



# MURDER BIMBO

A Conversation with  
author Rebecca Novack



**Q: What has it felt like to watch real life increasingly mimic your book?**

**A:** It's a rollercoaster. The thing about publishing a book that's different from writing a book is that so many other parties get involved. There's the reader. There's the publisher. There's everyone in your life that knows you are publishing a "timely" satirical novel. All of those people are placing bets and having feelings. Usually these are things like "this is going to be bad for your book," or "this is horrible news, but it's going to be great for your book."

I started looking for an agent right after the presidential election in 2024. I had a moment then of thinking *oh, if this election had gone the other way, would I have been able to sell this book?* After the assassination of Charlie Kirk, I returned to the book again to ask myself *Does this book promote violence?* I do not want to condone violence.

This novel doesn't condone violence. It describes violence though. Violence that was already happening in the US and seemed to be getting worse. So, it was somehow both shocking and not surprising at all when things in the novel started showing up in my real-life news feed.

**Q: What was the inspiration for this novel?**

**A:** The biggest inspirations for this book were the podcast "You're Wrong About" by Sarah Marshall and formerly Michael Hobbes, *The New York Trilogy* by Paul Auster, *Rejection* by Tony Tulathimutte, *Infect Your Friends and Loved Ones* by Torrey Peters, and *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn. As a group these are texts about defining ourselves inside systems, about people who start as morally gray or morally black. They are about all the different people we can be and personas we can use. (A bimbo, for example, is a persona that invites projection. It leans into dumbness and femininity. A bimbo absorbs what people think about her and can use it to create a malleable alter ego.) They are about mysteries and how our lizard brains just want to keep untangling until we have everything solved, but nothing gets solved, just sorted into different piles. But mostly, I wanted to write something fun.

**Q: Why did you make the protagonist a sex worker?**

**A: The first reason I made *Murder Bimbo* a sex worker is because she needed to have access to the mark. But also, sex workers rule. They are adept with people. They have to have a sense of humor. They are charming and hot. I wanted her to be a good hang for at least 212 pages.**

**A sex worker is also in a precarious legal and ethical spot, which is the setting of this book: the intricate and sometimes counterintuitive or hypocritical ideological frameworks where we all live. These are frameworks that the establishment left and the establishment right acts confused by. But in my experience, they're the way most of the world thinks. We know what we know. We believe what we believe. It doesn't always cohere. A sex worker is going to be immoral to some, empowered to others, a victim, a perpetrator. Some people think her work should be punished, stopped, legalized, or decriminalized. Just her existence forces us to keep the falseness of right/wrong, good/bad dichotomies front of mind, so it also made sense to me to have her involved in a plot concerned with political violence and what makes for useful resistance.**

**Q: Given your book's subject matter, some people might be surprised to find out that you went to Divinity school and worked for many years as a minister in the Episcopal church. Is there a connection?**

**A: I went to Divinity school to study agnosticism and atheism and came out with a calling to join the Episcopal priesthood. I got into that work because I have a curiosity about people and about the big questions in life: Who should we be to each other? What is dignity? How can I feed myself and my family? How can I tell the difference between what is right and what is lawful? etc. I wanted to accompany people as they sought answers to those questions over the course of their lives.**

**I'm still driven by that same curiosity, but when I left the path to priesthood (it's called "the process"), I realized I didn't need to worry anymore about what a Bishop would say about the contents of my novels. So I went for it. Maybe some people will think there is a very big discrepancy between the contents of my book and what they consider holy. I disagree. I am still a very religious person. I don't think there's any easier place to find holiness than at the intersection of danger, emotion, and survival. It's easy for me to see that hopelessness, fear of extremism, threat of state violence, threat of law, misogyny, and surviving oppressive forces is the foundation of Christianity. Figuring out how to be an ethical citizen, a good neighbor, a generous enemy, an ally to the afflicted: Those are the challenges of being a modern Christian in America.**

**I wanted to write about a character at her most human, most chaotic, most evil, and still have her be a person. There's no better way to think through God than by looking at the most human-human you can find.**

**Q: You wrote a lot of novels before *Murder Bimbo*. How did you get here?**

**A: I have been writing novels since 2012 and querying agents since 2014 with no success. In 2022 I started working on my fifth book, and decided that if I couldn't break into traditional publishing with that project, I would self-publish. That raised the stakes. It meant the book had to be irresistible not only to an agent and editor, but also, in the case of self-publication, irresistible to readers. I told myself irresistible meant fast-paced, few characters, plot-driven, a condensed timeline, first-person, voicey, and less than 200 pages.**

**I wrote the first draft of *Murder Bimbo* over four days. I was five months pregnant at the time and terrified that having a baby would either mean I had no time to write or no creativity left, so I raced to finish a full draft before the birth. After my first baby was born, I discovered I did have time— it was just not consolidated in the early mornings anymore. Instead, it was while breastfeeding, in the middle of the night, on my phone, etc. I also had renewed creativity and less energy overall, but more energy for the things I cared about most. Including writing.**

**In October of 2023, I hit a wall in the project, which was compounded by the realization that the book would most likely end up rejected like the rest. I decided I would give myself until my 40th birthday to sell the book. If it didn't go anywhere, I was going to take a break from writing for a while. I began my final rewrite, which is when I decided on the three-act structure, right before I was induced for the birth of my second child, in August 2024.**

**A couple of weeks before my 40th, I queried 12 agents. I had not yet written the last two chapters of the book, because I still didn't believe I'd get responses. When I heard back immediately, I had to pull an all-nighter to finish the draft. I received four offers of representation, and four months after I signed with my agent, we sold the book to Avid Reader.**

**A friend told me years ago that the trick to getting your novel published is to just keep writing novels. It depressed me at the time but also felt oddly exciting? I am so grateful that *Murder Bimbo* is the book that broke through. I really can't wait for people to read it.**

**Q: The first act of the book is addressed to the host of a feminist true crime podcast. Why was that where you wanted to start?**

**A: Anti-heroes are morally gray, or worse. A podcaster who resuscitates the reputations of anti-heroes gives us everything we want: the voyeurism of learning all about what the anti-hero did, the drama of the story, the catharsis of watching it from a platformed commentator. I think there's also something that we like about getting to do forensics on the anti-hero's story. We know we don't straightforwardly like murder. But when we're protected from the brutal reality of it, all kinds of people like to get close to murder. We love looking at photos of Luigi Mangione, showing them to our friends and saying "I mean, I get it" from home. Maybe it's because it's like a car crash and we can't look away? Maybe it's because we want to get close to something dark inside ourselves, or that we suspect is inside ourselves? Maybe it's**

because we want to think about danger—and try to figure out how much we could survive.

**Q: How did you think about the use of language in your novel, particularly “internet speak”?**

**A: My favorite authors use specialized diction to shine a light on the weirdness of that diction and the world it comes from, and then shine an even brighter light back on “normal” diction and the “normal” world. They are writers whose work makes me feel like I suddenly have new language for the world and new questions for it.**

In *Murder Bimbo* I really wanted to capture a nuanced and developed existing political rhetoric. And it’s a rhetoric that when it gets “translated” into whatever the opposite of vernacular is, it gets simplified, in a bad way. The language I chose in the book: internet speak, anarcho-capitalist political tracts, feminist intersectionality memes, subcultures of perversity, Democratic consciousness raising, dog whistles— those are all developed jargons. “Translating” it to language that seems more neutral or serious would incapacitate the characters, and their ideas. Maybe this language will alienate some people who aren’t familiar with it, but as a reader, I have always loved that challenge. Give me a dialect I need to learn any day.

**Q: What do you hope readers take away from *Murder Bimbo*?**

**A: This book is about revenge. It’s also about a very American roiling violence that either lives in all of us or lives in some of us and speaks to most of us. I have had so many conversations about this book. People hear the premise and they have something to say. I think that’s because some of the questions at the center are on our minds: How do we get out of our current political situation? Will it take violence? What would that violence look like in the best-case scenario or in the worst case? How do we, as a culture, tend to react to and absorb political violence?**

I hope readers take away a way to talk about our problems— with each other or just with themselves. Language helps us to feel less isolated. Talking about things makes us feel less helpless.

If I’m being very optimistic, I wish people would take away the fact that we are all very complicated. Pointing out ways in which people’s politics are hypocritical or insufficient is a distraction when we’re in crisis. But hey, if I knew how to solve this, I would be in a different line of work.