



To Die in Vienna

Kevin Wignall

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Soon to be a major motion picture starring Jake Gyllenhaal.

He's seen something that could get him killed. But what?

Freddie Makin is a spy for hire. For a year he's been watching Jiang Cheng, an academic whose life seems suspiciously normal. To Freddie it's just a job: he never asks who's paying him and why—until the day someone is sent to kill him, and suddenly the watcher becomes the watched.

On the run from whoever wants him dead, Freddie knows he must have seen something incriminating. The only trouble is, he has no idea what. Is the CIA behind all this—or does it go higher than that? Have his trackers uncovered his own murky past?

As he's forced into a lethal dance across Vienna, Freddie knows one thing for sure: his only hope for survival is keeping the truth from the other side, and making sure the secrets from his past stay hidden.

To Die in Vienna Details

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Author : Kevin Wignall

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From Reader Review To Die in Vienna for online ebook

Jim C says

I received this book thru a Goodreads giveaway for an honest review. I would like to thank the author and the publishing company for their giveaway.

This book can be classified as a spy genre novel. In this one, Freddie has been watching a man for over a year. Someone makes a move on Freddie and the person he is watching. Freddie has no idea why and who and Freddie has to figure this out before he is killed.

I am not the biggest fan of the spy genre but I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The strength of this book was the main character. He is not your typical spy that is the envy of men and women. He is a flawed character that has a checkered past that he feels remorse from. I also liked the investigative portion of this book as I kept on wondering who was part of the spy game or who was an innocent bystander. The finale was terrific and the surprise at the end works and totally surprised me.

This book is a great example of why I like the giveaways on this website. This author was totally unknown to me and this is not my favorite genre. That being said, I enjoyed every second of the book and I will definitely check out more from this author.

Thebooktrail says

Visit Vienna with this book!

I've not read many spy action thrillers but this one felt very different to the ones I had. Slower paced for one, but that worked well in the sense the tension built up steadily and the twists and shadows of the city appeared and disappeared at will.

Freddie was a great character but for a spy was rather in touch with his feelings! Not saying that spies aren't or shouldn't be but he has a backstory and worries of his own which, when being the target as it were, really came into his own. There's a great deal to think about if you're a spy it would seem and loyalty is not all it's cracked up to be. This was an interesting angle on the spy story for me and there were lots of grey areas opposed to the black and white of the spy world and the world outside.

Vienna was the perfect backdrop to this story of secrets and spies. Old, gothic and with plenty of character and history. The characters moved around the city, taking advantage of its history and cobbled, twisty alleyways. The author really used the setting well to illustrate an old city, plenty of heritage and secrets of course.

It's going to be a film – think this will work really well on screen and I'll be in that queue at the cinema for sure!

Susan says

Disclaimer: I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway and the promise that I would review it when done.

I really liked this book. I was kind of surprised by how much so. The characters are engaging and the author did a good job drawing them and not belaboring that process. The plot was fast paced and had enough twists and turns that, even though I suspected who "the bad guys" were, when I found out it still was a bit surprising. I've been to Vienna and the author captured the atmosphere of the city well.

It was one of those books that I felt a little bit of sadness when it ended because I didn't want to leave the characters. I hope this is the start of a series. I definitely will read this one again again...and probably see the movie when it comes out.

Sandra Ruttan says

There are books that have intricate plots. There are stories intended to be profound, with nuggets of truth the reader can take away and apply to their own life. And there are narratives with memorable characters that you genuinely care about and want to see succeed.

Occasionally, all of these components combine, as they do in *To Die in Vienna*. This could be called a spy thriller but it's really the story of Freddie Makin. Freddie has been putting in time, punching a clock and living like a ghost, haunted by memories of mistakes from his past. That all changes when his surveillance operation goes south and Freddie finds himself running for his life without any idea why anyone would want him dead.

Being threatened with death may ultimately be what forces Freddie to face his past and embrace life... or he may end up paying the ultimate price by repeating the same mistakes that cost him so dearly before.

I've never read a book by Kevin Wignall that I haven't enjoyed, and *To Die in Vienna* is no exception. I was really caught up in Freddie's story and what was going to happen to him. It builds expertly to an intense ending that is fitting for the character and the story. Wignall is a master storyteller and he breathes life into his protagonist in a way that makes Makin one of the most memorable characters I've read about in a long time.

(This review first appeared at Toe Six Press)

Maria says

Dying in Vienna is not included on the Freddie Makin plans after spending a year watching a Chinese scientist, but his boss thinks otherwise, he had seen too much and his life is worthless...

In this thriller full of action and secret spies, Freddie will play the cat and the mouse with the mysterious man/woman that wants him dead, while he is trying to decipher what he had seen that had put his life in danger...

Let me say that Kevin Wignall has done an incredible job with this book; it is addictive, suspenseful, with humour doses and human, I loved it!

You may be asking what made this book different, it was not the typical spy book, the spy was not really a spy, yes, he had a dangerous job, but he never thought it would be dangerous or that he will have to run for his life. The most important part is that he doesn't want to kill or knows killing movements, he simply has luck (or bad luck, depending on your perspective) and is ready to fight for his life (or run, if you prefer...). He even is ready to use some pink fluffy handcuffs to retain one of the bad men to stay alive and didn't have to hurt him, be prepared for a hero with a heart and a past, someone to trust. Ready for a dangerous trip through Vienna?

Richard says

It is always a joy to learn a new Kevin Wignall book is about to be released and I will hassle and cajole to get an ARC or purchase one as soon as it is available.

The author writes with great style and humanity.

So it is good to report having consumed the latest offering my joy has been replaced by a sense of well-being and a smile tattooed to my face.

To die in Vienna is a modern spy thriller set mostly in Europe but with a recurring throwback to a failed mission in Yemen. It focuses on the washed out former agent Freddie Makin who 5 years on from failure and resignation has become a watcher, a high-tech surveillance operative. Tasked for the past 12 months to follow every aspect of a Chinese intellectual in Vienna.

His mundane assignment takes a more sinister turn when he returns home one day to find his flat being robbed. The thief gets away but later returns to kill him.

From nowhere his life is turned upside down and suddenly he is wanted man. His employers appear to have been subcontracted by the CIA and for some reason they want him dead. During his many hours of observation he appears to have seen or over heard something that means he has to be silenced.

A classic story is played out. That of an innocent party trying to stay safe, while others are hellbent to kill them. Meanwhile in any time afforded to them, seeking to work out what they have stumbled across that has made further existence a liability to the pursuers, in this case the CIA.

He is a closed person, quite lonely and withdrawn haunted by nightmares of how his life unravelled 5 years before. He has no friends; no contacts and little tradecraft to call upon. He has few choices and limited resources at hand. He needs answers and quickly as the 'enemy' seems to be ready and increasingly determined to end his life. It is a journey of personal discovery and he finds his life becomes more worthwhile as he strives to ward off harm and deadly intent. Who can he trust; where can he hide?

I love the writing and characters penned by the author. Ordinary people who find themselves in strange circumstances. Little support and gadgets to give an edge, so Freddie relies on tools of his recent trade to gain an advantage. His life is in constant danger but he views his pursuers with a detachment that ensures he wants answers with little collateral damage. He'll take them out of the picture but not euphemistically; he has no desire to kill those trying to kill him.

The book has great locations and brilliant set pieces. Freddie is a guy we can identify with who we'll root for but sadly we grow increasingly gloomy that he'll survive.

All is set up for a showdown meeting with the rogue CIA agent, Langley seem to have given carte blanche to operate but somehow Freddie must cut a deal with.

Too many people have been killed. Freddie must face him knowing he has little to bargain with, and his life is all the guy has ever sought since the nightmare started.

Had me gripped to the very end. Loved the journey we take with Freddie. Wignall has the inside track on modern espionage. A book of hope; perhaps not for life after death but a sense of finding oneself; healing the past and finding reason to live again.

Trouble for Freddie is he finds peace with his past and an acceptance for a life he had largely shunned just

when he faces the most serious threat to his ongoing existence. Read it to find the journey's end.

Zita says

An intriguing, engaging, espionage story...

Five years ago Freddie Malkin worked for a covert section of the CIA, when an assignment in Yemen went horribly wrong he turned in his resignation. Now he works as a freelance high-tech surveillance expert for a private company and most of the time for persons unknown to him. He's currently watching a Chinese academic in Vienna and he finds the days rather routine. After a year he's gotten to know the subject well and wonders why this man, who leads such a normal life, needs watching.

Everything drastically changes when the subject mysteriously vanishes and Freddie's apartment is ransacked. Someone was cognizant of the surveillance and Freddie must find out what changed the status of his mark to survive. In his daily observations, the implication of something seen had to have eluded him, and that is the enigma he must solve as he tries to stay ahead of those that now hunt him. Years being out of the espionage business he's at a disadvantage, out of practice, but the skills returned to him quickly with the motivation his life. He suffers from nightmares, flashbacks and ocular migraines in relation to that last CIA mission. Leaving the agency appears to have been an attempt to find some semblance of peace after what happened though that hadn't yet materialized. This journey to find the truths of a missing man will lead Freddie to understand many things about himself and let him find his own redemption in the process.

This was an intriguing espionage story that kept my attention engaged. Freddie was a great character, flawed yet believable, we get an in-depth psychological look into the mind of a man who was once a spy and has since remained on the outskirts of that world until circumstances drew him fully back in. As we learned of the actions he took in the past, we also learn how they affected him, and how time changed him as he responds to events in the present and comes to comprehend both the past and the present. The story was well-written and highly descriptive, I feel like I know about Vienna, a place I have never been. The suspense was slightly muted but there was an increasing sense of time running out as the story progressed. The supporting characters were interesting, and likable, a diverse set of people.

An advanced reading copy was obtained from the publisher via NetGalley.

4.5 stars

Lestat says

I received an advanced copy of the book from Netgalley and publishers Thomas & Mercer.

Who doesn't love a good spy thriller? Looking at the cover of 'To Die in Vienna' you cannot mistake it for being anything but. Set in the capital city of Austria, Wignall's latest book follows Freddie Makin, a surveillance operative whose life is saved by a migraine.

Freddie had been following math professor - certified genius - Jiang Cheng for around a year, when suddenly he finds his life is at risk. His bosses are convinced he saw something while watching Cheng, but what it is,

and why has it cost so many people their lives, is something Freddie needs to find out.

Like most tales of espionage, our protagonist is a lonesome fellow, suffering undiagnosed PTSD after making a bad judgement call in Yemen five years before the events of the book. He frequently dreams of his fallen colleagues and the many poor decisions he made before, during and after the Yemen incident. His life has become a rum-drum excuse for existing, and somehow having these big bads on his tail makes him feel alive. The reader, however, isn't quite as lucky.

To find out why, read my full review [here](#).

Amanda Williams says

I really enjoyed this thriller. It was an intense read and kept me hooked right from the start. The author writes very strong characters that you will instantly fall in love with. This book will keep you guessing until the very end.

Dave says

To Die in Vienna is both the title of this book and an avid description of Freddie Makin's anonymous existence spending a year surveilling a boring routine university professor in Vienna. Freddie is in some ways like a Jason Bourne, unaware of the part he's playing in the great espionage games and determined to nevertheless survive. But, Freddie is no James Bond and no Jason Bourne. He's hamstrung by migraines and visited by nightmares. He once (before he became a spy for hire) worked a clandestine operation in Yemen, leading his small team to a bitter end, including his lover. Haunted by guilt over his affair and guilt over the sacrifices of his team members, he is a troubled outsider, who is barely existing. Until one day, something pops up in the operation and all hell breaks loose and there's no one to trust or rely on.

To Die in Vienna is as much a psychological portrait of Freddie and his survivor's guilt as it is the usual cat and mouse ? espionage thriller. Although at times the action hits furiously, much of the novel is a bit slower-paced, foreshadowed by the enveloping fog. And for that reason, because it is not the usual over-the-top action thriller, it is quite an engrossing read.

Many thanks to the publisher for providing a copy for review.

Martha says

Since leaving his position as a consultant for Evanston Electronics, a front for a murky CIA group S8, after an operation in Yemen had gone disastrously wrong, Freddie Makin has been freelancing for a Munich-based surveillance company headed by Leo Behnke.

Plagued by vicious nightmares and migraines after Yemen, for five years, Freddie has been keeping a low profile, basically watching, Jiang Cheng, a professor in Applied Computer Science at TU Wien, an operation that had been live for one year. When Freddie returns home early one afternoon, because of the onset of a migraine, he finds his apartment being trashed, but the intruder easily evades him and rushes off. Freddie

watches him from his window, apparently being ordered to return, clearly to kill him. Instead, Freddie, sets a trap and kills the intruder.

After he learns that Cheng has been kidnapped and that all his surveillance equipment and recordings have been removed along with the Chinese IT, expert Freddie travels to Munich to confront his boss who had just admitted that the client that ordered the surveillance is CIA, when a man with a gun arrives. He shoots Leo and his dog, before Freddie kills him.

At this point, with the bodies and unanswered questions piling up Freddie finally realises he needs to get away before they find and kill him. But instead of running, which is what he supposes they expect him to do, he returns to Vienna, checking into The Madhouse Hotel under one of his aliases (Alfred Robbins) and begins to fight back, setting in place an espionage adventure that includes more bodies, and several memorable supporting characters.

These include, a Russian history professor, Marina Mikhailova who is a double or triple agent, Eva, a reservations clerk at the Madhouse, who is an aspiring artist, and Cheng's girlfriend, Wei Jun, a tourism guide who also works for the Chinese government. One of the many things I liked about this book is that the author has given us women of agency who use their brains and talents to support the protagonist.

This is a well written, well plotted and intelligent spy thriller. The characters are not only believable but likeable and there is enough authentic detail about Vienna to make the reader feel they might be in a real place. I especially enjoyed the meeting Freddie sets up with his old colleague, Drew Clarke, in the Breugal Room of the Kunsthistorisches Museum. "...he found Drew sitting on the bench looking up at The Hunters in the Snow. ...Drew wasn't even paying attention to the people coming and going and it took him a few seconds for his gaze to drift to his left.

Freddie drifted over to look at the painting and Drew said, 'It's the first time I've seen this in the flesh. I could sit here all day.'"

And, without giving anything away, the ultimate denouement is also believable and satisfying. I happily give this 4****.

Eva says

3.5* --> 4*

Set in the wonderful city of Vienna, we are introduced to a rather unlikely spy. Freddie Makin has been watching a Chinese academic, Jiang Cheng, for the past year and thinks he knows everything there is to know about him. Until one day, someone is sent to kill Freddie, his equipment is removed and Cheng disappears. Freddie must have seen something he wasn't supposed to but what? And who is after him?

Not that I'm an expert on spy thrillers because I've not read that many of them, but as far as this one goes, it was a tad on the slow side for the majority of the book. Now, that's not a bad thing as the tension and action does build up along the way and you get a good feeling about the kind of person Freddie is. He's quite the likeable character, someone to sympathise with and to root for as he tries to find a way out of this sticky web he's found himself in. But if you're looking for fast-paced action, nifty gadgets, car chases and explosions, you won't find those here. Personally, I thoroughly enjoyed this change of pace.

Things are slightly tricky for Freddie. After a failed mission in Yemen, he left a covert CIA unit five years ago and so he lacks experience, confidence and doubts his abilities. On top of that, he's also suffering from nightmares and has trouble sleeping. Not the best combination when you need all your wits about you. And so we get that most classic of stories about an innocent person finding himself outside of his comfort zone and desperately trying to make it out alive. But Freddie has no resources to dig into, no fancy gadgets and no idea who to trust.

To Die in Vienna is an intelligently plotted, intriguing and suspenseful spy thriller. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting Freddie, who's so far removed from the cliché spy we usually get and there are also a few wonderful supporting characters, none of which I trusted at all. This is an entertaining and engaging read that made for quite the fun afternoon. Will Freddie be able to bury the demons of his past? Will he survive this ordeal? That's for me to know and for you to find out.

By the way, this will soon be a movie starring Jake Gyllenhaal so look out for that! But, as always, read the book first ?

James says

One of my great loves are 1970's conspiracy thrillers, The Parralax View being perhaps my favourite movie of all time. Alan J Pakula, the director, also directed Klute, and of course All The Presidents Men, the three movies forming a loose trilogy that summed up the disillusion, distrust and paranoia many American were beginning to view their government through. One can add to this mix The Conversation, where Gene Hackman played a freelance surveillance expert who stumbles upon a sinister conspiracy.

To Die In Vienna, while set in contemporary Europe, has a very similar vibe to those 1970's movies, an in particular to The Conversation. Like Gene Hackman's character in the movie, Freddie Mackin, the protagonist of the novel, is a freelance surveillance expert. He's on a job in Vienna, surveilling Jiang Cheng, a Chinese academic and programming specialist. Cheng leads a highly structured and mundane life; Freddie has no idea why he's been contracted to spy on the man.

Freddie is a man with a tragic past; prior to working freelance he was an operative for S8, a shadowy outfit on the frontlines of the War on Terror. An ambush occurred in Yemen and Freddie's has been haunted by it ever since. He turned his back on that kind of work and became a recluse, putting his skills to use for the corporate world. Freddie's struggle to come to terms with his trauma has him draw solace from watching the simplicity and peacefulness of Cheng's life and he has developed a fondness for his target.

One day, out of the blue, everything changes. Agents of some kind take Chen, seize Freddie's surveillance equipment and come after Freddie. What has Chen done to cause this? What has Freddie seen, through the surveillance, to put his life in danger? So begins a cat and mouse game, Freddie doing his pursuers, all the while trying to learn what it is he has seen so that he might ensure his own survival, and yes, perhaps get justice for Chen.

This is a brilliant book, If you like intelligent thrillers with well-rounded characters you'll like this; if, like me, you loved the paranoid 70's movies, you'll love it. This is a thinking person's thriller - there's little action, though when it comes, it's handled well - it's a slow burner, but gripping nonetheless.

It was no surprise to learn that To Die In Vienna has been snapped up by Hollywood. Apparently, Focus

Features (part of Universal) have purchased the rights and Jake Gyllenhaal is slated to play Freddie. Having read the book, I for one will be buying tickets for the cinema once the movie adaptation comes out.

Amanda says

At the beginning of this novel it was very confusing for me. Then it all started to build up. There's a man who was hired to watch Cheng named Freddie. All of a sudden Cheng is missing and Freddie walks into his place being burgled. The guy runs but then comes back and so Freddie bashed his face in. Now he is on a mission to find out why or who is after him. He hides in plain sight following leads. When this novel picks up it really picks up. Thank you to NetGalley for allowing me to review this book. I look forward to the movie.

Paromjit says

This is a great espionage thriller set in the architecturally beautiful Vienna, a city I know well, soon to come out as a film with Jake Gyllenhaal. A traumatised Freddie Makin left S8, a covert CIA unit, after a disastrous mission left 3 friends and colleagues dead in Yemen. Plagued by flashbacks, nightmares, and difficulties sleeping, for a year Freddie has been working as a surveillance expert for a unknown client of Leo Behnke, his employer. Freddie feels he knows all there is to know about Vienna Technical University academic, Jiang Chen, a man with rigid routines. Suffering from an onset of an ocular migraine, he leaves his surveillance of Chen to go home, this is to save his life as when he gets home a man tries to shoot him. Not a man who is comfortable killing anyone, he is about to find himself in a position where he is forced to do so to survive as he kills the intruder. Chen has disappeared, and Freddie is certain he has been murdered as he goes on the run. He has no idea who wants him dead or why, and nothing he knows about Chen provides any clue as to why the academic had to be eliminated.

Freddie goes to see his employer, Leo, in Munich but Leo is shot dead without Freddie being any the wiser about the identity of the client behind Chen's surveillance. Freddie's expertise in staying below the radar allows him to elude those after him and provide him with an opportunity to discover that they are American. Are they CIA? Knowing they expect him to leave Vienna, Freddie does the count intuitive thing by staying in Vienna at the trendy, off the wall Madhouse Hotel where he gets close to would be artist, Eva, who works there. Having been a solitary and isolated figure since the Yemen fiasco and sleepwalking through life, Freddie finds himself joining the human race as he begins for the first time to see the beauty of Vienna and the benefits of developing friends. As he battles to survive the murderous intentions of a powerful rogue CIA operative, Freddie investigates the women in Chen's life, the Russian History Professor, Marina Mikhailova and lover, Wei Jun.

Kevin Wignall writes a compelling and tense thriller amidst the background of Vienna, a city where spies abound and is a strong character in its own right. Freddie is your ordinary man whose life is turned upside down when he becomes a target for elimination. His predicament has him digging deep to find the inner resources to find out why Chen had to die, and finding the means to make life difficult for his pursuers. Wignall ensures Freddie is a flawed character you find yourself rooting for as he fights for his life with his backstory being slowly revealed as the story progresses. This is a wonderfully entertaining novel of spies with a wide range of diverse characters. The women, Marina Mikhailova, Wei Jun, Eva, really caught my attention in particular, just such interesting characters as Freddie learns that effectively he knew so little

about Chen despite his intense surveillance. Highly recommended! Many thanks to Amazon Publishing UK for an ARC.
