



The Hidden Cottage

Erica James

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Mia Channing appears to have an enviable life: a beautiful home, a happy marriage, a job she enjoys and three grown-up children to whom she's devoted. But appearances can be deceptive...

When the family gathers for her son's 30th birthday, he brings with him his latest girlfriend who, to their surprise, has a nine-year-old daughter. Then, before the birthday cake has even been cut, Mia's youngest daughter Daisy has seized the opportunity to drop a bombshell. It's an evening that marks a turning point in all their lives, when old resentments and regrets surface and the carefully ordered world Mia has created begins to unravel.

The Hidden Cottage Details

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Author : Erica James

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From Reader Review The Hidden Cottage for online ebook

Sue says

A village saga, starring middle-aged Mia, who has three likeable adult children and a somewhat obnoxious husband, Jeff. The wealthy Owen arrives in the village, drawn by memories of his childhood when he escaped from an abusive father to learn music from two sweet old ladies.

It's character-based, with a fairly light plot, at least for the first half of the book. I found it a bit slow-moving, and some of the people caricatured, but it was pleasant enough and made good bedtime reading. I had no problem remembering the fairly large cast: well-chosen names and characteristics helped me distinguish and remember them from day to day. I very much liked Owen, and also nine-year-old Madison. The viewpoint changes rather too often for my tastes, but it's handled well, on the whole, although I felt that some editing would have helped: there's rather a lot of introspection, and some generalisations that don't add to the story.

Then drama and tragedy strike in a way that felt somewhat unnecessary, pitchforking the family into recriminations, anger, grief, and some difficult decisions. Perhaps there was no other way to move the story forward - and it certainly made the last part more of a page-turner, although I didn't find my emotions much moved. Overall, it wasn't one of Erica James' best. Perhaps three-and-a-half stars would be fairer, but I tend to expect more from this author, who has produced some excellent and moving novels.

Still, it would make good holiday reading. The language is mostly clean, and there's nothing explicit.

Dale Harcombe says

I enjoyed this novel. It was a welcome change from the book I read before which was edge of the seat stuff. This is more an enjoyable slice of life about a family. The family functions best when Jeff Channing, husband of Mia and father of Jensen, Eliza and, his blatant favourite, Daisy, is out of the way. Otherwise Jeff tends to overshadow everyone else and all their insecurities rise to the surface.

Everyone in this family has secrets. They are not the only ones. So does Owen Fletcher who returns Little Pelham and fulfils his dream to buy the hidden cottage, where he spent happy times as a child. As you might expect in a village Owen immediately draws attention as the newcomer. There is an instant attraction between Owen and Mia and you get a feeling you know where the story is heading. But there are more than a couple of surprises and shocks along the way.

I liked the English village setting and its community involvement, with its fetes and talent shows but also its penchant for gossip, personality clashes and thinly disguised interference in the lives of others. The characters were well drawn. While I may not personally agree with Mia's choices or the way she handled decisions and conflict, the author made her and her family believable if flawed characters. Maybe it's because they were flawed they were so believable? I've read a number of Erica James novels. This is a very enjoyable read.

Jenni says

Couldnt get into it, my friend liked it. I just dont like books that start off good with main characters and then jump entirely to somebody else, too confusing.

Sharon Chapter One, Page One.. says

I really enjoyed *The Hidden Cottage* and felt very happy as I finished it – I was pleased it ended the way it did as I wasn't sure until I'd finished just how it would end.

I found it to be a great tale of love, honesty and family life with worry, excitement & loss woven expertly in for our reading pleasure.

There are a lot of characters – past & present - to get to know but the way the author, Erica James, linked them all together made it very easy to keep up with them all. She connected the reader to the characters in such a way that I was easily caught up in their lives, connecting with them & feeling for them.

I loved how Owen's childhood history with *The Hidden Cottage* and the village was slowly told through the book, it enabled us to understand his passion for the cottage, and the desire to continue to live there – whatever might occur in his private life, and the subsequent village gossip!

So well was the beautiful, quaint village of Little Pelham described that I wanted to live there – even with all the nosy neighbours! I enjoyed them all, especially Muriel who initially appeared to be a horrid village gossip but by the end it was evident what a good friend she was to the central character in the book, Mia.

I enjoyed Putin, the resident village peacock making his appearances through the book; his was a pleasant addition and added to the wonderful, idyllic image of the village.

Mia's husband Jeff had an attitude that ruffled everyone's feathers, including mine! He was emotionally distant from all of his family, particularly his children, his word was law and he was never wrong - in his eyes. Such a difficult man (and father) to get along with, but I did enjoy the way Mia dealt with him, always calm, ever the lady.

The surprising twist in the middle of the book was unexpected and heart-wrenching... but that's all I'll say as I don't want to give anything away!

I found myself entwined with the family and their problems – I cared about what happened such was my feeling of a connection to them.

Overall, this was a thoroughly well written book that I really enjoyed and didn't want to put down.

Erica James writes in such a way that pulls the reader in very quickly, and leaves us wanting more by the end. Another book that I would not necessarily consider of the chick-lit genre – it is much deeper than that.

Linda says

Loved this book. I could so clearly imagine the cottage with its lake and island. Liked the characters too, especially Owen! Recommended read for any chick lit fan.

Libonsor says

A lovely story set in a beautiful village. Erica James has a wonderful talent when it comes to setting a scene and she doesn't disappoint with this novel. I found the characters well rounded and you find yourself easily caught up in their lives.

A very enjoyable read :)

Andrea says

Took awhile to get into but then I couldn't put it down!

Twists and turns and I won't spoil it by saying anymore. Just i didn't expect something that happened about mid way in the book.

Jennifer says

I always refer to Erica James as my "duvet" author, the one I go to when I am feeling tired, stressed or just generally rubbish. I also go to her when I have had a recent addiction to my fantasy adventures, just to return to the real world a little bit. The thing with Erica James is that she is safe, you know what you are going to get with her. Her books can be a little formulaic (there is the odd exception, 'Tell it to the Skies' still amazes me!) and that is certainly evident in the 'Hidden Cottage'.

Almost from the start you could predict what was going to happen and whilst her characters did invite you to keep turning the pages (I was always a bit reluctant to return to work after a lunch break spent reading), she did not seem to invest the time to really develop them. We saw them on the surface and we were hurried into knowing their deepest, darkest secrets and past apart from one, but that was more to create an impact on an event that takes place towards the end.

Whilst I certainly would happily read this book again, and probably will, I would say it is perhaps not one of James' best. I do, however, still look forward to her next novel.

Tanya says

I love the family dynamics of this book, no sugar coating, The grief over losing someone close and how your life can change in an instant. Brilliantly written.

Sharon Burgin says

A typical Erica James book. It makes for easy-reading and is ideal for a holiday or just wind-down / chilling time.

As usual there are a couple of twists that you don't see coming; a predictable outcome for the hero and heroine, although you are not quite sure what the journey will be; some tears, taking you by surprise when they happen; and some laughter brought about by situations and characters.

I enjoyed this book and in a World where there are troubles and strife aplenty it's nice to be transported into the English countryside and into the world of parish fêtes and village gossip. Knowing the area of Olney and Yardley Hastings brought vivid pictures to mind!

If you love Erica James and Maeve Binchy, then this is the book for you.

Danii Allen says

My first problem with this book is that it was way, way too long (and I do like long books, but this one coupled long with boring). Could have easily been half as long; and I would have enjoyed it much more.

I think there were far too many characters, and it took me a long time to even know each character's name, let alone their personalities.

Books telling stories from multiple perspectives don't bother me, but I think this book did it too frequently with not much indication of who it was each time, and considering I didn't even know who any of the characters were until about 100 pages in; that wasn't helpful.

The problem is, that had the book just been the second half, I would have given it three or four stars - it got much more interesting towards the end. But if I wasn't a person who persisted and kept reading when a book was boring me I wouldn't have even passed 100 pages. I'd like the story to be interesting like the end was without over 200 pages of waffling at the start. (It took 252 pages for the thing that was blatantly going to happen to happen.)

Also there were multiple points in the book where the wording of something was simply terrible, which bothered me a lot.

The book was okay in the end, but not something I'll be in a rush to read again.

Keriann Davey says

I have read some pretty bad chick lit lately and was a bit sceptical about reading this, it's been on my shelf a long time being over looked for other more interesting things. I decided to read it as part of the reading challenge I am doing (a book based entirely on its cover and lets face it it's a beautiful cover!) and I am glad I did.

The story is based in a little village where the lives of the people kind of intertwine, I liked all the characters and the struggled they went through, it's always refreshing to read about characters who have flaws and are not perfect which you tend to find in most chick lit. This book really has everything, I laughed, cried and felt suspense too at some points dying to know what happened next. I couldn't put this book down, not because it was a page turner but just because I had fallen in love with the story and the characters so much I just wanted to keep reading and reading.

Will definitely be reading more by this author.

Jennifer says

A comfortable and easy read based in a rural English village called Little Pelham. The main action revolves around Mia Channing, her husband Jeff (booo!) and her children Jensen, Eliza and Daisy. It's easy to get drawn into their lives and the cosy village set-up provides a cute background. It comes as a bit of surprise then when ugly emotions begin to rear their head. Broken hearts, betrayal, jealousy and tragedy makes for an enjoyable read.

Harriet says

This is the last Erica James book that I will read. The titles promise much - pure escapism for me at least but they inevitably leave me feeling disappointed and uneasy. This one was no exception. Something must be awry with the book if the reader not only feels sorry for the 'villain' - in this story Jeff - but also begins to dislike the supposed heroine - Mia. The book invites you to judge, it wants you to judge Jeff and find him wanting and indeed he is. However, this fact does not make me want to condone Mia's behaviour which I thought was morally pretty poor, at times sanctimonious and at others judgmental, deceitful and mean.

Lesley Book Lover says

A lovely read, about a family living in an English village, with sadness, secrets, and love.
