



# The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen: Volume I

*Collins Hemingway*

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## **The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen: Volume I** Collins Hemingway

Tradition holds that Jane Austen lived a prim and proper life as a single woman. But what if she wed a man as passionate and intelligent as she—and the marriage remained secret for 200 years?

*The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen* is a trilogy that resolves the biggest mysteries of Austen's life, the "lost years" of her twenties—a period of which historians know virtually nothing.

- Why the enduring rumors of a lost love or tragic affair?
- Why, afterward, did the vivacious Jane Austen prematurely put on "the cap of middle age" and shut herself away to write her books?
- Why, after her death, did her beloved sister destroy her letters, journals, and diaries from this period?

*The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen* trilogy presents an original love story, based on actual history, to put forth a believable, compelling, and plausible answer to Austen's lost years.

Go with Jane Austen as this thinking woman, and sensitive soul, seizes the opportunity for meaningful love with a man who inspires her and understands her independent spirit—the one man worthy of her mind, heart, and soul.

## **The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen: Volume I Details**

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# From Reader Review The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen: Volume I for online ebook

## Carole Rae says

I love what-if stories, but I hate them at the same time especially if I want it to be the real thing that happened. This is the case for this one. This story follows a Miss Jane Austen. Instead of dying a spinster, she gets to be married to a man who really loves her. It took a while for her to realize she is supposed to be with this gentleman, but it does happen. No spoilers here...it is in the title. LOL

But yes, this was short and sweet. I am curious to read the next book in the trilogy. The next books follows Jane and her hubbie as they work out as newlyweds. I really like her hubbie a lot. I wish he was a real guy. Sure he is based off a real person who did propose to Jane which didn't fall through (as we all know). He was a sweetie and I feel like Jane was so mean to him unnecessarily so. You could tell he loved her from the moment he stumbled onto the page.

This was light and fun. I really enjoyed how you could see bits and pieces of her books scattered around the pages. I loved how the author showed possibly where she could've gotten her inspirations for her stories. It was a nice touch. Some were obvious, but some were done in a way that could be missed. Loved it.

There were some eye-rolling parts like the part with the balloon. The balloon-ride was fine, but the whole repercussion that Jane and Ashton had to deal with afterwards. Yes, I get the ton are jerks, but I really feel like everyone overreacted. Especially Jane's parents. Sure, sure, I get that it was scary and balloons were a new thing, but really? Jane was with a family friend and an old French guy. I highly doubt anything scandalous happened there.

Jane bothered me sometimes. She was actually kind of mean. For example, Ashton had gotten a bundle of tickets (I guess it was cheaper to buy 10 than just 5 – I can't remember) and he offered to take Jane and her sister. Jane was a jerk about it saying how she didn't want to be in his debt. Like really? Just take the damn ticket woman. The ticket was basically free. Gah. It bothered me sometimes with how cold she acted towards people.

I enjoyed the few pages of letter exchanges. Sometimes it bothers me, but it actually helped move the story along in a fun way. It also showed, slowly, how feelings were changing and morphing. It was fun to see how friendship turned to love. It was very nice.

In the end, this was a short, light, and fun read. I loved the whole what-if Jane didn't say no and actually got to get married to a man who really did love her. I highly recommend this if you even mildly like Jane Austen and her novels. I'll stamp this with 4 stars.

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## Alex (Briennai) says

This story started off with Jane and her best friend going on a hot air balloon excursion. Even though I know little to nothing about hot air balloons, Hemingway perfectly described it. I felt like I was in the sky myself! I was even scared when Jane and Ashton had to figure out how to fly the patchy balloon on their own and was

exhilarated when they landed. Then I remembered that this book took place in the early 1800s and that their family is worried sick as they are spending a day or two waiting for a letter to arrive about the pair's safety. This perfectly depicted how some things like balloons had been invented, but the world was still far from being modernized in any way.

The first part of this book is getting to know Jane and Ashton. They aren't together but are just friends. Jane thinks that she is already too old for marriage at 26 years old, and instantly declines Ashton's offer of marriage. Then, most of the rest of the book is in letter form. This was a beautiful way to write the story, as several years go by, but the characters have to actually wait for the letters to arrive and be responded to. Readers can see how much passion was poured into each letter, as the barrier between friend and lover starts to disintegrate.

I knew little to nothing about Jane Austen before reading this story, and I love how the small tidbits about her life were thrown into the main romance storyline. Like she sends a letter to Ashton about the books that she had been working on, and about all the female authors that she had been having conversations with. It seemed more real. She wasn't able to do much in society as an unmarried woman, but she decided to spend time with the other talented women of her time. Hopefully, we will get to know who some of these women were in future series installments.

The one thing I didn't like that much about this book was that some things moved a bit too quickly. I felt like we were rushing from the balloon incident to being at home with Ashton and then Ashton was away again. If those parts had slowed down a bit, I would have loved every second of this read!

I would recommend this series to anyone looking for a new historical fiction romance to read.

I received a copy of this book and this is my voluntary review.

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## **Abigail Bok says**

The title of this work is shocking: the *marriage* of Miss Jane Austen? Impossible! But so it is, in this fictionalized version of Austen's life. Author Collins Hemingway has taken a fragment of an incident in her life—when she wrote to a publisher protesting the failure to print the first version of what later became *Northanger Abbey*, she signed her letter “Mrs. Ashton Dennis” (as in she was MAD)—and has created an Ashton Dennis for her to be married to.

The fictional and factual elements of her life are blended seamlessly. Hemingway lies as little as possible to the reader, following the known biographical details closely and deviating only when necessary. He also borrows from other incidents of her life, such as the proposal she received from Harris Bigg-Wither and her friendship with Bigg-Wither's sisters. These details are smoothly shifted over to the fictional Dennis family.

The story opens at an assembly in Bath. Mr. Dennis was supposed to escort his sister and the Austen sisters but he is tardy; when he makes his entrance, he is very much a bull in a china shop. A few years younger than Jane, stuttering and awkward, he scarcely appears to have potential as a suitor, despite his wealth (acquired, sadly, through trade). But in the course of time, propose he does and is accepted—though after a night's agonizing, Jane changes her mind and turns him down.

Ashton, his hopes blighted, finds occasion to go off on a scientific expedition of dubious value to the West

Indies, having there a series of adventures that he recounts in letters to Jane Austen (to which she, on rather thin ethical grounds, responds). This exchange of letters over three years is the heart of the book and its best part.

The title gives away that Ashton and Jane do ultimately reconcile, and this book (as of my review there are three volumes in the series) concludes with (well, just after, if you get my meaning) the wedding. It can certainly be read as a freestanding story.

I was impressed by Hemingway's research in most aspects, though he needs to learn more about how meals were served and what the courses consisted of in the early nineteenth century. The language is also pretty good, though there are modernisms that jolted me out of the story from time to time—"get a jump on," "pulled the buff brick house visually together." I did not entirely see the Jane Austen of my imagination in this portrayal, though I liked the character as she was written. And the author entirely delighted me with his gratuitous mention of the White Horse Inn at Dorking, in Surrey, the area about which I am writing my own series of historical fictions! The reference especially worked because it took place in 1805, about the time Jane Austen was working on *The Watsons*, whose opening scene is set there.

I liked this story—even the delicately handled wedding night scene at the end, something I usually shy away from. The characters were vivid and interesting, and the course of the love story was touching and believable. Like many romantic fictions written by men, it achieves a balance between the male and female points of view that I find satisfying. These felt like real people and real lives. Highly recommended for Austenesque readers.

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## **Lauralee says**

We all know that Jane Austen was never married. However, what would it have been like if Jane Austen had fallen in love and married? The *Marriage of Miss Jane Austen* reimagines how Jane Austen would have changed had she been married. Jane Austen takes a disliking to her childhood friend, Ashton, because he has grown up to be pompous and arrogant. She doesn't believe that he is capable of winning her heart. However, through a series of events, Jane realizes that Ashton may be the person who completely understands her and may be worthy of her love.

Because there are so many known facts about Jane Austen's life, I had a hard time believing that this character was Jane Austen. There were a few mannerisms that did not seem to match with the historical Jane. One example is I highly doubt that Jane would go up in an air balloon with a gentleman without a proper chaperone. Therefore, in order to fully enjoy this book I had to picture her as a fictional character rather than Jane Austen herself. To be honest, I never truly understood Jane. Jane is smart and observant. However, she can be impulsive at times. She seemed to change her mind a lot after she makes a decision. Therefore, Jane is not a character that I thought was developed to her full potential.

The *Marriage of Jane Austen* started off great, then by the second part of the book it started to drag. This is because it is written in a series of letters, and it didn't capture the emotions of the characters. Because this is such an integral part of the book, it did not translate the story to the page. This is the part where Jane Austen falls in love with Ashton. However, it never shows why she starts to fall in love with him. What was it about Ashton that she loved about him? It was never fully explained. Thus, by the end, I was still unsure why Ashton was still the one for Jane. Therefore, the relationship between Jane and Ashton was very undeveloped and forced.

Overall, this book is about friendship, second chances, and love. The characters were a bit flat. The novel could have been shortened and edited. There were a lot of heavy details about politics, philosophy, science, and religion that could have been toned down. The novel had a great idea, but did not fulfill its potential. Still, it was a very sweet love story. There were moments in the book that reminded me *Pride and Prejudice* and *Persuasion*. It did make me want to read the sequel to see how Jane Austen would grow as a writer once she was a married woman. Therefore, this novel is definitely worth a read for Janeites.

(Note: This book was given to me as part of a blog tour in exchange for an honest review.)

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## **Claudine DiMuzio / Just Jane 1813 says**

Review and giveaway of this lovely book at Just Jane 1813.

Visit: <http://justjane1813.com/2016/09/07/th...>

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## **Carole (in Canada) says**

What a wonderful, imaginative and beautifully written story giving Jane Austen an alternate life. I had a very hard time putting this book down. I am always hesitant to read these type of stories, as we know it didn't happen, but as I have said before, I shouldn't be.

"If you do not hold her dear, then wait. Find a woman who can truly know your heart. Who wants you..."(quote from the book)

There is so much to love in this adventurous and witty tale that springs to life through the descriptive verse. I especially enjoyed Ashton Dennis, an impulsive young man who loves Jane. However, being younger than Jane and getting her to do things outside her comfort zone, he has an uphill battle in winning her heart.

"Platitudes occupy the space in language where honesty ought to reside except that honesty would crush the soul." (quote from the book)

The history of the times is woven in seamlessly with the story, and the letters written through Part II were a delightful surprise. There is also one scene that had shades of Lady Catherine and Elizabeth in the garden at Longbourn. What fun that was to read! I look forward with great anticipation to read Volume 2 as Jane begins her married life!

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## **Cathy says**

The author has created a fun, light and affectionate tribute to Jane Austen alongside speculating on how her life might have turned out had she married, and delivering an engaging historical romance. The book captures the spirit of Jane Austen's appraising eye of society, its foibles and – to modern day eyes – its bewildering rules of etiquette.

Jane and her sister, Cassandra, despite neither of them being that old, find themselves on the way to being

consigned to the ranks of spinsterhood. 'She was in her own clique, of course, along with Cass, that of women who were stylish, if overly stale. Her invitations no longer came from young men who were on their way up in society but from older men who had stalled or were in decline: unmarried clergy from poorly endowed parishes or lately widowed men of middle age and anxious finance.'

It doesn't help that their branch of the family is relatively poor and dependent on the support of more well-off relatives for both money and accommodation, moving from house to house of acquaintances and distant family members. As Jane writes, 'Like travelling minstrels, we earn our victuals by entertaining our hosts and helping with the odd family tasks. One afternoon chasing the children around, two witty rejoinders, and three darned stockings will earn a meal, by my estimation.'

In fact, Jane and Cassandra have begun to think that love and marriage is something they will never experience since both have suffered the tragic loss of men for whom they had felt affection. 'Cassandra's expression shaded from thoughtfulness to entreaty and finally pain. "Shall we never find love?" she asked. "Is it over? Are we never to be happy? Never to embrace the kindness of a man, the blessings of a child?"'

However, Jane does have an admirer: Ashton Dennis, a wealthy young man. But although she likes him, she can feel no romantic affinity with him as he has little interest in literature or the arts. His focus seems only to be on the business of running his family's estate. And Jane could never love or consider marriage to a man like that could she?

When Ashton goes abroad to "find himself", as we might describe it these days, he and Jane strike up a lively, witty correspondence, which makes up Part 2 of the book. Jane provides him with news from home about current affairs and scientific developments. This provides the opportunity for the author to give the reader a fascinating insight into important events of the time such as the Louisiana Purchase (the sale of Louisiana by Napoleon to America), the progress through Parliament of the Anti-slavery Bill, and the latest scientific and technological discoveries. Over the months he is away, as she reads Ashton's letters in response to hers, Jane gradually starts to see a different side to him. How this will be resolved is the subject of Part 3 of the book.

As well as the story of Jane and Ashton, there is much for lovers of Jane Austen's novels to enjoy with many scenes alluding to plot lines, characters or events in her books (although at the time this book is set, she has yet to be published). So, for example, we have Ashton's mother warning off Jane from any marital interest in him, much in the way Lady Catherine de Burgh tries to do with Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice*...and taking possession of the most famous line from that book to boot. "A single man in possession of a good fortune does not automatically need a wife – not from your class. It is a misconception from which both you and your mother suffer."

The author also captures the witty, acute observations readers have come to expect in Austen's novels.

On being asked her view of a potential match for Ashton: "She is the sort of person who professes a love of books without reading, and who is lively without wit. Yet – Mr Dennis – I am not the person to ask about marriage. I live on the corner of Old and Unattached."

On dealing with marriage proposals: 'Every polished young woman has a dozen stratagems to deflect the purpose of an unwelcome suitor. One practices firm but gentle rebuffs in front of the mirror almost as often as one practices coquettish ways of saying yes to the proper man.'

I also loved this little joke about writing a book as Ashton reacts in amazement that Jane has written a novel

that has been accepted for publication: 'To think that you have spent – what, a year, more? – to compose a work on a single topic, about a set of characters, is beyond my ken. I salute you, madam!'

This was a fun, engaging, well-written book that captured the spirit of Jane Austen's books and which I really enjoyed. I received a review copy courtesy of Historical Fiction Virtual Book Tours in return for an honest and unbiased review.

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### **Trish says**

I love the novels of Jane Austen. They are comfort reads for me. I have print editions but also carry them in e-book format on my phone. That said, I have read relatively little about Jane Austen's life, so I found the premise of *The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen* particularly intriguing.

This novel tells an alternate history of Jane Austen's life and love, with a glimpse at how this difference might have effected her writing.

It was a pleasure to spend time with Jane Austen and a lively cast of characters in this novel. I enjoyed the way Jane approached the world, with grace and wit. I also enjoyed her interplay with Ashton Dennis. Their balloon ride was my favorite scene in the novel -- and it was great fun.

This story is beautifully told. The author's voice is elegant and quick, and invokes the spirit of Jane Austen's writing.

The historical details of this novel were fascinating. I loved descriptions like this:

"When Jane and Cassandra stepped out the front door of their house, every imaginable noise of the city assaulted them. Vendors hawked their wares: muffins, milk, cheese, newspapers. 'Hot spice gingerbread, smoking hot!' cried one. 'Milk below, maids!' cried another - though the ill-fed city cows produced thin milk. Housewives and servants haggled with the peddlers over the prices of all the food needed for the day's meals, a reminder that living costs were higher in Bath because the Austens could not grow their own food as they had in Stevenson. Carriages clattered in and out of the entrance to the Sydney Hotel across the street. Banging and thumping came from the tavern behind them, where workers hauled in barrels of fresh beer and mead. The crowds made Jane long to turn toward the open fields -- toward the sun -- rather than walk into the heart of the city" (p. 10).

This is the first of a three part series, and I look forward to continuing the story. I recommend *The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen* highly for Janeites, literature lovers, and fans of historical fiction.

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### **Tom Hanrahan says**

"*The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen*" is an engaging book that I think captures to life and times of early 19th century England. Miss Jane's adventures are fun and interesting but importantly tell us a lot about her and help explain the writer she will later become. I really enjoyed this book.

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## **Anna says**

I was excited for the chance to read Volume I in Collins Hemingway's *The Marriage of Miss Jane Austen* trilogy. The premise is so intriguing! What would Jane Austen's life have been like had she married? Would she still have written the novels that I love so much? And if she would have had the opportunity to write while running her household, how would her marriage have changed those stories? This first volume doesn't focus much on Jane's novel writing; it's set from 1802-1805, during the time she lived in Bath. But the story is rich nonetheless.

Hemingway's Jane Austen came to life for me, from her wit and impertinence to her intelligence, her understanding of the world and her place in it, and her hope for happiness. Whether it is an accurate portrayal or not, one will never know, but she felt real to me. From page one, I fell in love with this version of Jane. I loved her snarky remarks to her aunt Perrot, her desire for adventure, and her impulsiveness. There were many scenes in which she reminded me of Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice*.

Hemingway also brought Ashton Dennis to light, Jane's childhood friend, five years her junior. He is shy and impulsive, large and clumsy. He has inherited a fortune and an estate, and his Lady Catherine-esque mother very much dislikes his close friendship with Jane. Meanwhile, Jane understands her limited options in society and prepares to live out her life unmarried, constantly traveling from the home of one relative to another with her sister Cassandra. As time passes and Jane begins to understand herself and Ashton more fully, she wonders whether she will ever have a chance to marry for love.

I loved the way the story unfolded, gently and realistically, and I enjoyed that it was more than just a love story, as Hemingway weaves in tales of war and other aspects of history. I am looking forward to reading the next two volumes and seeing how this alternative life for Jane plays out.

Review originally posted on *Diary of an Eccentric*

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## **Megan says**

3.5 stars

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## **Michele Mcfadden says**

Probably my favorite alt-universe Jane Austen novel (and I've read a bunch). The most surprising thing was that it was about Miss Austen herself, not a reimagined Elizabeth Bennet or Emma Woodhouse. Beautifully written, and such an interesting combination of JA history, her fiction, Georgian science and history, and what-ifs. Reminded me a little of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*- without the magic. Looking forward to parts II & III.

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## **Diana Page Jordan says**

Thoroughly up-to-date and entertaining, *THE MARRIAGE OF MISS JANE AUSTEN* is highly imagined,

playful, and it is writ close to Austen's own voice. Collins Hemingway's tale discovers how Jane Austen's life might have changed had she said, "Till death do us part."

In this novel, she does, but not until the very end, leading the reader to the edge of a chair, straining to hear the whispers of what might come next for Jane Austen and her suitor Ashton Dennis. That answer is Part Two of a trilogy.

In this first book, Hemingway takes the reader down a garden path, watching Austen and Dennis in their delightful dance of courtship. It teases us, as Austen engages in a witty banter. The chirpy pace of the 18th century characters reveals that they - just as we are - on the generational transition to - in her case - the industrial revolution, to us - the information revolution.

The result is that the reader falls head-long into an intelligent book, feeling the tug-of-war, which is just too much fun!

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### **Gail Herman says**

Excellent! Well written. Well researched. Not a retelling of an Austen novel. Rather, this author used elements of Jane's stories but made Jane the central interest of this novel. Language seemed to fit the time period. A satisfying read. Highly recommend this book. Looking forward to the sequels!

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### **Connie D says**

I love Jane Austen so much that I enjoy books that just remind me about her novels. This Austen-inspired book had moments of fun cleverness as well as some thoughtful developments. However, in the end, it didn't quite do it for me and it didn't quite mesh.

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