



The Devil in Music

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The Regency dandy and amateur sleuth Julian Kestrel is back in his fourth mystery -- and this time he confronts murder far from home in the sensuous, turbulent Italy of the 1820s. With flawless period detail and a dapper English detective reminiscent of Lord Peter Wimsey, Kate Ross is charming fans of Anne Perry and Elizabeth George -- and earning a loyal following of mystery readers eager to accompany Julian Kestrel from adventure to satisfying adventure.

Traveling on the Continent with his ex-pickpocket valet, Kestrel finds himself caught up in the mysterious and murderous world of the opera. Four years ago, the Italian marquis Ludovico Malvezzi was murdered, and Orfeo, the young English tenor he had been training for a career on the glittering operatic stage, disappeared. As Kestrel is irresistibly drawn into the baffling case, he encounters suspects at every turn: a runaway wife and her male soprano lover; a liberal nobleman at odds with Italy's Austrian overlords; a mocking Frenchman with perfect pitch; a beautiful, clever widow who haunts Kestrel's dreams; and the missing Orfeo, the penniless protege who just might be a political agent. And when the killer strikes again, Kestrel's quest for answers spirals into a crescendo of passion, danger, and music as he risks becoming a ruthless murderer's next victim.

The Devil in Music Details

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Elizabeth says

I spent 6 days reading this 447 page book, and only made it to page 185. This is one of those extremely rare times that I've given up on a book, as it makes me feel guilty. I have *loved* the 3 previous Julian Kestrel Mysteries, but couldn't warm up to this one.

It began with the subject of opera (not a fan) and was based in Italy. There was a parade of characters that I found unlikeable, and when they were all rounded up and herded to the Villa to solve a 4-and-a-1/2-year-old murder, my patience started to wear thin. I threw up my hands and gave up at the point when the second (unlikely) person suspicious for the murder came onto the scene. It was too late in the game to hold my interest.

Nicole says

The fourth and final book of the Kestrel series. One of the greatest tragedies of the 90s was the death of Kate Ross. Julian, London dandy with a talent for detecting and the tact to do it amongst the rich, goes to Italy where he solves an old mystery and we learn more about his past before we are cruelly ripped away from that world. I probably love this book the most since it was the first I read, but I did make up for it by rushing out to read the rest of the series.

Jennifer says

One of my favorite mysteries. Intelligent historical mystery set in Italy. One of Kate Ross' best. Julian Kestrel is a multi-faceted character and I feel that the author had much more planned for him, but she only wrote the 4 books before she died. This is one of those mysteries that you can read several times and spot new and subtle clues on each reading. Although they do have the "let me explain to you all exactly how I solved the crime" scene at the end of the book, for the most part the author doesn't over explain things or make the clues so obvious a child can see them the way some authors do. It is refreshing to find mystery novels that don't insult the readers' intelligence, and this is one of them!

Kathy says

Wonderfully constructed, complex and final book of the four in this author's Julian Kestrel series. I have just finished the read. I admit to spreading it out over a bit of time since I knew it was the author's last book before her untimely death. This was such a satisfying book on many levels: mysteries, music, history lesson, travel diary, manners of the aristocracy from several countries...and finally the unveiling of Julian Kestrel's history. You can be certain I shall read this book again. I cannot recommend The Devil in Music highly enough and sincerely mourn the loss of this author.

Lynn Spencer says

When prompted to choose a little “something different” for the multi-blog TBR challenge this month, I opted to leave romance in favor of my other beloved genre – mystery. Twenty years ago, Kate Ross published the fourth (and last) of her Julian Kestrel mysteries, *The Devil in Music*. The entire series is strongly written and wonderful to read, but this last book contains an intricate mystery and adds depth to Kestrel’s character. It was a fantastic reading experience, though bittersweet, because I knew as I read that this would be the last visit to Julian Kestrel and his world. Kate Ross died in 1998, but the four books she left behind are a wonderful legacy.

Readers familiar with the first three books (*Cut to the Quick*, *A Broken Vessel* and *Whom the Gods Love*) will already know Kestrel as a somewhat mysterious English dandy in the early 19th century, with a penchant for solving mysteries. Kestrel is witty, urbane and at times rather distant as a character. One of the great delights of this series is that readers see Kestrel becoming more human and more real with each volume.

In this installment, Kestrel has left England in search of the solution to an Italian mystery. A powerful marchese was killed at his own villa and the crime hidden for four years. Now that the murder has come to light and it has become known that an English tenor being trained by the marchese is suspected of the crime, Kestrel thinks he may be able to lend some aid to the investigation. As is his habit, the well-traveled Kestrel manages to ingratiate himself with at least part of the marchese’s family and he starts digging.

This is a partial review. You can find the complete text at: <http://allaboutromance.com/may-tbr-ch...>

Pamela McLaren says

A death four years ago is found to have been murder and the incident drives British dandy and amateur sleuth Julian Kestrel to return to Italy to try solving the mystery.

In this fourth outing for Kestrel, the story is filled with enough twists and turns to keep the reader riveted, especially as Kestrel looks for several 'ghosts' three individuals who were at the scene of the death of Ludovico Malvezzi all those years ago: the singer Orfeo, the gardeners wife and another servant. All three have disappeared.

Then there are Malvezzi's family: the wife who was in Milan at the time of his death and the son who was looking for her; the son's wife who had run away with a soprano; and the man's brother, who backed the wrong side in Italy's ruling overlords.

During an extended gathering with a couple of other guests in the mix and a police official who is convinced they are all involved in one way or another, Kestrel must find the clues and solve the mysteries. And its getting more and more convoluted and deadly. Can he resolve the case before more deaths and innocents are accused?

Kate Moss created a wonderful realistic character in Kestrel and her secondary characters, even if they are a bit stereotypical. The story is multilayered and interesting, the solution exciting. My only regret is that this book goes a little too long and the final twist is a little too pat. Never the less, a fun and enjoyable read.

Scott says

I wanted to like this book – a historical mystery set in Italy in the 1820's. The author died tragically from cancer at a very young age and the book is highly acclaimed, but it just did very little for me. The story concerns an Italian nobleman in the Lake Como region of Northern Italy who befriends an English singer and tries to promote his training and ultimate career in the opera. A murder occurs though, leaving one dead and the other disappeared. Enter Julian Kestrel, the noted English dandy and amateur sleuth to help solve the crime. Kestrel is joined by his entourage and a cast of high-brow suspects. I felt like nothing of any note took place for the first 300 pages or so and then over the last 150 things started happening but I found them unconvincing and not properly developed. I like surprises in my mysteries but I like to look back after the surprise happens and be able to say that I could see how the foundation was laid for it. Unfortunately that didn't seem to happen much in this book (at least that I picked up on) and I found the whole experience underwhelming.

Kathleen says

Really a slog to get through this book. It is a complex mystery with a huge cast of characters and a maze-like plot. The style is reminiscent of a nineteenth century novel like *The Moonstone*. For me, there were too many twists and turns, false confessions, red herrings and long speeches as characters attempted to explain themselves. I'm not sure I would have gotten through it if I hadn't been reading on long train and plane journeys.

Ruby Bibi says

Magnificent end to great series. Keeps you guessing throughout.

-It's sad that such a great series ends with this story, but this 4th book is the best yet. For the first 4 or 5 chapters the story is focused on a wealthy property owner in Italy, Marchese Lodovico. His servants are proud to be in his employ and his connections with government officials gives him and those in his household great immunity from the authorities.

-He had been married once, and has one son, but Lodovico's wife passed away. That son was a great disappointment because of his lack of ability, and even more so, because his son's wife left him for a castrato, which caused embarrassment to the family. The Marchese took as a second wife a widow who was much younger but she could not bear children.

-His great passion was music, especially if he heard a beautiful voice. He heard a young man singing outside his window, and it was such a bewitching sound, that he ran outside and approached the singer, and arranged for the youth to get singing lessons from a master. Lodovico wanted to keep the young man's identity a secret, as that would add to the mystique when the Marchese was ready to reveal him to the world, and so, Lodovico concealed his true name and gave him the name of Orfeo. Orfeo was forced to stay on the grounds of his benefactor's estate as the lessons continued, but irritation at being forced to stay hidden from the outside began to grow in the young man.

-One day, Lodovico received a package of a woman's long glove, with jewels embroidered in the fabric

along with a note that contained a threat to reveal a secret in Lodovico's past. Lodovico was to meet his blackmailer in the small closed building in the garden and went there at the appointed time. Later in the evening, the singing teacher, who was blind, was in the garden and was trying to find his way back to the main building, when he came upon the small building and when he entered, he tripped on what turned out to be the body of the Marchese. The Marchese was dead by a bullet to his chest.

-The neighbor was sent for, and because of the political situation in Italy at the time, the neighbor thought to keep the murder a secret and gave a story that the Marchese had a heart attack, to give them time to capture the killer. Orfeo, also, had disappeared. And so, he was the prime suspect and, despite all of the efforts of the authorities to locate him, he seemed to have vanished. It was not until 4 1/2 years later, during which time the murderer was still not found, that it came out that the Marchese was murdered. This became the talk of all of the social circles in several countries.

-It is into this situation that Julian Kestrel has thrust himself with a desire to plunge once more into solving what was considered unsolvable - and put it on himself to discover who killed the Marchese and why. He travels to Italy with Dr. MacGregor, with whom he had gotten very close and gets himself introduced to the young widow of the murdered Marchese and convinces her to allow him to locate the murderer of her husband.

-The Commissar of the area who is responsible for the investigation, is insulted by an outsider coming in to deal with this. To the Commissar, it's apparent that once he locates Orfeo, he'll have his killer. To Kestrel, it's not so obvious. By having us witness the opening scenes of the last days of Lodovico, the author makes us feel how daunting the task is, which has now been undertaken by Kestrel. Details of the family have to be probed and all the players, including the beautiful young widow who has asked him to be involved in the investigation, must be a suspect until they can be eliminated.

-It's a constant back and forth, as small irregularities pointed out by Kestrel keep bringing out different possibilities. Other characters come into the scene, and events cause them to be suspect as well. It's an amazingly well done investigative adventure for the reader, as small clues and observations by Kestrel are pointed out. To complicate things, Kestrel is greatly attracted to the young widow, who is exceedingly beautiful and refined and he becomes jealous of another suspect, who he feels is also vying for the woman's attention.

-This is a deeply absorbing story with a well developed array of characters and with surprise heaped on surprise towards the end as new revelations keep causing the story of what happened, to be in constant flux. It's only as you complete the last page that you finally understand the true course of events that occurred 5 years before and become a witness to the inner turmoil that drives Kestrel. This the last but the finest episode that we are privileged to read with this series but it has ended on an extremely high note.

Jeanette says

The best of Kate Ross who never wrote a bad book. What a tragedy that she died so young. What can I say about this 4th and last novel of a superlative series that gives it its full due. Mystery genre in cultural depth! I can only think of a handful of moderns that pull that off. Bel Canto comes to mind. Or some of Louise Penny. But this is 1825 and we are in Northern Italy for the entire on top of it. City-state intrigue, classic manners of three cultures, immense class differences in characterizations. And that is just the face of the story. Dipper's London street idioms and coded trash talk are priceless alone.

But Julian! Oh, Kate- I wish you were still around to make this dandy come of full age and to give him his most eloquent and passionate reveal.

These 4 Julian Kestrel books do not have to be read in order but if you can, do that. And this last one is a

more difficult read, IMHO. It was for me. In length (close to 500 pages) and absolutely in its depth. And to be savored, as well. Classical music, opera, voices of varying temperaments, associations for celeb and nobility nuance, passions of infidelity, grotesque marriage relationship, conflicting national loyalties, and Lake Como/ Piedmont/ Milan/ Lombardy alive as much as the characters are alive.

Julian and Dr. MacGregor are tested to their limits. Excellent plot- really two murders, not one, more than 4.5 years apart in time.

This writer had a gift. Exactly the same as Agatha Christie had in her best ones. Revealing to the reader and the investigator by the supposedly insignificant glance or a silly omission or the gap of silence when there should have been clunks. And the clever, clever people!

Leah Alvord says

I think my boyfriend is a little tired of the phrase 'this book just got good' due to how often I interrupted Final Fantasy XII with it. Yes, it was worth every raised eyebrow and shake of the head.

Summary:

In Austrian-Italy of 1821, a notable--and formidable--Italian nobleman, Marchese Lodovico, is found murdered at his villa on the Lake of Como. It is a crime that was to be covered up for four and a half years. Leaving the only suspect, a young English Tenor known only as Orfeo, to disappear into the mists that haunt that particular lake.

When the death of Marchese Lodovico is at last revealed to be foul play, an uproar shakes up all of Italy. And even reaches the ears of the English dandy, Julian Kestrel. Being an amateur sleuth in his own right--and willing to ask even the most important people the truly delicate questions--he sets off to offer his services to the late Marchese's family. With his ex-pickpocket servant, Dipper, dragging his heals to go along and a doctor friend in desperate need of a vacation, Julian proceeds headfirst to make friends and enemies of every being he comes into contact with in Italy. And it's a daring and twisted adventure to learn all the secrets to be found at the Lake Como villa.

Initial Thoughts:

At first, this book dragged for me. Typically, I don't read much historical fiction, anyway, so I started with trepidation. Which could have resulted in feeding my expectations of what happened early on: I felt like it took too long to get into the meat of the story. There was so much set-up of the society and characters--and oh the music!--to be met with in this little drama. Yet, that is precisely why the story played out as well as it did: without all the little details, you would feel utterly blindsided by the large ones. So, though my initial process was to drag my feet, it took a lot to separate me from this book once I really got into it.

Characters:

Who do I start with? Julian Kestrel, the literary man whom I would have no compunction dropping panties for? (That was a joke. Mostly.) Dipper, who though not often seen, plays such a critical role that you kind of

always want a best friend just like him? How about Marchesa Beatrice (Bay-TREE-chay), who is single-handedly the most passionately cold Italian throughout the entire book? You know what, LET'S start with her!

This woman. Oh this woman! If I had even the slightest of bisexual/lesbian tendencies, even I would have chased after this woman as Julian and de la Marque have. (We'll get to the Frenchman in a minute, the Marchesa has the stage.) Not only is she a ravishing beauty, but the charm and intelligence she exudes are no small devices. This woman embodies everything one cannot but admire in a woman. Disarming charm, sharp ingenuity, a cold splash of realism, heavily concealed passions, moments of delicious *lack* in self-control, and an overall sense of purpose. She is portrayed in such an artful, realistic, mesmerizing way as to leave you absolutely on your toes. Is she a suspect who killed her older husband for her independence? Or a lonely widow eager to see Orfeo brought to justice by whatever means necessary?

Okay, now we can move onto Julian. An English dandy who solves murders in his own country, and just seems like he's about to muck everything up in the beginning of the story. (Having read no others of Ross's works, I'm not familiar with Julian as a character, so I can't have known exactly what I was getting into with him.) Yet, he proved to be a shrewd judge of character, a determined investigator, and a challenge to figure out himself. Julian is far more clever than most people, tends to watch for reactions more than he actually induces them, and observes everything about him in a way that disconcerts almost every other character in the book. I adored him. His 'English chivalry' that the Italians constantly tease him of is endearing and instantly lays a foundation for his gentlemanly roots. Julian is a man of integrity and has a very broad and open mind. Nothing more can be asked in a man investigating the most dramatic murder the Lake Como has ever seen.

Which leads us to super-sleuth ladies-man, Dipper. No man could be more loyal or daring as Dipper. He knows what he's about and he takes all the necessary risks--without being a complete blockhead. He's not a man who does as he's told just because he's told to do it. Though his faith in Julian puts him in some scrapes, it's obvious that there's a bond between them that one knows means that they are in this ordeal together. They're more than man and servant. They're partners. And Dipper takes that role far more seriously than anyone else would expect. Bless him for that!

Shall I now move onto the rest of the cast? (In a very short spurt because I don't want to run out of room.) Conte Carlo is Lodovico's indebted and politically ill-inclined brother who has more than his fair share of vices and virtues. Gaston de la Marque is the flirtatious Frenchman who confounds everyone, and appears to have more than one ear to the ground when it comes to Orfeo. But as he seems involved with this more for his own entertainment than to actually provide assistance, he's hard not to love. I can see why he's Julian's rival for the Marchesa's affections. Then there is the absentee Marchese Rinaldo--Lodovico's cowardly, cruel, useless son--his estranged wife, Francesca--who chose the shame of leaving him for her *castrato* lover, Valeriano. Commissario Grimani, the Milanese official investigating the murder who is--blessedly!--as smart as he is portrayed to be. He is, however, far too ambitious to take the time and discover every angle to an investigation before jumping to conclusions.

Okay, I'm done with the list. There're way too many people in this book. Except ... there's not. There is a huge cast and could have been nearly impossibly to keep track of it, except that they were all so wonderfully and fully fleshed out that you never had to go back and say, "who was that again?" (Even though the book has a very cool cast-list at the front.) This is because Ross has portrayed these characters so beautifully--each in their own element--that you come to know them as people. Whether as chivalrous or savage, cold or flirtatious, frisky or demure, you are privy to all. And it is an enchanting formation to watch. To many authors, a cast list this large would severely hinder their plot. Kate Ross didn't even know how that could be

possible.

Plot:

Okay, I am always vague on this point because I HATE giving away spoilers. Suffice it to say: there is a number of real mysteries here. Because nothing is what it appears to be from the onset. Which weaves into one incredibly fantastic story. This plot is real. It is tangent and succulent and I encourage everyone to sink their teeth into this delicious mystery.

Writing Style:

Kate Ross wrote in the third person omniscient, which in some cases have been good to me, but in others have left me with a serious under-appreciation for the style. Ross has restored this narrative into a place of good lighting. It was done artfully with just the right subtle shifts so that the reader isn't jarred into another place/time than they were currently at. (Yes, this has happened before. No, it was not funny.) The switch from one character's mindset was artfully done and I found a lot of pleasure in it.

And as the reviews all state: she knows her period. Having been evasive as far as Historical Fictions go, I was toeing the line with a novel so deeply immersed in a world of such chaos. Well, Ross proved that that chaos is where she thrived. She knew as much as any person today could know of Italy during those moments in time. And she utilized them well and truly to weave such an intricate web of suspicion, lies, deceit, coquetry, and substance as to maintain all of the enchantment of the time period. Where liberty was pitched violently against loyalty and political assassinations were all too real a fear. This woman knew exactly what she was doing with this book, and it shows in the care and the subtle manipulation of each plot point and character realization.

Overall Opinion:

Really. Have you not read this review? (Okay, maybe you didn't because it was pretty long.) I LOVED IT.

Pet-Peeves (AKA SPOILERS!):

Okay, the slow beginning bothered me a bit. But nothing bothered me as much as Julian falling oh so deeply in love with Marchesa Beatrice. I mean, I came to admire the woman myself. Yet, for Julian to have known her for only a short time and be so damnably in love with her... It felt a little too false to me. I mean, attraction would be nothing more than understandable. Even moderate jealousy would have been acceptable. The way he felt about her though... It was as if Ross had him say it louder and more frequently just because she knew it wasn't as believable as it should have been. And that, unfortunately, is why this review lost that one single star. *sigh*.

Who I would recommend this to:

Anyone who enjoys historical fiction and/or mystery. Both are truly indulgent of the senses here, people.

I will definitely be looking for the other three Julian Kestrel books (all predecessors to this beauty) after being immersed in this world. I encourage everyone else to do the same.

Well, I think it's high time I leave off, since I've written another novel here. I think the rest of the review explains my opinion very sufficiently and so I digress. Thank you Kate Ross for a most stimulating read!

Carolyn says

The last book in Kate Ross' series on Julian Kestrel as a detective in the early 1800's. Read the others first. Julian becomes involved in a murder that had been hidden for 4 1/2 years. With his valet Dipper, a reformed pickpocket, he resolves a mystery with its beginnings many years before.

As a mysterious English dandy and man on the town, he has little credibility with the Italian police other than his renown solving four previous intricate murders in England. Under threat of being a suspect himself, he peels away layer after layer of lies and deceit to finally catch the bad guys.

Kate Ross has become another of my favorite authors. I'm so sorry she died after this book was written.

Blair McDowell says

The Devil in Music is number four in a series by Kate Ross featuring dandy, musician and amateur detective Julian Kestrel and his side kick, former pickpocket turned valet, Dipper. We find the pair in Italy on Lake Como in the political turmoil that followed the Napoleonic wars, trying to solve a murder of a nobleman who loved opera and doted on spectacular voices. Is his death related to his most recently discovered singer "Orfeo" who mysteriously disappeared the night of the murder, or could the murder have been politically motivated? Among the principal suspects, we have the count's daughter-in-law, who has deserted her husband for the love of a castrato.

The story is intricate and rich in texture. The author clearly knows and loves music since it forms a major part of the tapestry of this intricate and involved plot with its surprising conclusion. I found every moment of this novel of intrigue enjoyable. I recommend it to all lovers of period detective fiction, and particularly to music lovers.

Jamie Collins says

Julian Kestrel in Italy. He teams up again with the curmudgeonly Dr. MacGregor and Dipper, that lothario of valets, to solve the murder of an Italian marquis. It's a good read, and there's some nice material here for opera fans - one of the suspects is a castrato, living in the age when the popularity of those extraordinary performers is in decline.

I think some fans of this series will be enchanted with the ending, but I'm not sure I liked it. It transformed Kestrel's character, revealing too much, too quickly. But then, possibly the author knew this would be her last book (she died not long after publication) and wanted a spectacular finale for him.

Elizabeth says

Murder mysteries are not usually my thing, but I could not put this book down. Set in nineteenth-century Milan, the plot and characters center around the cultural and political antics of the time - namely, the operatic

tradition. As I had a somewhat insatiable interest in classical music and opera this year, I found myself delighted to recognize terms and traditions I read throughout the novel. I enjoyed having an historical and cultural context in which to place the characters as well. While I was already familiar with certain elements, I was pleased to learn about the politics of Italy during and after the Napoleonic era. Suspicions of secret societies and traitorship add another level of complication to the mystery.

A complex, gripping plot and thoughtful prose keeps this novel speeding along like an unmarked carriage containing a certain missing marchesa.

Spiderorchid says

Loved it.

As sad as it is that Kate Ross wasn't meant to live longer and continue writing, "The Devil in Music", the fourth and last Julian Kestrel book is a fitting conclusion for the series. In addition to a wonderfully detailed, atmospheric and elaborate mystery full of red herrings, interesting characters and Italian culture of the time, we get some answers about Julian's past and the events that made him who he is. It would have been fun to see what he'd done next and if he ever settled down, but nevertheless this novel leaves the reader content and the series doesn't have that feeling of being unfinished that many other works have when the author could no longer go on.

The Julian Kestrel mysteries are easily some of the best historical mysteries out there and "The Devil in Music" is a worthy and satisfying last instalment. Highly recommended.

Idril Celebrialndal says

me: um the book i was complaining about

i finished it on friday, and it was basically a total mess right to the end

bro: ah

me: i bought the 3rd one with misgiving, and it was back to the way the first one was!

i feel like the second was ghostwritten or something

it was so strange

bro: very interesting

me: but now i have finished the 3rd and bought the 4th (and last), and i am filled with misgiving again
becuase i am afraid she is going to claim he's a *professionally trained opera singer*

it's too stupid to handel

GEDDIT

Kim says

A really great novel as well as a good mystery. It's unfortunate that this was the author's last book, because it shows how skilled she was at creating an atmosphere and a large cast of believable characters. All the characters felt like real people with their own motivations and secrets. Of the many secrets in the book, some

were truly surprising and others were not. That's my only quibble with the book, that I wish I had been more surprised by some things. But I didn't guess Whodunit, so that's something. This book thankfully exposes some of the protagonist, Julian Kestrel's, inner self and past, which is something the reader has been wondering about in all the previous books. I wish the series had been continued, but this is at least a satisfying final chapter.

Amy says

I almost abandoned this book a number of times and the only reason I didn't is because I had loved her other three books so much. I've decided to make a checklist of all the literary things I hate that this book included.
Warning I am going to post some very mild spoilers.

Five things Amy hated in this book:

5. Surprise twists at the end when no clues had been developed earlier in the book
4. Love at first sight between main characters when you are never given any reason to believe that there is any "chemistry"

Example I just made up to illustrate this point:

"Oh I just love Lydia. She is so beautiful and personality-less. And beautiful. And has nice manners. Those two times where we've made boring small talk were the best moments of my life," thinks John.

Lydia give John a coy smile and then flirts with someone else. "John is so handsome. I'm in love with him. I'm so glad I met him three days ago," Lydia thinks. "I'm going to play hard to get for the next three hundred pages and flirt with other men right in front of him. The few times we do talk I will make sure it's about nothing important or interesting." She smiles coyly again.

"Sigh. Lydia has the most amazing ironic coy smile. I wonder if she loves me as much as I love her. And she's beautiful. And mysterious." Thinks John as he fixes his cravat.

Gag.

3. Surprising background added at the last minute to a well developed character
2. 350 pages of dialog between boring, flat characters who should be off solving a murder
1. Unreliable narrator. This was a pretty mild case of it but still made me angry when I figured it out.

Summary – Read her other three books but skip this one.

Joanne Lessner says

Finishing this book was bittersweet. Knowing that it was the last that Ross wrote before she died, I kept it on the shelf for awhile, and then savored it over two weeks. It was a beautifully written, labyrinthinely plotted, and atmospherically evocative novel. There were so many intertwining strands that she won the game by allowing the reader to figure out some, but not all, of the nested mysteries. As a reader, I want to think I'm

smart enough to see through the traps, but if I figure out everything, I lose just a little respect for the author. I have nothing but the utmost respect for Ross's mysteries and, like many of her fans, lament that there were only four.
