

## **Q & A with Pamela Burford: The Jane Delaney humorous mystery series**

**Your amateur sleuth, Jane Delaney, is called the “Death Diva.” She does freelance jobs relating to death and dead folks. How did you come up with such a strange occupation?**

The inspiration for this series came from a news story. Several years ago *The New York Times* ran an article about a woman who’s paid to place flowers on graves and scatter ashes. I took the idea a step—well, quite a few steps—further and am having Jane take on all kinds of interesting assignments, the better to get cozy up to murder in all its various forms. For example, in the beginning of Book 1, *Undertaking Irene*, Jane attempts to swipe a brooch from a corpse during the wake. In fairness to Jane, she thought she was snatching it for the rightful owner.

**Jane’s sidekick is a toy poodle named Sexy Beast. How did he come to be?**

Sexy Beast was inspired by my very own poodle, named Murray, who shares many of his fictional counterpart’s traits. Murray shrieks in alarm at the sight of shampoo or clippers. He’s a high-maintenance though devoted and adorable member of the family. And yes, he possesses a buck-fang, just like Sexy Beast. By the way, Sexy Beast was named for the movie of the same name. His original owner in *Undertaking Irene* was a big cinema fan. Her previous dogs were named Dr. Strangelove, Annie Hall, and Jaws.

**The books in this series are hilarious. Is it hard to write funny?**

My writing has always incorporated a quirky brand of humor. It comes to me naturally. I grew up in a funny household (wait, that didn’t come out right). My husband has an exceptional sense of humor, and our kids continue the tradition. One of them is even a standup comic!

**The second book in the series, *Uprooting Ernie*, begins with the toppling of a tree after a storm, causing Jane to make an interesting discovery. How did you come up with that idea?**

It was another news story! I live on Long Island. During Superstorm Sandy, my husband and I—and Murray, of course—had to evacuate our home and move in temporarily with our son in his tiny apartment in Astoria, Queens. I spent a lot of time there watching the storm news, which included a segment about a tree that had been upended, revealing a skeleton underneath. It was later determined that the bones belonged to an eighteenth-century soldier who’d died of yellow fever, but the idea had been planted. I had my initial premise for *Uprooting Ernie*.

**Is Crystal Harbor, where your stories take place, a real town?**

Nope, I made it up. The affluent, suburban town of Crystal Harbor is based on several actual towns on the North Shore of Long Island. Crystal Harbor is about thirty miles from New York

City, but it still has a homey, small-town atmosphere and everyone knows everyone else's business.

**Jane has two potential love interests in this series, men who are very different from each other in looks and temperament. Tell us a little something about Dom and Martin.**

Jane and nice guy Dom have long been divorced, but they've remained good friends and she's never gotten over him. Enter bad boy Martin, he of the mysterious and possibly felonious past, and you have yourselves a fun love triangle. Jane's relationship with both men has its ups and downs. There's no hanky panky going on (yet), but the sexual tension and emotional complications get pretty intense at times.

**Will Jane ever settle down with either of these sexy guys?**

If I knew, I still wouldn't tell!

**How many Jane Delaney mysteries do you plan to write?**

I'm having so much fun writing this series, I don't think I'll ever stop! I can't get enough of Jane, Sexy Beast, Dom, Martin, and the fun, eccentric, and sometimes murderous denizens of Crystal Harbor.