



## A Palette for Murder (Lana Davis Mystery #1)

*Vanessa A. Ryan*

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### A Palette for Murder (Lana Davis Mystery #1) Details

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## From Reader Review A Palette for Murder (Lana Davis Mystery #1) for online ebook

### Amber Foxx says

Vanessa A. Ryan picked the perfect background for a murder mystery in Santa Fe: rich people, not-so rich artists, and crime and corruption in the city's art world.

First, some relevant local data: In the *Santa Fe Reporter's* 2013-14 *Annual Manual*, the city's population was given as 68,642 residents. The more recent *Manual* didn't give us the population number, but both editions say that the City Different has four art galleries per 1,000 residents. That's a lot of art. After city government, it's the primary business in town, aside from tourism. Santa Fe is ranked the number one city for air quality in the country, and has 320 days of sunshine a year, which may be part of the reason it's the fourth happiest city. I'll second that. Music and dancing and general festivity are a way of life. The downside? The cost of living in Santa Fe is 17.7% higher than the national average. Maybe that's why it's not *the* happiest city. But without all those wealthy people, the art scene would die. It's a necessary symbiosis—and central to this story.

Insurance administrator Lana Davis comes to Santa Fe looking for the beneficiary of a life insurance policy. As soon as she starts her search, the plot gets complicated. I can find my way around Santa Fe's oddly configured streets without a map, but I couldn't figure out whodunit. This is a classic puzzle type of murder mystery. Everyone's a suspect, and I mean, *everyone*.

The behind-the-scenes look at an art gallery was intriguing. A lot of the little details—how important it is to some people to be invited to a benefit auction, the way rich people can tell who's really one of them but poor artists can't, and even snobbery about fauxdobe—also give the book an “insider” feel.

Lana is an amusing narrator. She's basically good but willing to bend rules just enough to take some risks she shouldn't take, and she's cool enough not to get as freaked out by death, danger and violence as most people would. If she were an animal, she'd be a cat: independent, self-sufficient, and persistent and clever in the chase. She has nine lives, too, and is good at landing on her feet—at least figuratively. This makes her a good fit for the amateur sleuth role—the personality has to be believable for the premise of the amateur investigator to work. More sensitive or rule-following folks wouldn't dare get into the situations she does. I think there are two kinds of series protagonists: the ones we identify with, and the ones we would like to be for a day. Lana is the second kind.

Ryan is a polished story-teller. If you like tight plotting, a great setting and a fast pace, this is your book.

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### Monica Ganz says

A Palette for Murder is the kind of book that had me glued to it from beginning to end as I fell in love with this read. The story is very well written with just the perfect amount of murder, action, and suspense that kept me captivated as I was turning the pages. All of the characters, my favorite being Lana of course, are all unique, vividly described, and very well developed as you go through the story which was nice. This was actually the first time I've read a book by Vanessa A. Ryan before and I have to say I'm impressed. Curious to see what else is in store.

## Erika says

When Lana Davis, an insurance adjuster from LA, heads to Santa Fe to find a missing heir, she gets more than she bargained for. Her investigation takes her deep into Santa Fe's art scene, where she finds forgery, murder, and temporary employment.

The story starts off slow, but once Lana makes it to Santa Fe the action, and the pace of the story, pick up. The search for Antonio "Lefty" Sanchez, a client's beneficiary, takes Lana to several galleries where Lefty was employed doing odd jobs. One of the gallery owners decides that an insurance investigator isn't that far from private detective, and asks Lana to track down a missing painting and in so doing, save her gallery. While Lana's main focus in Santa Fe should have been to track down Lefty Sanchez for the employer who is paying her expenses, she devotes most of her time and attention to her investigation of the missing artwork. The two mysteries eventually start to intertwine though, and there are enough suspects and red herrings to keep you guessing as to who has done what.

While they mystery itself is well plotted and enjoyable, the characters fell flat for me. I didn't feel any emotional connection with the main character, or see any real conflict in her decision making process. Lana displays the same lack of commitment to her new part time job as she did to her original job, and I found her indifference off-putting. I prefer a heroine that I care about and can root for, or a main character that I can despise, but Lana was neither of these. With a little more character development this could turn into a good series though, so I'd be willing to give Lana one more try.

*NOTE: While I received a copy of the book and was compensated for my review, this in no way influenced my opinion or rating of the book.*

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## Rob Shelsky says

An insurance company wanting to find a missing heir, a large inheritance at stake, and an angry man, Miguel Garcia, who seems almost maniacal in claiming everything belongs to him, is a problem for Lana Davis. Lana is thrust into the middle of all this as her company's insurance agent and is tasked with finding out just what is really going on. She must find the missing heir, Antonio Chavez. This, Lana sets out to do by traveling at her company's expense to Santa Fe, New Mexico. The misguided Lana thinks her job will be a relatively easy one. She might even have the time and chance to look up an old boyfriend while in New Mexico.

Upon arriving in Santa Fe, Lana learns things are considerably more complex than she had initially expected them to be. There is a developing mystery and step by step, the determined insurance agent is drawn ever deeper into a complex web of events. Art is big business in Santa Fe. Lana Davis finds herself in the midst of it all and dangerously so. Between theft, master forgeries, and unfaithful spouses, the intrepid agent must wend her way, find the answers, and somehow not die in the attempt.

Here is a mystery novel that is chock full of surprises and one which kept me engrossed from beginning to end. The story is well woven, the plot full of twists and turns. The characters were very real to me, and the descriptions of Santa Fe (having been there myself), are spot on.

The author, Vanessa A. Ryan, adeptly brings the art world of Santa Fe to life, complete with all the possible inner dealings such a world implies, with emphasis on the corrupt side of things. One feels for Lana as she tries to work her way through it all and stay alive in the process.

If I had one slight problem with this novel, it is that at times, just at times and only to a very limited extent, I

felt as if there was a bit too much telling rather than showing. At some points, the story had a little too much told to us about things, as in a sort of info-dump on the reader, but again, this was a minor thing and didn't subtract from the overall story for me to any real degree.

I found the dialogue mainly very good, if at times lacking just a little sparkle, but again, this also was a very minor thing. What I did find very well done was the plot, the character development, and the pacing of events, as well as the descriptions. The writer has a natural, easy way of writing that draws the reader in. She did with me.

For a cozy type of murder mystery, this is one of the better ones for me. I recommend this book as a great read. To take on a holiday, to enjoy on a quiet summer's evening or just to snatch bits of while on work breaks or at lunch, this is a fun book to read! I give A Palette for Murder by Vanessa A. Ryan a perfect five stars out of five for this book.

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### **Will Zeilinger says**

Vanessa A. Ryan has woven a great story of intrigue and murder all set in the art establishment of Santa Fe New Mexico. Her knowledge of the subject is displayed through in her characters and brings a sense of reality to the tale. Having been to Santa Fe, I could feel the places she described.

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