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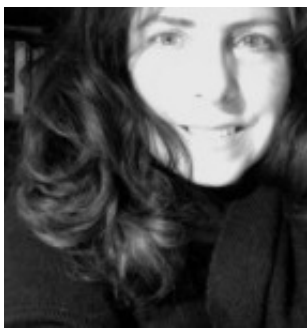


### Linda Westphal

by [Kathy Reinhart](#)

## After a brief hiatus, I'm back and today I welcome best-selling author, Linda Westphal.

**IDI** - Good morning, Linda. I've had a few unexpected issues lately, which put me behind with interviews, but I'm glad to finally be able to talk with you. Let's start with something a little broad. Define a great book.



Linda Westphal

*LW - When I must have the paper version of a book in my personal library, I know it's a great book. In some way the book has touched or inspired me deeply, or I feel connected to the story or a character. It's in my library because I want easy access to the book.*

*A great book may also be a book that you did not like when you were, say, 22 years old, but at age 32 or 42, you pick it up again and not only are you able to read it straight through, you love it. I think of this when I start reading a book that's not resonating with me at the moment I'm reading it (every page feels like work). Reading is a very personal experience. Who you are — your interests, what's going on in your life at the moment you pick up a book — all play a part in how you feel about a book when you are reading it. If this happens to you, put down the book and pick it up again in a few years; you may have a different reaction to the story.*

**IDI** - They say know the rules and then you may break them. Which rules do you find yourself breaking and how does it work in your writing?

*LW - When I made a decision to write fiction, I read everything I could get my hands on about the art of writing a story. How to develop characters. How to write dialogue. How to develop a plot. What makes a good writer great. None of these how-to guides helped me, because all I could think about during the writing process was Am I following the rules? To write a great story, you have to forget all the rules and just write. Write every day. Visit the story every day, even if it's only to write one sentence. Keep at it until you reach the end. Then edit like crazy.*

**IDI** - Great answer! When was your Eureka moment? When did you know you were born to be a writer?

*LW - While I have been writing on and off most of my life, my Eureka moment happened just a few years ago. It came to me while I was reading. I never planned to be a writer, but here I am. Now I can't imagine being anything but a writer. Funny how it all works out, and how we are naturally pushed into what we are meant to be doing.*

**IDI** - Tell us about the picture on the cover of your book *The Medium*. Was it taken in Savannah, Georgia?

*LW - Indeed! It's a photo I took in 2003 when I spent about three weeks in Savannah's Historic District. It was my first visit to Savannah and I was mesmerized by the city. During my stay I purposely did not rent a car, because I wanted to get to know the Historic District. I've traveled a lot so I know it's nearly impossible to get to know a place while you are in a car. You have to walk, at a slow pace, to really see a city. I wanted to get to know Savannah's history, the charm of its 22 squares, the architecture and iron works, the hidden gardens, and walk the cobblestone streets. I can tell you without a bit of hesitation that Savannah vibrates with energy (both past and present) and is a joy to visit.*

*Surprisingly, no one has asked me about the white orb in the middle of the photograph. There's an interesting story about it. I*

*was out for a walk with my Olympus digital camera with ultra zoom (the fabulous iPhone camera had not yet been invented), when I saw the building you see on the book's cover. I had to photograph it. I took a few shots, then started to walk away when I had an urge to turn around and look at the building one last time. I took two more photos, then felt satisfied I had what I needed. Later, when I was reviewing the day's photos, I noticed the orb. It was the first of the two photos I had taken after I turned to take another look at the building. The two shots were of the same angle and taken a second or two apart; the first photo had the orb, the second one did not. If you have never researched orbs in photos, I highly recommend it. The information is fascinating. I know the orb in my photo is the energy of someone who once lived in Savannah. Whoever it is, he or she wanted to be in the photo. I wonder if this person knew that the photo would some day be on the cover of a popular book.*



**IDI** - Wow. That is interesting. Savannah is my top three favorite cities in the country. There's so much history there. Linda, every author has his/her own style, but what writer would you say your style most resembles?

*LW - I hope my writing style resembles writers whose writing voice I admire, such as Michael Crichton, John Caples, Elizabeth Strout, Fannie Flagg, John Grisham, E. B. White, and many other writers. I strive to write in a simple, clear manner, which is what I hope I have in common with these writers.*

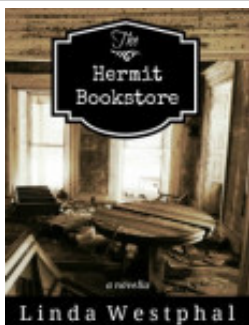
**IDI** - You just mentioned some of my favorite writers! How much time/effort do you put into social media as a means of self-promotion?

*LW - It's important for authors to be near their readers. If readers spend time on a website, blog, or social media channel, that's where the author should go. I think every author should be on at least one social media channel. I'm on [Goodreads](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Google+](#), [Tumblr](#), and I have an active [website](#) and [Amazon Author Page](#). I try to visit these channels at least five days a week and spend a minimum of 15 minutes a day on them (combined, not each channel).*

**IDI** - I need to take a page out of your book. I wish I could limit it to 15 minutes a day, but with that little time, I never seem to be able to reach the end of the email, replies, RTs, comments, et cetera. Is there a particular area of your writing (getting ideas, revision, editing...) where you seem to struggle the most and how do you overcome it?

*LW - Developing ideas is easy for me, editing is too. The challenge (I think this is a challenge for most people) is taking an idea or theme and shaping it into an interesting story. Another challenge for me is the overall size of the task of writing a novel (I'm used to writing 1,000-5,000 word pieces). If I think about all the things that go into a novel — characters, themes, place, plot(s), ending — I get overwhelmed. To overcome this, I break it down into smaller tasks. First I develop the story's theme. Then I develop the characters and where the story will take place. The rest comes during the writing and editing process.*

**IDI** - The book, *The Hermit Bookstore*, has a theme running through it. What does the theme mean to you and why did you choose to write about it?



The Hermit Bookstore

*LW - One of the themes in *The Hermit Bookstore* is, even if you are not aware of it, there are moments when you are receiving hints, a nudge, or support from the other side. This help is coming from people you love who have passed on to the other side, or your spirit guide, or an angel.*

*I decided to include this theme in the story because of the tiny moments of help I've noticed in my own life over the years. At first, it's easy to dismiss these moments. But when you pay attention, you begin to see bits of "magic" that happens precisely when you need it to happen. It could be a person you meet when you need to meet them; a comment that's said*

*when you need to hear it; a nudge to look up at the car in front of you at the right moment; a feeling to take a different route home from work; the alarm clock that fails causing you to miss the bus that's involved in an accident. There are endless*

...and, causing you to miss the bus that's involved in an accident. There are endless possibilities. You just have to pay attention. And see that they are too important to be mere coincidences. Try it yourself for a few months; I think you'll be surprised what you see.

**IDI** - We all draw from within and I believe there is an element of 'us' in everything we write. How much of you will a reader find in any given book?

*LW - I agree. There's a piece of the writer in everything he or she writes. It can't be helped. Sometimes I don't see myself in my stories, but people who are close to me tell me they recognize a part of me in them.*

**IDI** - One last question. When you find yourself in a rut, where do you turn for inspiration?

*LW - I look for story and character ideas in everything I do — books I read, movies and TV programs I watch, people I talk to, eavesdropping in public. Being observant is a very important characteristic of a writer. You can do this by being present in the moment as much as possible during the day. Many of the experiences you observe will become part of your story during the writing process.*

**IDI** - Linda, this was wonderful. Thank you so much for joining me today. Best wishes and continued success to you!

Linda Westphal writes feel-good stories, like *The Hermit Bookstore* and *The Medium*. Her stories include characters who explore life events that cannot be explained but are true based on firsthand experience, such as coincidence, help from people who have passed on, interactions with angels, intuition, and mind-body-spirit topics. Linda lives in northern California with her family and enjoys travel, tea, food, sunny days, friendly people, and reading a good story.

*The Hermit Bookstore* is a 2015 TISBA Finalist in the Fiction Category. Visit <http://www.LindaWestphal.com> to sign up to receive Linda's blog posts, news, giveaways and updates.

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