

### Elaine's Reviews says

The Woman in the Dark is the story of one family and a house. Patrick, Sarah and their two children, Ben and Mia live in Cardiff. Patrick, as a child, lived near the coast in a beautiful Victorian house. Unfortunately though the house he grew up in was repossessed when his father lost his job and a new family moved in. Following a tragedy in the house involving the new family, the house remains empty for years and is dubbed, in the media, the "Murder House".

For 15 years, Patrick dreams of moving back to his childhood home and recreating that loving, nurturing environment he experienced in the house, before it was known as the "Murder House", for his own family. Sarah, not keen on moving, has to be persuaded but eventually relents for Patrick's sake, and the children are not happy about the move either. Once they move in though, they try to overlook the reputation of the house in the local area but still, Sarah feels uneasy in the house, there's unexplained cold spots and a cellar that Patrick insists remains locked. She feels as though the house is being watched by someone. Patrick is oblivious to all of this and tells Sarah she is paranoid, however, with every day that passes, Patrick becomes less and less like the man that Sarah married and more into someone she doesn't recognise.

Initially, I found it difficult to get into this book, I found the writing style hard to get my head around. I felt there were too many unanswered questions at the start and I was getting a bit confused. I continued reading the book and holy moly, did it take off!! The story quickly becomes clear. It is a claustrophobic, tension-filled psychological thriller that moves at a pretty fast pace. I found myself thinking about the family when I wasn't reading the book. Sarah is an unreliable narrator and a lot of what she witnesses can be explained in different ways, by herself, by Patrick, by the children. The details are drip fed to you and this helps spiral the tension ever upwards as the book goes on, and you begin to wonder, what is the truth? Is the house haunted? Is Patrick all that he appears to be? Is Sarah grappling with mental health issues? I loved this book and stayed up half the night to finish it, and I thoroughly enjoyed the ending too, a great twist. This book is released in January 2019

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### Angela Smith says

A wonderfully twisty story of mystery, thriller and suspense all rolled into one. From early on in the story you sense the darkness in Sarah's husband Patrick as he manipulates the lives of his family to get what he wants. What he wants is to get back his family home and all costs, more or less breaking them financially to get it. Sarah is still recovering from a breakdown after her mother's death. The small legacy her mother left her is emotionally blackmailed out of her and they move to the house which is named "The Murder House" by the locals. For a good reason as almost an entire family were slaughtered within it's walls.

The house has a dark history and has a palpable presence as any character in the book. From it's mouldering walls to it's dark corners. A large house that manages to make you feel claustrophobic. It's peeling wallpaper is like layers of an onion skin being peeled back as Patrick's lies and past come to light and all the while there is an unknown person stoking the fires making him more frightening to his family. Sarah is barely holding it together trying to keep her children safe.

A real nail biter of a book!A wonderfully twisty story of mystery, thriller and suspense all rolled into one. From early on in the story you sense the darkness in Sarah's husband Patrick as he manipulates the lives of

his family to get what he wants. What he wants is to get back his family home and all costs, more or less breaking them financially to get it. Sarah is still recovering from a breakdown after her mother's death. The small legacy her mother left her is emotionally blackmailed out of her and they move to the house which is named "The Murder House" by the locals. For a good reason as almost an entire family were slaughtered within its walls.

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### **Andrea Hicks says**

My thanks to Sphere and NetGalley for giving me the opportunity to read *The Woman in the Dark*. This is a very dark novel with many layers entwined for the denouement that I'm not sure satisfied me completely. Sarah thinks she has the perfect husband, but I began asking questions as to the balance of their relationship when he all but pushed her into looking after his motherless child when she was only nineteen. Her youth and experience led her to believe her life with him would be idyllic but after seventeen years of marriage and another child, she begins to realise that all is not as it should be when he guilts her into giving up her inheritance from her mother to buy the house he was raised in, a Victorian villa with a murderous past where three people were stabbed to death. The premise and plot of *The Woman in the Dark* is excellent, however I feel Sarah's acceptance that everything that goes wrong in their lives is completely her fault becomes a little wearing. I wanted to tell her to 'woman up'. I'm sure most readers could see what was coming, and that it could never end well. I enjoyed the novel. It was well written with lots of heart and soul within it, but Sarah was a character I unfortunately found difficult to champion.

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### **Susan Hampson says**

The rose-coloured spectacles are well and truly on when Patrick hears that the house that was his sea-side family home as a child is up for sale. The coastal location sounds an ideal place for him and his wife to bring up their two teenage children. Sarah had fallen into a state of depression after her mother died. So Patrick sees the windfall she has been left as the opportunity for a fresh start for them all.

There is only one draw back. The family that lived there after Patrick's family moved were all slaughtered, with the exception of one child. The Murder House, that had been left empty ever since the tragic family had died, wasn't quite what Patrick's family had in mind to up root and move to.

Now this isn't a family that you would say was stable to start with, it has its secrets, it has its emotional problems and it has Patrick who I disliked from the first time he appeared on the pages. So what begins with unease soon builds into a dark and disturbing story once this dysfunctional family moves into the house of yesteryear horrors.

There are some real creepy people in this story that all have their own take on Patrick's family and that of the family that were murdered. The house even seems to have its own influence on its occupants too as it feels

like the walls are closing in as the mental health of all of them takes a dive. I was swept along with it all, wanting answers, then wanting to unread them!

The intensity just increases in every chapter at times blurring what I thought I knew and at others shocking me to my core. To say I got edgy just doesn't quite tell of the shocks that I came across. This is a real mixed up family believe me. A super ending that I had to read twice. Gob-smacked!

I wish to thank NetGalley and the publisher for a copy of this e-book which I have honestly reviewed.

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### **Amanda says**

Sarah is recovering from a breakdown after losing her Mother. Husband Patrick is adamant that they should move to his old family home by the sea even if it financially breaks them. The house is not called the murder house for no reason though!! As much as he makes the house sound idyllic it's hard to forget 3 people were killed there.

A very chilling read, a proper nail biter full of wonderful suspense, murder and twists along the way.

Loved how Patrick's lies come to light and revealed who he really is. I found him to be shifty from the start!! All the time there is someone out there watching and plotting this family's downfall, you had me on the edge of my seat.

Thank you to Netgalley for a copy in exchange for my review

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### **peggy says**

If you are looking for a dark and disturbing tale then this is the book for you.

A really good psychological thriller about a family who move back to the husband's childhood home where some gruesome murders were previously committed and the house well all i can say is CREEPY I DEVOURED this book in one sitting and had to stop reading a few times as i was listening for strange noises. Reading this book had me on the edge of my seat, it got my heart racing and made me turn on all the lights in the house with. Well i only have one more thing to say, would you like to spend a night in the MURDER HOUSE?? HIGHLY RECOMMENDED.

I would like to thank Netgalley and Little Brown Books UK for the ARC of this book in return for giving an honest review.

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### **Candy says**

What a fab read. It grabbed me in right from the start ! Quite chilling and spooky in places. With a perfect twist at the end ! I loved it ! 10/10

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### **Louise Wilson says**

Sarah and Patrick have always had an easy family life. But when Sarah's mother dies, Sarah is sent on a

downward spiral. They decide to move away and make a fresh start with their two children. They move to the large seaside house that Patrick grew up in. But horrific and brutal murders took place there. The locals call it the "Murder House". The house has been empty since the murders took place 15 years ago. Sarah did not want to move, but she is eventually persuaded. Patrick soon becomes less like the man Sarah knew.

I found it difficult to get into this book at first. There were many unanswered questions and I felt a little bit confused. Bit I'm glad I persevered with it as what a marvellous book it turned out to be. This is a very dark story that's narrated by Sarah. There are a few twists and the characters are well described. The tension builds with every turn of the page. A gripping thriller that will have you on the edge of your seat. I would have given this book 5 stars if the beginning had been better.

I would like to thank NetGalley, Little Brown Book Group, UK and the author Vanessa Savage for my ARC in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Liz Barnsley says**

The Woman in the Dark is a relevant and very disturbing tale, taking on elements of mental health, abuse and the things that define us.

It was an addictive, unnerving read, with "The Murder House" taking on a presence of its own – the idea that places of violence hold onto that violence gives this oft told tale an extra, intriguing layer.

In a family full of secrets, the story plays out in pacy and thought provoking style, as Sarah fights her inner demons in an effort to protect that family – it is a fascinatingly dark read that leaves you thinking of it after it is done.

Enjoyed it muchly even though it made me shiver.

Recommended.

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### **Cari says**

My review will appear in Booklist. Enjoyed this one - atmospheric and creepy. A few disturbing events might upset the reader, but this is generally a creepy book, so it all fits.

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### **Sue K says**

I can't quite work this book out. It was a quick read and quite enjoyable but at the end I wasn't particularly satisfied with it.

Sarah and Patrick have been married for about 17 years and they have a daughter Mia and Sarah's stepson Joe who are 15 and 17 respectively. Their marriage doesn't seem to have hit any blocks until Patrick wants to move back to his childhood house in a seaside town in Wales – it is all consuming to him and, despite his wife and children not wanting to move, he manages to persuade them to when the house unexpectedly comes on the market – as he wants to recreate his "perfect" childhood. (Alarm bells are starting to ring at this point).

The house has a history though because after Patrick's parents sold it to the Evanses, the house became

infamous for some grisly murders so it was known as the Murder House by the locals. It has also fallen into a terrible state of disrepair and would cost a large amount of money to put right – money they don't seem to have as Patrick has mortgaged it up to the hilt and used Sarah's small inheritance from her mother.

Things start to spiral out of control as it appears there is someone watching the house, Patrick goes from reasonably nice family man to manipulating monster who is not afraid to hit his family and Sarah seems to go through the whole story in a semi-drug induced state – brought on mainly by the death of her mother who, as far as I could see wasn't a bad person, just lonely. The thing is that it didn't really add up for me – why go from nice family for 17 years to dysfunctional in a matter of weeks. I was getting frustrated at Sarah who couldn't stand up to her children who seem to blame her for everything that has befallen their lives and winced and cringed at the insults they were hurling at her; Patrick has become a stranger and nasty to boot and I was fed up with their battles as he also kept blaming her for everything. There is also the obligatory best friend who wafts in and out of the story, and new "friends" in the town who also seems to have secrets.

It was an OK read and would do well on a long haul journey or beach but for me the characters lacked gravitas and the plot had a lot of holes that really needed plugging.

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### **Debbie Littley says**

I can honestly say that this book will be next years must read psychological thriller of 2019.

It has it all, what appears to be the perfect family, but in reality they are facing underlying stress, a mental ill wife, self-destructive teenage children, deteriorating marriage and of course, the move into The Murder House!

As with all books in this genre, things are never as they seem but sometimes, just sometimes, they are exactly that! I mean, who would expect The Murder House to be a perfect family home and a fresh start for them all? But can a house really have influence over the occupants and their actions? How much influence does our upbringing and past have on our futures?

Sarah, a once young colourful aspiring artist looking forwards to her future painting her way around the world. Her best friend and fellow aspiring artist Caroline, never a fan of Patrick but who has supported Sarah as best she can. Patrick, the older professional career and family man, who had an idyllic upbringing, brought up in a perfect house by the sea and who loves his wife and children. Joe their 17-year-old son, also a promising artist who has yet to find out Sarah is not his real mother and finally, Mia, the 15-year-old daughter who has always been a daddy's girl.

All have their own story, their own problems that all culminate and come to a head inside the murder house!

Although Patrick is the only family member that wants the move and the fresh start the family all agree that they will try to make it work and to make the house perfect again just as it was when Patrick first lived there. It will be a monumental task for them all, the house has been neglected since the family before were all murdered in that house, damp patches and mould on the walls, rotting window frames, cold spots in certain parts of the house, not to mention the noises an old house can make don't go anyway towards helping the new occupants to settle in to their new house.

Sarah becomes convinced someone is watching the house ever since they moved in, but is that just her

imagination as Patrick suggests? And then what of the odd items left on the doorstep? A seashell? Living that close to the beach doesn't sound that strange but then things begin to escalate as both Sarah and Patrick's sanity and reality begin to deteriorate.

Who's perception is in fact reality and who's is reality slipping away from them?

Will the house always be The Murder House or can it become the perfect family home they wish it to be?

With some plot twists to be expected and some that come as a shock, this is a psychological thriller not to be missed!

The Woman in the Dark will be published in the UK on 10 January 2019

A big thank you to Vanessa Savage, the publishers Little Brown Book Group and NetGalley for my advance reader copy in exchange for an honest review.

All thoughts and opinions are my own.

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### **miss j a robinson says**

Many thanks to Vanessa Savage, Little, Brown Book Group, Sphere and NetGalley for an ARC of The Woman in the Dark. Here is my honest review.

The Woman in the Dark is a dark and foreboding tale, Patrick Walker grows up in a large seaside home and speaks of it lovingly, despite the horrific and brutal murders of a family occurring, after his childhood home was repossessed. It is now known locally as 'The Murder House' and has been vacant since the fatal attack. When it suddenly comes up for sale, Patrick persuades his reluctant wife, Sarah, and his children to buy the house. and move away from their current home and social network. It is at this point where things begin to go terribly wrong.

From the start there is a dark feeling within the home, Cold spots, personality changes, nightmares and a general falling apart of the family begin to happen. This gets progressively worse. The longer the family are there, the worse the atmosphere and well-being of the family deteriorates. Sarah is convinced The Murder House is cursed, the children believe it is haunted. Sarah begs Patrick to allow the family to move, but Patrick is determined to make the house into a family home and refuses. Things escalate from there, with a claustrophobic story filled with dark mystery and suspense, ending with a twist. Is The Murder House responsible for the deterioration in the family's mental health and safety or are other dark forces at work? A brilliant book, scary in places, but generally darkly suspenseful. A fantastic ending with a twist that I did not see coming. I really enjoyed this book and would be interested in the author's other works.

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### **Cheryl M-M says**

Savage portrays the isolation of mental health in the middle of a family structure, and the blame game which often ensues. The 'it's your fault because, how could you do this or that' ect ect blame game. It's easy to point a finger in the direction of the most vulnerable person in the room instead of taking a closer look at our own faults and mistakes. It's also easier than trying to comprehend why someone would try to hurt themselves.

In a more understanding environment Sarah would be given support to deal with her grief after the death of her mother. Instead she has to deal with constant jibes, insults and a lack of respect from her children and her husband Patrick.

Moving to a new town and into Patrick's old family home should alleviate some of the pressure of Sarah's issues, according to her husband. If it wasn't for the fact that the house is renowned for being the scene of a horrific crime, so it's rumoured to be filled with ghosts and evil spirits, it would be perfect. Not exactly the right setting for a new start.

The reality is, Sarah has just taken a step into a dangerous situation, however she isn't sure whether it is paranoia, her illness or something more sinister afoot. Her friends and family think she is slowly losing the plot, as the walls start to close in on her and her secrets.

There is no denying that the author knows how to keep the tension as taught as a bowstring, and also keep the reader looking under every stone and behind every corner. I particularly enjoyed the way she shows how outsiders are often unable to pinpoint and recognise abusive behaviour, even when it is happening right in front of them. It doesn't always have to be a punch in the face or a hidden bruise. Sometimes it is something subtle which may make you feel slightly uncomfortable.

It's a riveting whirlwind of darkness and suspicion with plenty of twists and turns to keep readers on their toes. You might not know who to trust, but you will definitely know who to dislike.

\*I received a copy courtesy of the publisher\*

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### **Gayle Noble says**

When Sarah married Patrick everything seemed idyllic, Patrick had a son from a previous relationship and they had a daughter together. Seventeen years later, Sarah is recovering from depression following the death of her mother, when Patrick decides he wants to family to move to his childhood home - the only problem is it's referred to as The Murder House for good reason. Both Sarah and the teenage children feel that there is something wrong, but Patrick won't listen, and then he starts to change for the worse.

This one was a difficult one to rate for me. On the one hand, I thought the plot was good and it was certainly very dark. On the other hand, I found Sarah was a little too meek and mild. She let Patrick and the kids blame her for everything and talk to her like she was rubbish. I understand that the author was showing how people can react in an abusive family situation, but honestly I got fed up with reading "It was all my fault". I'm rating it 3.5 stars - a pick but with reservations.

TW: abuse, psychological abuse, sexual assault.

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Thanks to NetGalley and publishers, Little Brown Book Group / Sphere, for the opportunity to read an ARC.