

Dying to Write

A Patrick Shea Mystery



*Murder at a
Jane Austen
Conference*

Mary Lydon Simonsen

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In need of a break from his job at Scotland Yard, Detective Sergeant Patrick Shea of London's Metropolitan Police is looking forward to some quiet time at a timeshare in rural Devon in England's West Country. However, when he arrives at The Woodlands, Patrick finds himself in the midst of a Jane Austen conference.

Despite their Regency Era dresses, bonnets, and parasols, a deep divide exists between the Jane Austen fan-fiction community, those who enjoy expanding on the author's work by writing re-imaginings, and the Janeites, those devotees who think anyone who tampers with the original novels is committing a sacrilege. When one of the conference speakers is found dead in her condo, Patrick is back on the job trying to find out who murdered her. Is it possible that the victim was actually killed because of a book?

Dying to Write Details

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From Reader Review Dying to Write for online ebook

Kevin says

I liked the Patrick Shea series but this one fell a little flat for me. It wasn't a bad book or bad writing, it was just that the story itself wasn't that compelling so it didn't provide a lot of suspense for me. I'm looking forward to the next one.

Sandra says

This is the first mystery from the Patrick Shea series by author, Mary Lydon Simonsen that I have read. I have read eight of Simonsen's Austen variations. I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book. "Dying to Write" is written in a whole new style from her Austen inspired works. Her clever style in writing plants hints as well as false avenues to a conclusion throughout the book. Naturally, one may wonder who the killer is in this who-done-it. Your mind is lead down different paths for sorted and various reasons that are written between the lines of the pages. I enjoyed deducting motives for the killer and even the back story of some of the characters. Like Austen, Simonsen completes the characters by offering these profiles and histories of the characters. Readers get a better feel for motives of the characters reminiscent of Jane Austen herself. I sense the books tend to build upon each other given the main character Patrick Shea and his personal story line. But that will not divert your amusement of the main events in the book.

Simonsen also entertains us with underlying themes in the book. Sure, it is a murder mystery, and it happens to take place at a Jane Austen Conference. But an underlying and major theme is the apparent differences in people who would attend an assembly such as this. On one hand you have the Austen followers who believe Austen's original works stand alone on their own and should not be tampered with under any circumstances. Some of these people might even be a member of one of the Jane Austen Societies throughout the world - our Janeites. The other hand holds those who are fans of Jane Austen and enjoy the mash ups of the original story. Pondering the "what ifs" and back stories of the characters are simply exhilarating. These are in the Jane Austen Fan Fiction realm - JAFF. Although, I too, am a member of JASNA, I cannot get enough of Elizabeth and Darcy or Captain Wentworth for that matter. I love exploring the different scenarios and what would characters do now. Austen has made these characters so complete and rich that moving them into other scenarios is fantastic. Writers of these types of novels uncover much more than your first impressions of the masterpieces. I find it skillful that Simonsen has picked up on these differences in the Austen world and uses it as an underlying theme in the book. Well, these differences of opinion in the mystery will certainly cause unpleasantness between characters. Angry people are not always wise. Examining this aspect really supports the book and the main storyline and the characters.

Another tactic used by Simonsen is the treatment of Austen quotes throughout the book. Fans, whether a Janeite or a member of the JAFF, have been known to use Austen's clever wit and use of her quotes to reinforce the situation they find themselves in daily among their friends. The characters mimic the quotes as if they are wisdom and gospel. It is hilarious to me to find an Austen quote tucked among the literature. I delight and smile at Simonsen's references to them. She carefully crafts them into the murder mystery and their use brings a familiar "friend" back into your acquaintance. When a friend is at hand the heart must be opened.

Naturally, Simonsen writes the story line through the eyes of a male main character and I feel it is pulled off very well. Since a woman author is writing through the eyes of a man, one must consider - one half of the world cannot understand the pleasures of the other. She writes with clarity and precision and understanding of these characters she has created.

One final thought on the novel is the amount of research Simonsen succumbed to in order to get the facts correct and the story believable. Thankfully, a reference is included in the back of the book. This ties my understanding together and the various characters that descend upon the crime scene. The process of an investigation must have been researched as well as to have the proper procedures placed into the story line. The timeliness of these events allows for readers to think one thing, then to only be corrected by new events and details that followed. In vain I have struggled to make out who the culprit is in the book. I am corrected at every turn and I charmed in being proven wrong.

Well done, Simonsen! The mystery was engaging and thrilling! I even found myself up literally through the night turning the pages to continue to find I am wrong at every turn. But isn't that what you intended to the readers? I have taken much pleasure in your mystery along with the Austen inspired fiction. The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good novel, must be intolerably stupid. But for my own part, if a book is well written, I always find it too short.

Meredith (Austeneseque Reviews) says

Besides crafting lovely historical Austenesque romances, variations, and tales of time travel, Mary Simonsen also pens a series of detective/crime mysteries featuring Patrick Shea, a thirty-something detective sergeant working for Scotland Yard. For the fourth installment of her Patrick Shea Mystery series, Mary Simonsen decided to throw a little Jane Austen into the mix. While we don't see a mystery involving Mr. Darcy, the Bennets, or Jane Austen herself – we do see a Jane Austen conference become very grim when one of the conference speakers is found dead in her room...

I've always been a fan of Jane Austen-related mysteries; the series by Carrie Bebris, Tracy Kiely, and Stephanie Barron are amongst some of my favorite Austenesque reads. :) However, *Dying to Write* is quite different from all those. This is a series about a real detective who works with a police force team that gathers evidence and interrogates the suspects. Think less Nancy Drew and Miss Marple and more Law and Order or NYPD Blue.

This was my first experience with any type of police procedural literature and I found it fascinating! No need to sleuth around in the shadows or stealthily search basements and attics unobserved. Detectives have a much easier time collecting their evidence, whether it be requesting phone records, fingerprint scans, or DNA tests. I was greatly impressed (although to be honest, not at all surprised) with Mary Simonsen's knowledge of not just police procedures, but British police procedures! After reading almost a dozen of her novels, I've come to know that Ms. Simonsen is truly meticulous with her research and history – no matter the subject, location, or time period. I found the Glossary of British Terms and Note from the Author to be very helpful, especially since this was a new kind of read for me.

I, of course, loved the Jane Austen conference parts in this mystery – the arguments between Jane Austen purists and the Jane Austen Fan Fiction community were fun to explore and witness. I loved seeing the characters discuss blogs and online groups, reference fictional plots and titles related to Jane Austen, and

quote Jane Austen during police interrogations! (Ha HA! That got old for DS Shea real fast!) I also loved how Patrick Shea decided to start reading *Pride and Prejudice* to help solve the case!

In *Dying to Write* we learn a bit about our thorough and hardworking detective and his personal life. I enjoyed hearing some details about Patrick's previous cases and his history with women...I'm dying to know more about Maureen and what happened between them! (you know me, I like my romantic bits!) I imagine that if I had read the other three books in this series before reading *Dying to Write*, I would have an even better picture and understanding of Patrick Shea's character and past. However, because Mary Simonsen provides a good amount of details about Patrick and his life in *Dying to Write*, this novel can still stand alone.

My one quibble is that I sometimes felt it was hard to tell the other police officers a part from one another. This might be because there are two different police forces working on this case, or because many of these characters were introduced in previous books with more descriptive detail and distinguishing characteristics. Either way, I had a hard time keeping straight all the female and higher ranking officers. Maybe along with a glossary of British terms, there could be one for characters (especially those that are reoccurring). But despite that, I found this mystery to be absorbing, well-constructed, and not at all easy to solve!

How far would a Janeite go to protect the legacy of Jane Austen? Would someone really murder an author to prevent her from publishing a book? Does Patrick Shea become a fan of Jane Austen??? Well wouldn't you like to know... ;)

Sarah says

DS Patrick Shea is going on holiday. He hasn't had a proper break in almost two years and has decided to accept a colleague's offer to use their time-share flat in Devon, where it's part of an old inn. In this sleepy country locale there's not a lot to see or do, but he's decided to make the most of it, helped by a little advice from a young and flirty staff member.

It turns out the inn is also the venue for a Jane Austen conference and Patrick is rather bemused by all the goings on. Those in attendance fall into two camps. First there are the traditional Janeites who revere Jane Austen and rebel at anything that smacks remotely of being disrespectful of the author. Then there are the fan fiction aficionados who delight in imagining myriad stories involving their favourite characters. It's a pressure cooker situation, and not long after a controversial author makes an appearance, she's found dead in suspicious circumstances.

Being on site when it all kicks off, Patrick finds his holiday swiftly hijacked and he's seconded to work with a team of country coppers. Is the author's death connected to a disagreement between conference delegates, or something else altogether? There are several potential suspects and motives abound: jealousy, anger, rivalry, religious beliefs, and adultery are all at play. What Patrick discovers and the people he meets in the course of his investigation, encourage him to take a fresh look at his own life and consider what it is he really wants from it.

Dying to Write is an enjoyable peek into the world of literary fandom, coupled with police procedure. It's also a reminder of human fallibility and that relationships take effort. Mary Lydon Simonsen demonstrates excellence in writing what is a detailed, yet gently told murder mystery, imbued with a real sense of place. Austen fans should look out for tributes to her characters, too. Personally, I'll be watching out for the next

Patrick Shea story so I can continue following the detective's exploits.

Kathy says

I really enjoyed this, but I think reading out of order was a bad idea -- I clearly missed a couple storylines and some character development that occurred in the previous books in the series, so I'll have to go back and read the two books I missed. The Jane Austen conference that set the stage for this book was a fun part of this story and made me wonder how the author's opinions on that might have influenced her story.

June Williams says

"Dying to Write" is the fourth Patrick Shea mystery. Unlike the others in the series, Patrick actually meets the murder victim while she is still alive and well. Also, the story takes place in Devon, which is in the southwest part of the island – far from Patrick's familiar base in London.

The murder occurs at a Jane Austen event, but you don't need to know anything about Jane Austen – or the British police system – to understand this story. The British method of interrogation is very business-like, unlike what you see in American TV crime shows. Patrick does not use his muscles on witnesses, does not try to intimidate, and does not bluff about "we have witnesses and security camera film." There is nobody in this book who is a truly nasty character or villain, which makes the ending somewhat sad.

What I did not like about this book: the setup seemed to take a while. There were some back-stories and explanations that could have been simplified or replaced by dialogue. For example, she takes 140 words to explain why a fellow officer is giving Patrick the use of his timeshare – and this is the only time the officer is mentioned in the book; he is not important to the story. She could have simply written, "Hi, Patrick, My wife and I are going to Italy for a week. We have an unused timeshare unit near Sidmouth – would you like to use it for free?"

But these are not serious criticisms. The author is a talented writer who is also gifted in the art of inserting red-herrings, and there was a twist at the end that I didn't expect. Well done, author! I am already looking forward to the next Patrick Shea Mystery.

Sheila Majczan says

I had never read any of this author's books before so when it was offered for one-day only @ \$1.99 I read the sample and looked at the nearly 300 reviews and decided it was worth the price. I was happily surprised to find an author whose books I will buy and read beyond this one.

The story line is described in the book description and in other's reviews so I will not repeat such. I believe the thing I like most was that in describing bedroom scenes the author did NOT go into gory details. There was just enough to satisfy my tastes. I read this in one day, despite plans to put it down and go out shopping. I found it thoroughly enjoyable and now will order another book, even at a higher price. I recommend this book for all who enjoy historical romances or just plain old romances.

Mrs. Juanita G. Bass says

Wonderful Reading

The characters, setting, dialogue, plot, and the twists/that come with murder mystery made this book a good read. I enjoyed it in flight and finished at home in the early morning hours. I do recommend the book.

Sophia says

A Scotland Yard Detective is on a much needed time of R&R in the Devon countryside when he suddenly finds himself up to his hips in Jane Austen addicts and a murder of an unpopular guest at the cozy inn where they are all staying. Patrick Shea is ready to run as fast as the cab and train can take him back to London where the suspects don't speak in quotes and come to near blows over a book by an author whose been dead for two hundred years when his boss at The MET loans him out to the desperate local detective assigned to the case. This was what he got for attempting a vacation.

This is the fourth book in the Patrick Shea series. I have read them all in order (proudly pats self on the back since this is not always the case with me). For those who wonder if they can jump right in, I'm going to give you a 'yes, but...' Yes, the murder mystery and the people involved in the case do not carry over from the previous books so it can stand alone. However, if you're like me and enjoy following the character's growth arc and series story arcs through then it's best to start at the beginning so Patrick's character and personal life make more sense. Like the two women he keeps thinking about through the story make better sense in the context of the series.

So, the story opens with Patrick letting a co-worker sucker him into take over his time-share at a little inn in the Devon countryside. Patrick is a true city dweller and is unimpressed with the bucolic life of the country, but he knows that he has been pushing himself hard at work so takes the opportunity for a week away. On arrival, he discovers his inn is overrun by a Jane Austen conference. Patrick recognizes the name, but has no idea what all the fuss is about. He is really flummoxed when he discovers there are actual factions amongst the Austen fans and the year before it had come to an altercation. The girl at the desk is happy to get him up to speed. Patrick gets the lay of the land and meets all the key players and his copper sense tells him that this year's conference is shaping up to be a lot of the same even as he goes about his touristy pursuits and tries to relax. But even he didn't see it escalating to murder.

Patrick is almost resigned to his fate when the local detective tells him that he has been made her second in the investigation and must stay in Devon until they close out the case. He isn't pleased to be working with the locals and he takes his share of hostility from those who aren't to fond of working with a detective from The MET either, but things look up when his boss sends along familiar faces to be a part of the investigation team. Patrick and the others pursue the victims past, follow the available evidence and interview the suspects. In the meantime, he worries that his son would prefer golf lessons with his step-dad to time with Patrick and the case hits close to home for Patrick as several times it makes him consider his own love life and its future direction. The solution is no grand twist, but it still takes Patrick by surprise.

Each time I read this series, I am delighted for yet one more chance to be along with Patrick Shea whether it

is on a case or as he tries to figure out the rest of his life. Patrick is the story so there is a lot riding on him having just the sort of personality and character that draws in the reader and engages them in his story. Fortunately, he is a brilliantly written character so it really works. He's a middle-aged amicably divorced man. He admits that his work broke up his family and now it's almost all he has besides his son. He's fairly good looking and attracts women easily though he gets in trouble with that most of the time. He's a tenacious detective. But really, when all's said and done, he's an ordinary bloke- as he would call himself- and has his faults and make mistakes. Patrick narrates each story and I love being inside his head as he goes about things. His wry humor, temper, stubborn determination, and the way he sees people is more than interesting.

I loved the change of setting to Devon and found it amusing as he floundered in the country and amongst the Jane Austen lovers. I laughed over how a Janeite or a JAFF fan appears to the rest of the world. Patrick was respectful and was curious enough to attempt to read *Pride & Prejudice* to better understand as he worked the case just like before things went crazy, he really tried to see what the fuss was about when it came to the countryside and the sites around that area of Devon. He even went to a church and stared at a holy rood while an elderly lady nattered on at him about medieval art all to please his girlfriend. What a champ! But I confess to missing time with his Shea Irish family and more time with Tommy, his guv, his son and even his ex-wife. It was obvious that he was also kicking around a decision with the state of affairs in his love life too. Though about that, it was hilarious how many people had an opinion or questioned him even total strangers. Oh, and that last bit of surprise at the end about a woman from his past? The author is a tease.

The mystery in this one isn't as intense as some of the others in the series. It's still a police procedural, but it has a touch of the cozy mystery feel too since it's a country setting and the murder took place at an isolated inn. It was also interesting that for the first time, Patrick actually gets to know the victim while alive and is on the spot to meet the other people and gauge things before it all goes terribly bad. I had my suspicions, but alas, I was only half right.

All in all, it was another good installment leaving me wanting more. More Patrick, please! If you are looking for a series with an underdog hero that's engaging, charming and even a bit sexy who solves puzzling crimes the old fashioned way through tenacity, intuitiveness and brains, then check these out.

My thanks to the author for the opportunity to read this book in exchange for an honest review.

Susan says

I read this book as avidly as my holiday schedule would permit and loved every page of it!? The detective was winning and the setting was a Jane Austen conference in Sidmouth, a location known to Janeites. I highly recommend this mystery with an Austen flavoring!

nancy duell says

Austen-esque mystery

I like a great mystery with a love of Jane Austen. I will be looking for more Patrick Shea mysteries
