



Paradise House

Erica James

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Angel Sands is a traditional seaside resort of bed and breakfasts, cottages to let and teashops. And with the best views of the tiny beach and surrounding coastline is Paradise House, home to the Baxter girls - or the Sisters of Whimsy as they're known locally. With their mother taking time out to find herself, it's down to Genevieve to maintain the smooth running of the family-owned B&B. Not an easy task given that their father - now that his wife isn't around - has suddenly become a magnet for the opposite sex. And there's little help from her sisters: Nattie is too busy offending her long time admirer, and Polly spends most of her days with her head in the clouds or in a book. But when news spreads in the tightly knit community that a nearby dilapidated barn has been sold, Genevieve finds that a bittersweet trip down memory lane is unavoidable . . .

Paradise House Details

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Author : Erica James

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Dawn says

The cover and the title drew me to this book, both evoke images of relaxed, long, summer holidays spent with family near to the sea.

Paradise House is a seaside, B & B on the Pembrokeshire coast, it's here we meet three sisters - Genevieve, Nattie and Polly and a whole host of supporting characters from old friends, family, neighbours and even a couple of donkeys whose lives are interwoven with their own. Geneva is the constant in their lives, helping their father run the B & B whilst their mother 'finds' herself in New Zealand. A very hands on sister and aunt, never being able to say no she takes on the bulk of responsibility in all their lives - something she does willingly, it's much easier concentrating on other peoples lives than it is your own!

Erica James explores family and friendship dynamics as she slips between the present and the summers of their childhood - this really worked for me, her descriptive skills are just amazing I really felt like a fly on the wall, living in their lives with them. The insight into their childhood gives a clear understanding of the adults they had become. Erica has created characters that feel real, the three sisters are bound by blood but are each different, each has very different characteristics. One almost too thoughtful, putting everyone and everything before herself and her own life, another the complete opposite, living her life with little or no regard for anyone else and the third somewhere in-between.

A truly captivating story that compelled me to read at every opportunity. A story of family, friendship, love, trust and hope - a story that I found captivating. It was at times sad, at others uplifting - in case you hadn't guessed I loved it from the very first chapter. I cared what happened to each of the three girls and willed events on quietly from the sidelines. It's a book that made me think and if I take one thing from it, it's that anything is possible given a bit of courage and support of family and friends.

Sue says

It's an encouraging character-driven story featuring Genevieve Baxter. She's dyslexic, a recovered anorexic, and had her heart broken in her teens. She has two younger sisters who are also important in the plot. Genevieve runs Paradise House, her parents' hotel, after her mother took off to 'find herself' some months previously.

There's lots of potential here for a great novel, and I found the second half very well-written. Unfortunately the first part was too full of mini flashbacks and people 'telling not showing' what was going on. It could have benefitted from some editing, in my opinion!

Nevertheless, I became very involved with all the main characters by the time I was about half-way through, and found it extremely moving towards the end. I have a minor quibble that all the ends were a little too neatly tied up in the last chapters, but that's not a major problem. Overall a good book, though nothing like as special as the wonderful 'Precious Time'.

Janey says

I usually love Erica James but this, though it had many of the perfect ingredients, ambled along too slowly. I got annoyed at so many of the characters who, while never putting it into words (not emotionally articulate lot these!) took the view, "Never make a decision or take an action today if you can become a martyr by putting it off a few years."

I suppose real life can be like that - but it doesn't make for great reading!

Some of the characters need a good shake- the woman who goes to New Zealand and leaves her husband, three daughters, granddaughter and the bed and breakfast she and her husband were running without saying why, or how long she'd be gone, and even letting them think she had found another man, because she thought the romance had gone out of her marriage. To be clear, this is a husband who not long before gave up his beloved farm and his lifetime of farming to move to the B&B in Wales to make her happy. What a selfish woman - yet we are meant to like her I think. Sorry, no can do.

Positives? The setting is wonderful, and there is some sensitive treatment of eating disorders, deafness and single parenthood. There are some very likable characters and the overall story is good - would have been better if it had been shorter.

Mrs Vivien Frank says

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I did not enjoy this as much as other of her books as I felt it was somewhat predictable. I will continue to read this great author.

Judy Spare says

Too slow.

Amanda says

I've never been disappointed by an Erica James book. I enjoyed reading about Pembrokeshire and got caught up in the characters' personalities and lives. I found the book well written and would recommend to any Erica James fan.

Pauline says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Not my first Erica James novel, but a definite favourite.

Lady Drinkwell says

If I had seen some of the other covers I wouldn't have read this book. The cover on this edition makes it look a little bit more edgy and chick lit like, however this is basically a romantic novel with no real surprises in it. I thought I would enjoy it as I felt like reading a feel-good straightforward story and I did like the setting, having been to Pembrokeshire for my holidays, and the characters. However I quickly grew bored with it, it was quite nicely written but very plodding with a lot of unnecessary detail about food in particular. For me its two main faults were that it lacked humour and that the plot was extremely predictable. Although it was a pleasant book and I didn't give up on it I felt I wasted my time and am re-reading the Mill on the Floss and an antidote!

Maureen Vincent-Northam says

I wanted to award this one 3.5 stars but will come down on the side of generosity!

Paradise House is the name of a bed and breakfast place owned by the parents of Genevieve Baxter, the main protagonist. Gen's mother has swanned off to New Zealand, taking her mid-life crisis with her and her sisters and father are worse than useless at helping to run the business.

The beginning of the book concerns Gen's childhood and her love for a deaf boy, Christian, whom she meets when on holiday in a Welsh seaside resort (now the location of the B&B), her friendship with a rather controlling best friend and her slip into anorexia.

Almost two decades have passed when the family are coping with their individual problems and Christian re-enters her life. This is a pleasing story but I did feel at times that it was over-long. The ending, however, was very moving and tied up all the loose ends nicely.

Leanne Hunt says

Frankly, I wouldn't have finished this book except that I had a personal goal to reach in the form of my 2013 reading challenge. As it was, I ran overtime and had to finish it in 2014. I found the story very slow, especially in the first of the four parts, which basically just set the scene for the subsequent action.

Nevertheless, I did persist with the novel and found that it improved once the back story of Genevieve and Christian's relationship began to be filled in. The author has a talent for depicting character in action and this creates a warm sense of familiarity for the reader. One feels as if one is part of the family group, involved in the family dynamics and able to respond emotionally to the remarks and behaviour of the more off-beat and annoying people in the story.

There were parts of the book which really held my attention and kept me committed to finding out what eventually became of all the characters. In particular, I enjoyed reading about the near-drowning of little Lily Rose and the Angel Sands Talent Competition. To my mind, there could have been more of this kind of action, particularly in the start of the book, to keep up the pace. Erica James is a competent writer who writes good dialogue and creates a satisfying plot, but I do not think I will be rushing to read another of her books

in the near future, simply because the length of the book doesn't warrant the amount of attention it demanded.

Lauren Roberts says

I love the adage 'loose yourself in a good book' and this was one of those. The narrative flowed, characters easy to get to know and a lovely story with the right level of drama, love and sincerity.

It tells the story of the Baxter family and the many intriguing happenings that occur to the three Baxter girls in the village of Angel Sands where their parents own a b&b.

A lovely story that is easy to get lost in so the 400+ pages pass in a blur.

Elisabeth Bibbings says

Another heart-warming family story from Erica James, this one about families who relocate to a beautiful seaside location to set up businesses. Pembrokeshire is the location, where the Baxters run a guesthouse - except Dad is grieving because Mum has disappeared to New Zealand, Polly is dreaming and playing music, Nattie is upsetting everyone with a waspish tongue, and only Genevieve seems to be doing any work. Lots of weddings, romances, and only one funeral.

Elaine Harris says

Good holiday reading, loved the book the first time I read it, then I purchased the book again in a charity shop, not remembering I had read it, must have been another cover, I enjoyed it even more the second time around.

Julie says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. Likeable characters in the Baxter family, particularly Genevieve who, after several major events in her life, has returned to Angel Sands and is running Paradise House (the family home) as a bed & breakfast, with limited help from the rest of the family. Her mother left some months previously "to find herself" and is currently in New Zealand. Sisters Nattie and Polly - work-shy and musical genius respectively - aren't much help so the bulk of it falls to Genevieve. Adam Kellar is a wealthy entrepreneur who has a thing for Nattie which is not returned, but he is still a good friend to Genevieve. When a local barn is sold for redevelopment to a wealthy businessman, he brings his own architect.....who turns out to be Christian, Genevieve's teenage love. I could not put this down...

Lisa Jayne says

Second chance love, Erica James does it again. Dreamy and engaging a story that I will treasure in my heart.

These stories never fail to pick up my book heart and demand that I fall in love. If this is your type of reading genre, you can't go far wrong than to pick up an Erica James novel.

Family drama, true love and forever type endings. It's a solid read that shows what true romance is all about.
