



A Midsummer Night's Scream

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Jane Jeffry has a new hobby: the theater—specifically, a rundown theater that close pal Shelly and her husband have donated to a local college drama department. Jane has graciously agreed to lend her taste buds to the college's newest production, helping Shelly judge prospective caterers who will be feeding the actors. But soon she's drawn deeper into the real life drama surrounding the play than she ever hoped or anticipated.

The cast is embroiled in petty, off-stage jealousies, ego trips and power struggles, all of which are further fueled by the clueless, blowhard director. Even the presence of two aging professional thespians—a lecherous old boozier and his genteel, seriously gifted wife—fails to bring a sense of decorum to this train wreck of a production. And the plot takes a decidedly darker turn when a particularly rebellious young performer exits stage left—permanently—courtesy of a head-bashing killer! Now Jane and Shelly have their own roles to play in this twisted, true life theatrical where each member of the dramatis personae has a make-up case full of secrets, masks and motives.

A Midsummer Night's Scream Details

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From Reader Review A Midsummer Night's Scream for online ebook

Judy Goodnight says

It's been several years since I read any of the Jane Jeffry books so I thought I would just read the last two rather than go back to the beginning & re-read.

This book just didn't do much of anything for me. I thought the needlepoint class and caterer testing were quite distracting from what was supposed to be the mystery. The characters seemed pretty two-dimensional and the whole story rather flat.

Jane's only connection to the mystery seemed to be providing the link between the assault on the janitor and the theater death.

The epilogue at the end was surprising and seemed unnecessary.

One last thought: Given the title, am I the only person expected them to be performing a Shakespearian work?

Overall - a disappointment

Jennifer says

The obvious theme of A Midsummer Night's Scream is the theater, but this book had a lot more going on than that. We see Jane making progress in her blossoming career as a author, Shelley testing caterers, and the two of them taking a needlepoint class. With so many different activities going on, readers are sure to find something to grab their attentions. I may not care much about acting or needlepoint, but I loved the look at Jane's road to publication as well as the culinary aspect of the different caterers.

In A Midsummer Night's Scream, Jane and Shelley are on their home turf as they look into the death of an actor. That means finding time for the investigation while raising kids (not as much as before since the children are mostly grown). It also means more involvement from Mel, as it's his case.

The case itself is surprising. I only had the tiniest inkling who the murderer was right before they were revealed. The motive behind the murder was only slightly more obvious given earlier clues. All in all, it was a fun addition to the series.

Kitty Tomlinson says

Jane and her friend, Shelley, are involved in a play produced by the local university. Jane and Shelley show up each evening for rehearsals to check on the catering that Shelley has set up for the rehearsals. Murder occurs.

DaShannon says

I've not read Churchill before and although I finished this one I didn't love it. Between a needlepoint class, catering details, and a subpar theater production, I felt like I was missing something. Maybe not reading the series in order makes a difference but several times something new was just being talked about and I didn't feel any introduction. The murders didn't seem to even be a big deal and the ending, although most cozies are, was predictable. Not a satisfying read.

Nancy Fredenburgh says

I hadn't read Churchill in a long while and I enjoyed it immensely. Jane and her best friend Shelley have gotten into mysterious murders many times and this one revolves around college theater productions. Light, fast reading. Very enjoyable!

Pelican Rapids says

I didn't enjoy this mystery as much as I do Danielle Steele. As a matter of fact, I'm not much of a mystery reader.

Jim says

The series started out okay, got better, kind of stagnated, then dipped down. Since I'd read all the others, and know the characters, I thought I'd catch up, with this one and the newest one (The Accidental Florist). Now I'm not so sure I'll read the next.

It almost seems like the mystery is a side issue that intrudes on the story once in a while. Some irony is the "play" in the book is bad, especially the ending. I thought the ending of this book was very anti-climatic (like an excursion from the real story, slipped in to wrap things up). The epilogue, to close it off, wasn't too bad.

Susan Schnelbach says

A Midsummer's Night Scream is clearly a continuation of the slow downward slide in quality that began with Bell, Book, and Scandal, and ends with the horrible The Accidental Florist.

Bell, Book, and Scandal had, I think, only one change in viewpoint. A Midsummer's Night Scream had several changes in viewpoint, mostly from Mel's view, which is unusual in this series.

Despite the series name, A Jane Jeffry Mystery, Jane had almost nothing to do with solving this mystery. In

fact, most of this book revolved around tasting testing caterers and attending a needlepoint class. Since neither the caterers nor the needlepoint class had anything to do with the mystery, their constant presence in the story was distracting and served no purpose in advancing the story or the mystery.

Unlike previous mysteries in this series, Jane does very little thinking about this mystery. In fact, she does almost no thinking about the murder, potential motives, or potential guilty parties.

The oddest part of this book: the epilogue. No previous book in this series has ever done a "where are they now" ending to the story. It was out of place, not remotely entertaining, and again, not from Jane's viewpoint. None of the "where are they now" statements would be anything Jane could possibly know.

Jill Churchill, if you are tired of writing this series, just stop. Don't try to wrap everything up neatly for Jane as you did in *The Accidental Florist*. Just stop writing.

Dharia Scarab says

Good, but different from the others.

Mel's point of view and the police investigation, played a far larger roll than in any of the previous books in the series. And he's the one that solves the mystery, instead of Jane. Except for inadvertently passing on information that turned out to be useful clues for Mel, Jane and Shelley had very little to do with this mystery and its solution.

Since I don't normally write reviews unless I have something specific to say, here's the break down of how I rate my books...

1 star... This book was bad, so bad I may have given up and skipped to the end. I will avoid this author like the plague in the future.

2 stars... This book was not very good, and I won't be reading any more from the author.

3 stars... This book was ok, but I won't go out of my way to read more, But if I find another book by the author for under a dollar I'd pick it up.

4 stars... I really enjoyed this book and will definitely be on the look out to pick up more from the series/author.

5 stars... I loved this book! It has earned a permanent home in my collection and I'll be picking up the rest of the series and other books from the author ASAP.

Yvensong says

Maybe 2 1/2 stars. The character development was adequate and even though this is the first of the Jane Jeffry stories I've read, I had a good sense of who the characters were. One issue I had with the novel was the

mystery seemed to be treated rather trivially while the more trivial background stories (such as needlepoint classes) seemed to be pushed into the foreground. Maybe the author was doing so, to give us a way to know one or two other characters, but it really was just distracting, and didn't really move the story forward.

Per a few of the reviews I've read, this is not this author's best example of her work. I'm glad to hear that since I picked this up because of the notation on the cover that the author is an Agatha award-winning author.

DaShannon says

?I've not read Churchill before and although I finished this one I didn't love it. Between a needlepoint class, catering details, and a subpar theater production, I felt like I was missing something. Maybe not reading the series in order makes a difference but several times something new was just being talked about and I didn't feel any introduction. The murders didn't seem to even be a big deal and the ending, although most cozies are, was predictable. Not a satisfying read.

Anne Hawn Smith says

I think this is one of Jill Churchill's best. Shelly is trying to find a new caterer for Paul's business dinners and she has chosen a number of caterers to provide food for a theater group. Jane accompanies her to taste the food and help evaluate the companies. By the second day, a body turns up and there are a few candidates for the murder.

Along with the crime is the story of one of the stars of the play, and elderly actress who wants to take a needlepoint class with Jane and Shelly. She turns out to be a spunky and admirable character who provides some depth to the story. She has known Sylvia Sidney, actress, author and famed needle pointer. They all are fans of Sylvia's books, which I happen to also own. It was kind of interesting to want to chime in with my own opinions to add to the dialog of these three characters.

Drebbles says

Jane Jeffry's friend, Shelley Nowack, has agreed to find caterers to provide meals for participants in a play the local community college is putting on and asks Jane to help her. Jane agrees, figuring she can work on her latest hobby, needlepoint, while watching the rehearsal. She also hopes to get some ideas for a new book that she is writing. But Jane gets more than she bargained for when an actor in the play is murdered and the janitor at the theater is attacked. Jane's longtime boyfriend, police Detective Mel van Dyne, is investigating the case and asks for Jane's help as she knows the cast and crew quite well. Jane has plenty of suspects for Mel, including the director-playwright, Steven Imry and all the cast members.

Jill Churchill's last Jane Jeffrey mystery "Bell, Book, and Scandal" was pretty bad but I had hoped that was just a one-time thing. Unfortunately, "A Midsummer Night's Scream" is almost as bad, if not worse. Outside of Jane's success as a novelist, there is no character development and the only new interesting character is Gloria Bunting. The writing is stiff and some passages, such as the needlepoint class instructions seem like they are quoted from books. The dialogue is awkward and artificial and at least once Churchill loses track of

which character is speaking. Even cozy bits, such as Jane's cat catching a mole are badly written and feel forced.

The Jane Jeffry mystery series used to be a light, cozy, pleasant read and it's a shame to see the series go downhill so fast. I recommend reading the other books in the series and skipping the last two. Hopefully that the next one will be better and puts the series back on track.

Simon says

I haven't read any of the others, and it is unlikely I will after this. Golly. The only time it comes alive is when Churchill describes the caterer's foods. The mystery, and I use the word kindly, is solvable in about twenty seconds. The descriptions of theatre and theatre people are preposterous to anyone who works in it (I do). The writing is leaden. And for some odd reason, Ms. Churchill includes a *Dragnet* roundup of what happens to all of the imaginary characters *after* the mystery is solved. If the reader doesn't care about them during the actual story? Yeah, not so much in the aftermath.

Mary Ann says

It was a good story and enjoyable to read. I didn't like all the edit errors and felt that these should have been corrected before printing.

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Jane has finished her first book and it is being looked at for publication and she needs to find an agent to help protect her interests. While this is going on, she and her friend, Shelley, are tasting meals created by caterers, hired by Shelley to provide small, snack meals to the cast and crew of the play. The play is written and directed by Professor Emery, who dislikes the actor, playing the oldest son. Shelley and Jane make friends with the female actor hired to portray the matriarch. They all go to a class together with the costume designer, to learn cross stitch.

So much is happening in the story and it helped to move it along and I feel like I have read this book before, but I don't remember ever borrowing it before. I feel that it is important to note that it was published in 2005 because there is a character who states that she will never have a computer in her home and she won't use one. I find this interesting as there are now people who state that they won't ever own a smartphone but have computers in their homes.
