



Desolation Row

Kay Kendall

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A bride from Texas uses her CIA-honed skills to catch the real killer when her husband lands in a Canadian jail.

Amazon: "Remarkable dialog & subplots result in a wholly satisfying read. Packs a considerable punch. Readers will look forward to more of Kendall, with her formidable intellect, tart sense of humor, & resolute sense of justice. Unexpectedly magnificent."

Award winning author Hank Phillippi Ryan: "Deception, intrigue and authentic sixties nostalgia. The passionately anti-war generation hoped to give peace a chance, but in this entertaining mystery would up with murder instead."

" A great heroine, authentic period details, and a satisfying conclusion!" says author James Ziskin

Best-selling thriller writer Norb Vonnegut: "A brutal murder, a woman fighting to prove her husband's innocence--DESOLATION ROW hooked me on page one. Author Kay Kendall knows how to burrow into your heart."

Desolation Row Details

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Author : Kay Kendall

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From Reader Review Desolation Row for online ebook

Lynne Raimondo says

I really liked this book and was sorry to finish it. Kendall does a brilliant job of evoking the atmosphere of the Vietnam War era and the dislocation her young heroine feels after moving to Canada with her husband, a conscientious objector. Canada is our friendly North American neighbor, but it's easy to forget that it's still a foreign country, with an English-speaking culture that is sometimes very different from our own. Its justice system may treat defendants less harshly than ours, but that's of little comfort to protagonist Austin Starr when her husband is jailed for murder and all the evidence seemed stacked against him. Austin is an very appealing character, young and occasionally naive, but also spirited, stubborn and smart. The writing in this debut novel is top-notch and the story moves along quickly to a surprising and satisfying conclusion. I'm very much looking forward to the next Austin Starr novel.

Sandra says

The story flows easily and the characters are distinct in this throwback to the 60s. The female protagonist, Austin, is gutsy and likeable. I enjoy a mystery where loose ends are tied up neatly and this was one of them.

Richard says

This fast-paced mystery recalls a chaotic and tragic time in American history, when too many young men faced the choice of fighting a war they didn't believe in, or leaving their homeland to avoid it. I love the way this author uses her own wit, skill and personal experience to flesh out her characters. This is an exceptional debut mystery.

Debbie says

I was attracted to this book by the cover. It appeared to be a girl resembling Janis Joplin. While Janis was not in the book, it was written in her era. The days of a war no one wanted and no one wanted to serve. The story highlights the resistance of men and their families and their fleeing to Canada. A network is made with others who have done the same. The arguments of what their renounced country is and is not doing evolves into a deadly one. Austin Starr's (the wife of one such draft dodger who is accused of such murder) finds herself alone and not convinced her new found home is doing everything they can to prove her husband's innocence.

Against everyone's protests she sets out to absolve her husband and prove his innocence. The story takes on a fearful plot when Austin starts to receive anonymous threatening letters. I can honestly say that I did not see the ending of this book as I silently accused several people throughout the story.

This book was very well written with likeable characters and a fast paced plot. It really gave off the air of living in those times when America was at war with itself.

I highly recommend this book and look forward to reading more from this author!!

Darla says

First of all I want to thank Goodreads and Kay Kendall for choosing me for this book in the contest I am very thankful for being able to read stories from different authors. At first it was hard to read this story as it wasn't making much sense to me even though I knew what the story was about however by chapter 5 the story started taking off and then it was a very good story. I have mixed feelings what the story is actually about as to whether or not a person should avoid the draft, however from what happened back in the 60's and 70's that the Vietnam war I understand why lots of people went to Canada. War is not a good thing even though it happens every so many years. My father was in time of the Korean war and I know it was hard for him and my son also was in the military during the Iraq war so that is why I had so many mixed feelings about the story. Overall it was a good story to hear the other side as this book does not glorify war yet it also gives thanks to the people whose life was severely affected by war. I was glad that the writer wrote about both sides that made the story more important. I am anxious to see what the next book will be about

Warren Hutch says

This gripping mystery took me back to a really tense time when I witnessed so many Americans flooding up to Canada. Many of us in Canadian universities were riled up over the war—and sex, drugs and rock and roll—even in usually sedate Manitoba. Desolation Row shows you what it was all like if you weren't alive back then as I was...kind of like my reading a WWII book to see what it was like for my parents. Highly recommended.

Suzanne Leopold says

We are introduced to graduate student Austin Starr. It is 1968, during the Vietnam War era. She has moved to Toronto with her draft dodging husband David. Their friends consist of transplants from the United States who also oppose the war.

One evening, Austin stumbles across a dead body. The victim is her husband's frenemy and incriminating information lands her husband in jail for the murder. With little or no help from the police for a thorough investigation, she must take matters in her own hands to clear her husband's name.

This mystery is fast paced and has a good flow to it. While reading this period in time, I am reminded how difficult life was without cell phones, computers, or google.

The book is in Austin's voice, so we really do not get her husband perspective on the murder. Other characters are introduced into the story, and their relationships with Austin are well executed. I can best describe Austin Starr as Nancy Drew for adults.

Kay Kendall is also the author of Rainy Day Women which includes the protagonist, Austin Starr. I look forward to reading her next adventure!

Tammy Hastings says

I received this from First Reads Giveaways.

Wow. Just wow. I loved this book. It was simply amazing from beginning to end. I have not ONE. SINGLE. complaint about it. It was just... Wow. It is one of those books that I can't really write a review about because once I started talking about it, I wouldn't be able to stop. It's just... I'm sorry to say it again, but Wow.

Richard Sharp says

Kay Kendall's *Desolation Row* is a fast-paced murder mystery that engages the reader. While filled with popular culture references and solidly grounded in the late Sixties, it is accessible to readers of all ages. Those more familiar with the period may find an extra smile or two, but setting will not be an obstacle to the reader's enjoyment.

I very much enjoyed that the Kendall based her plot and solution to the murder on the lead protagonist's persistence rather than a brilliant Sherlock Holmes observation of a tiny detail that others overlooked. Investigators rarely solve real crimes through such arcane clues. Similarly, many mysteries have the astute sleuth able to sum up everything about a suspect based on an initial meeting. Uh-uh. Austin Starr, the protagonist, is a young wife who has set aside a possible CIA career for marriage and is thrown into the mystery when her husband is accused of the crime. She is not the hyper-talented, long-time pro able to leap to astounding solutions at a single bound (even if such persons actually exist). In keeping with her youth and experience, she allows herself to follow up first impressions with an open mind. Austin's persistence and avoidance of snap judgments is thus much more authentic than most plots. The setting of the murder among a small community of Vietnam War draft resisters having fled to Canada might have tempted the author toward a politically motivated revenge scenario – over-used and not very authentic. Without revealing any spoilers, she does not succumb to such a formula plot but develops a realistic chain of events keyed to the personalities of the victim and perpetrator.

I give *Desolation Row* four stars, noting that this is a debut novel intended to be the first in a series developed around the Austin Starr character. Kendall is writing in America's most popular fiction genre with a constellation of established best-selling mystery writers turning out dozens and dozens of mysteries a year, many with protagonists refined through several tales. A mystery novel will be judged among that competition, not just first-time Indie mystery authors. In that light, four stars for a debut novel in a continuing series is a high complement. Kendall has created a character with the depth to take her series and Austin in many different directions. I'll look forward Austin's evolution in the next installment.

Susy Gage says

This book spoke to me on many levels. I love the parts about the freezing Southerner in Canada ("banana belt" lol), and about the homesickness of being an American in Canada. The whole era was captured in a way that reminded me of my parents' stories, bringing the sixties to life. "Three mile rule," love it. Really enjoyed the political intrigue and interplay. The only criticism I have is that I was surprised by the villain's identity, and would have liked to know more about what sparked the crime. The identity of the killer seemed to come sort of out of the blue. This is a minor criticism, only applicable to the end of a book... and it's really

hard to end a mystery. Definitely a must-read for Americans in Canada or anyone looking for a peek into the Vietnam War era.

Christel says

I was in high school at the time of this book. The author nailed her characters in terms of how they act, talk, dress and what their concerns are in terms of politics with protests and avoiding drafts by going to Canada as well as the music of the time. It was like a time capsule. That's tough to do looking back. So many period pieces are infused with too much modern sensibilities. In this setting, Kay crafted a richly thought out and intelligent mystery. I look forward to the second book in the series.

Colby Marshall says

When Austin Starr's husband is accused of murder, the young sleuth sets out to find the killer herself. Fast-paced, smart-plotting, and a rich, historical setting during the Vietnam War, if you enjoy mysteries, you're bound to love Austin Starr.

Viviane Crystal says

Austin Starr's husband David is a "draft dodger" (term used for those without refused to fight in the Vietnam War) and has taken her to live in Canada where they are both pursuing academic careers. Austin isn't completely happy there, is rather homesick and finds the culture in Canada very different from America. Things are about to get even more difficult for her and her husband. Even though they're living outside America, they are still part of the protest movement which is actually picking up steam in both countries. Murder suddenly alters their world!

One of the protest leaders, Reginald Simpson, the son of an American Senator, has been great for the movement but has earned a few enemies as well. When Austin one night stumbles over his dead body, she is totally traumatized but quickly has to recover when David is accused of the murder. Having spent some brief time being trained to work for the CIA, albeit never pursuing that career, she knows with every fiber of her being that David is innocent and sets her course to find the killer. This drive doesn't exactly endear her to the Canadian Mounties, who don't know about her background and see her as meddlesome. However, she does make a somewhat strange semi-friendship with one of the officers and manages to share her findings with him.

At the same time she comes under the protection of her university mentor, a Professor of Russian history, and his daughter. They help her examine her questions: Who hated Reg so much to kill him? Why was Reg so out of sync with his father and why is there something shady about Reg's father? What's the difference between hating the system that turns to war in times of conflict and just not wanting to fight in a war? Other questions appear on so many pages but the most important is who is now threatening Austin?

The ending will be quite a surprise and another point of view that really most will realize we don't think of too often. Desolation Row is a good read, an engaging mystery, and a satire of the anti-war movement in some ways. Interesting read!

Kathy Harris says

I received an advance copy of this book, and finished it in two days. I loved the characters, the plot, the setting. Vivid. Realistic. Gripping. I'm not a huge mystery reader, but I think I get it now after reading Desolation Row. Can't wait for more from this author! --Kathy Lynn Harris, bestselling author of Blue Straggler and A Good Kind of Knowing

Ken Pelham says

Author Kay Kendall pulls us back into a time of polarization and change--the 1960s--and spins a captivating mystery novel out of it. Transplanted student Austin Starr follows her husband to the draft-resister community in Toronto, and becomes embroiled in a murder mystery.

My estimation is that fans of Nevada Barr's heroine, Anna Pigeon, will find Austin Starr much to their liking.
