



Murder in Pastel

Josh Lanyon

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"The path that leads from the back of my cottage to Adam's lies through a meadow thick with poppies and lupine. Beyond Adam's cottage this same path disappears into the woods where Cosmo Bari, my father, disappeared one soft summerâ's eve ten years ago..."

Ten years ago Cosmo Bari vanished, and with him, his legendary masterpiece, *The Virgin in Pastel*. Since that day no one in the seaside art colony of Steeple Hill has heard from the eccentric painter.

Surrounded by an extended family of Cosmo's colorful compatriots, mystery writer Kyle Bari believes he has come to terms with being abandoned by his famous father, until the day Adam MacKinnon arrives with his new lover, the beautiful but poisonous, Brett. Brett has an unerring instinct for other people's weak spots; soon the quiet colony is seething with hostility and suspicion as Brett hints he knows something about the missing artist.

Kyle doesn't take Brett seriously until the long lost *The Virgin in Pastel* is discovered hidden in an antique dresser. A few days later the painting has vanished again--and Brett is dead. Murdered...

**NOTE - This book is written by Josh Lanyon. The rest of the books by this author name (Colin Dunne) are written by another mystery writer. Josh no longer uses this alias for an other book except this one.*

Murder in Pastel Details

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From Reader Review Murder in Pastel for online ebook

Sofia says

The setting for this one reminded me very much of Agatha Christie's mysteries where there is an obnoxious Drama Queen or King who pinches and scratches at every one of the cast and then things go on nicely from there

So as far as the setting goes I'm good, I like Christie so I liked this.

I did have slight problems with the character building and the relationships because these felt a bit strange, unfleshed unlike the Lanyon's I'm accustomed to. I was reading in the notes that JL wrote this one at the same time as Fatal Shadows and this is easily seen, there are similarities. I find I like Fatal Shadows better though.

14th Oct 2015 BR - with Rosa, Otila & Therese - great as usual :D

Rosa, really says

3.5*

Well, the book bugged the shit out of me in parts but I ended up really liking it. I'd say that if you like Lanyon, you'll like this book and if you haven't read any Lanyon, it's a good place to start. (And why the fuck haven't you read any Lanyon?) The feel of the book, the tone, the atmosphere, the humor, the characters, it's the essence of all that is *Lanyon*.

Anyway, to touch briefly on the plot: Kyle is a writer, his father was a famous artist who disappeared 10 years ago and now Kyle's childhood crush, [oh my god, I've already forgotten his name! Aaron? No.] Adam, has reappeared in his life along with Adam's boyfriend, Brett. Kyle finds this very upsetting.

Okay, fine, he's not *that* upset. I just really wanted to use that gif.

The thing I love most about Lanyon's books is this book's biggest weakness. Some mystery novels make me nuts because they seem to exist in a world without novels or movies. Every clue is overlooked because they've never seen a Hitchcock movie or read Agatha Christie. Dumbasses. However, in Lanyon's world the characters have read every mystery novel in existence. They've even read Lanyon's books (Fatal Shadows gets a mention here). That works well in Lanyon's other books, where the characters seem a little more naturally suspicious, but in this book Kyle was either stupid or naive. He didn't notice SHIT. He just thought,

hey, that's odd, oh well, might as well go for another dip in the ocean.

Dear Meme Creator, "goddamn" has TWO Ds. Please check your spelling when taking the lord's name in vain. Thank you.

How can a guy who's read so many mystery novels, as well WRITING THEM for fuck's sake, not see that there's something very fishy going on? I don't buy it. I read a lot of mystery novels and I'm completely paranoid. Every time my neighbor does something super nice for me it just further convinces me the guy is a serial killer. It's always the nice ones! Anyway, poor Kyle does get a clue about half way through the book and thank jaysus for that.

My other complaint is Kyle's love interest Adam. (By the way, there's no cheating going on.) Brett is total diva, shit disturbing, asshole. It's amusing in a book (for a few chapters) but in real life I'd only be able to take behavior like his for about 2 minutes. And Adam has lived with it for TWO FREAKIN' YEARS. I can only guess that part of him does enjoy the role of care taker and/or likes to be tortured. If I were Kyle I'd feel weird about that. Kyle doesn't need a nurse/daddy/victim. By the end I wasn't totally appeased, but I did have a better understanding of what Adam saw in Brett and I felt like Adam was ready to love Kyle. And vice versa.

So is it the best mystery? *Non*. Is it the best romance? *Nein*. But is it Lanyon and is that good? *Si*.

Thank you for the BR, Otila, Sofia & Therese!

Jenni says

Classic Lanyon, as they say.

(No really, classic. The best.)

As I shared with a friend while reading:

I love how Lanyon gives EVERYBODY the motive.

It's a game of Clue:

It was the professor in the parlor with the candlestick.

Does it get any better than that?!?

Lori says

A twisting whodunnit by the master of crime. I was left feeling sad for the MC as he seemed to lose everything - even as he gained what he, perhaps, most wanted? As Lanyon usually writes wonderful stories about couples he has already established, would I be wrong to hope for more from Kyle and Adam?

Ingie says

Written October 6, 2015

3.8 Stars - Another solid good JL mystery with a dash of tender romance

There was a "new" Josh Lanyon novel to read. Of course I wanted it. New or new — according to the author is this novel written a few years ago. One of his/hers own favorites that first was published by another pen-name and now finally edited and published once again. Thanks Mr/Ms Lanyon! Appreciated.

Newly written or nor —whatever similarities to other JL's books / MC's, as I know other mentions here—I sincerely enjoyed.

A seaside art colony of "Steeple Hill"...

Murder in Pastel is about the since ten years missing famous artist *Cosmo*'s now adult son, the mystery writer **Kyle Bari**. Kyle is maybe living a bit boring drama-free life in his father's old sea house but he has two books published and is overall quite satisfied. Then returns the man Kyle admired and loved already as a boy and teen, **Adam MacKinnon**. A by now smart, goodlooking and quite successful artist.

'I appreciated his malicious sense of humor (when it wasn't aimed at me), and he had certainly livened things up. But he was dangerous. Dangerous in the way of beautiful wild things. You could admire his beauty, but you couldn't trust him.'

This book is also about *Brett Hansen*, Adam's very young stunning beautiful, but also moody, crazy and dangerous scheming, lover (partner) and the rest of the "old gang" still spending their time at this small seaside art colony. ~ But is the admired Cosmo really dead? What about that famous (oil) painting '*Virgin in Pastel*'? Who fancy who? What about Brett? Why is he asking so many questions? Who sleeps with...

I've a weak spot, for writers writing about writers. Ms/Mr Lanyon does it so amusing good. His/hers struggling mystery sleuth aka novel writer characters are the very best to spend reading-time with. Remember *Adrien English* from Fatal Shadows? Or *Griffin L Hadley* from Stranger on the Shore or lovely *Christopher Holmes* from Somebody Killed His Editor? — All very like-able and interesting main characters. Here in this book we get a new favorite one. Kyle Bari is just adorable cute, charming sweet and boyish innocent. Loved him.

'Thursday was a slow day for sleuthing. A slow day for writing too, and I was getting paid for that.'

...

'Still, I struggled on improving my typing skills if nothing else, knowing in my heart most of what I was writing was destined for the delete key.'

Not the very highest JL class in my opinion but for sure more than good enough. For once I liked the crime part and these secondary (life) stories more than the main romance part (didn't feel it that much). To be honest, this is more a mystery novel with a dash of romantic parts than a smexy steamy M/M romance. There is hot stuff and sweet kisses but just enough to make us romantic smut ladies a bit happy and satisfied.

Recommended for (hardcore) JL lovers and all admirers of good M/M novels.

I LIKE - beach and sleuth stories

Mandapanda says

I was quite bewildered most of the time reading this book because the MC is exactly the same as Adrien (heart defect, poor health, amateur sleuth, murder suspect, etc). I wondered if an author can plagiarize his own book? But at the end there is an explanation that this was written at the same time as Fatal Shadows.

The MC Kyle is kind of a weird loner actually. No personality, no friends apart from a few hangers on from his father, and no interests outside a fixation with an older guy who he hasn't seen since he was a teenager (he's now around 27 I think). He doesn't seem to leave the house or even work for a living except for having written two (surprise, surprise) gay murder mysteries which (again surprisingly according to all the author blogs I've read) seem to bring in a living wage.

The mystery is mildly enjoyable although the final murderer seemed to come from nowhere. There is some of Lanyon's trademark beautiful prose. The romance is lacking. Kyle's love interest (Adam) arrives back in town with a partner of two years who he loves and who I found to be a very appealing character. Once this love rival gets the chop Kyle and Adam jump into bed with unseemly haste.

This brings me to what I think is the enormous mistake with this story. I feel the author used the wrong character as the hero. The hero should have been Brett, Adam's lover, whose character was much more fleshed out compared to anyone else in the book. He had a great back story and an intriguing personal reason for returning to town. And when he got there he was faced with Adam's creepy admirer who couldn't let go and a small town full of hostile residents who didn't understand him. The author said at the end that he rewrote the story. I wish he had rewritten more ruthlessly and made Brett the hero he deserved to be and killed off Kyle instead.

Adam says

2.5 stars

To say that I have conflicted feelings about this book would be an understatement.

Let me be blunt: I didn't like either Kyle Bari, the MC, or Adam MacKinnon, the love interest. And I especially didn't like Brett, the conniving shit-stirrer.

Both Kyle and Adam are weak. They are weak-willed, and let Brett and others walk all over them. In a way, I suppose the two were meant for each other. Though I didn't really understand that attraction, as a lot of the romance hinges on whatever Kyle and Adam felt for each other so many years ago. This is one of those cases where you're just supposed to accept that the characters feel something for each other and just go with the flow.

If I could use one word to describe this book, it would be 'dysfunctional'. Dysfunctional relationships, a dysfunctional town, and dysfunctional families. I'm a fan of books set in small towns, but 'Murder in Pastel' was a PSA of what happens when the people living in small towns become bitter and turn on the easiest targets - their families and neighbours.

And yet, I still genuinely enjoyed this book. No one does family drama like Josh Lanyon. I stay as far away from drama, especially other people's drama, as I can in real life. Yet when I read a Lanyon book, I eat up every single scandalous morsel. So the 'dysfunctional' worked for me. It's like a soap opera, but much better.

Hell, I even developed a grudging respect for Brett. It takes talent to be able to single-handedly destroy a community.

The mystery, as I know to expect from this author, was very entertaining. The twists and turns kept me guessing throughout. Around the 75% some of the pieces began clicking, though the outcome wasn't exactly what I'd expected.

So, 2.5 stars. The characters in this book are wholly unlikable, but I guess that makes them more realistic in some sense. I'd have liked for the romance to be more fleshed out, and the characters just more palatable. In any case, I'm rounding up for the sheer entertainment of the drama.

Review copy provided through NetGalley.

Baba says

3.5 stars. Review posted September 17, 2015.

Murder in Pastel is a good and quick read in vintage Lanyon style. It's actually not a brand-new story because Lanyon mentioned in the Author's Note that he wrote it around the time Fatal Shadows was born. It revealed undeniable similarities to AE but I can honestly say that I didn't mind. I just enjoy Lanyon's voice and writing. Well, I guess he's my comfort zone and my chocolate box all at once because he manages effortlessly to put me back on the right track after having read some not so good books, to put it mildly.

"This is a regular murder epidemic you've got going. You think the sheriff is going to buy it?"

Fast paced, **focused on the mystery** and totally light on the "romance", Lanyon incorporated an eclectic cast of characters who served equally as suspects and an extra flavor. Kyle's sleuthing started off a bit maladroit, though he managed to ramp up his performance over the course of time. I questioned a couple of his moves, but enjoyed the mystery and, as per usual, Lanyon's wit and his black humor put quite a few smiles on my

face. The way Lanyon creates atmosphere through the weather (esp. rain) or the setting in general is very appealing to me. It feels like meeting another character and those little important details make his stories richer.

"How bad's your heart anyway?" After an astonished moment I said, "Well, I washed out of NASA. I'm okay for normal living."

Murder in Pastel is on the shorter side of the spectrum and that probably didn't help to develop the (lacking) romance. Likewise, it didn't really detract from my overall enjoyment of the story.

Bold, pretentious, obnoxious and somewhat malicious Brett, who didn't forfeit a chance to point out that he was Adam's lover, served his purpose as the unlikable fifth wheel. Despite all those negative attributes, I couldn't shake off the impression that he was also very insecure and probably afraid that Adam would abandon him eventually. To me, he seemed to be very much concerned about Kyle and Adam's mutual attraction. It goes without saying that I didn't like Brett's attention-whore attitude in general and his character in particular. However, looking at the way he grew up (he was abused in foster care), I should have cut him some slack, but his background didn't give him carte blanche to act so selfishly and disdainfully.

Again, Murder in Pastel was extremely light on the romance and didn't really wow me in that department. Thus I can't say anything about Adam and Kyle as a couple. I sure would have liked much more relationship development.

Bottom line

A famous painting, murder and a very generous helping hand of mayhem and very good writing made for a diverting reading experience.

#11 can be added as a satisfying and solid read to my book shelves because, as hoped for, Lanyon delivered.

Recommended read.

Pre-reading Murder in Pastel:

I just checked out the last ten books I'd been reading. Seven were crap, one was good and two were great. Let's see if I can add another great one. Lanyon usually delivers.

Sara says

As many reviews have already stated, this is classic Lanyon and that my reader friends, is always a good

thing.

The authors note at the end made me grin like a fool and yeah, this belongs in the Lanyon catalog and I'm thankful and giddy it was properly shared.

Though this does have a bit of the Adrien Englishy feel etc., I read this as a separate story of a very lonely boy, or boys, simply searching for the place they belong.

Brett, ugh, you were a douche but now, I'm kinda sorry I felt that way. Not totally sorry, but yeah. You know?

Kyle, I feel you my brother in the land of malfunctioning hearts and unrequited love. You told a wonderful story and you need a shit ton of daily hugs for the rest of your life.

Adam, you pissed me off and I am not sure I am over that yet but... yeah. You were kinda confused by your feelings and yet you ultimately did the right thing and how hard was that for you?

So... this was good. This was like a warm Lanyon hug with a teasing ass grope. Totally worth it.

Ije the Devourer of Books says

Murder and secrets!

I really, really enjoyed this and I don't have much to say beyond that.

I loved the setting of the story in the artists colony and small seaside town.

I enjoyed the mystery that surrounded the disappearance of the painting, and the disappearance of the artist Cosmo Bari.

I loved the different relationships in the story: the obvious support all the artists had for one another, the underlying professional jealousy, the unrequited love between Kyle and Adam, the mystery and hurt between Kyle's father and grandfather, the irritating small town sheriff, the way in which the towns people regarded the artist colony and so on.

And Brett. I enjoyed this obnoxious and irritating character who had a way of offending everyone and manipulating them, and yet at the same time amusing and befriending people. I thought his character was just so deliciously complex and the kind of character that makes a mystery come alive.

And I enjoyed the mystery and the dark, slightly gothic feel to the story with it's beach setting and nearby cemetery, dark woods and past secrets.

I really enjoy a good murder mystery and particularly those with a romance and this had both. Of course I enjoy Josh Lanyon's writing and this is another one to add to my pile of great JL reads.

Natasha says

4.5 stars.

Lanyon is the only author I put all my work aside for, always.

Written around the same time as Fatal Shadows. Lanyon mentions at the end that it wasn't meant to be published, originally, but he decided to publish it anyway. It shares a lot of motifs and themes as Fatal Shadows, but it still read like a separate Lanyon to me.

Greatly enjoyed. Best writer ever.

Aimee ~is busy sleeping~ says

[MC with heart problem, Brett reminded me of Finn, set in a very close knit community where everyone looked after the MC growing up, MC reunites with childhood crush, ect. (hide spoiler)]

Evil Cat says

This is one of those Lanyon stories where the romance absolutely does not work for me. I didn't particularly like either guy and I liked them even less as a couple. Their relationship felt a little creepy.

The mystery plot wasn't satisfying either. It was over-complicated with a series of mcguffins. I kept tripping over them and after awhile it made me think "hmmm, what is the author trying to hide with this little bit? I bet he goes THAT way". Which made everything surprisingly predictable. The fact that Lanyon has mined this story heavily for bits and pieces that he used directly in other books like the AE series and Stranger on the Shore didn't help that process.

Mostly I was bored, especially after (view spoiler).

These things happen occasionally. :)

Steve Leonard says

Loved it. Vintage Josh.

Vivian says

Is not knowing worse than knowing?

Kyle Bari is minding his business when the past comes back knocking on his door.

Starts innocent and congenial, then suddenly Peyton Place is not a friendly place anymore. It all starts when you have a group of friends, very close knit, almost incestuous, and suddenly one of you brings a new person into the fold. Except they don't fit, blend or compliment. They aren't the sand that makes an oyster; they're a poison that pricks until your friendship starts to fester.

Let's just say that the consequences send shockwaves through the artist community of Steeple Hill. Everyone is at each others throats and trust is a luxury none can afford. When the second death occurs, Kyle is worried and rightfully so.

The author's note at the end explains that this story was written at the same time as Fatal Shadows and it shows. This is almost like a twist of the kaleidoscope, imagine Adrien with a slightly different upbringing and setting. Not actually sure if I like Kyle more as I like his situation. But, the trajectory of future stories would be limited and not have the horsepower of Adrien English series.

Overall, a diverting mystery of murder and suspicion in an idyllic colony.
