



Kind of Cruel

Sophie Hannah

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Sophie Hannah's latest gripping Zailer/Waterhouse mystery debuts as a Penguin Hardcover

Amber Hewerdine suffers from chronic insomnia. As a last resort, she visits a hypnotherapist, doubtful that anything will really change. Under hypnosis, Amber hears herself saying, "Kind, cruel, kind of cruel." The words awaken a vague memory, but she dismisses the whole episode as nonsense. Two hours later, however, Amber is arrested for the brutal murder of a woman she's never heard of, and the only way she can clear her name is by remembering exactly where she's seen those words.

Kind of Cruel—the latest page-turner featuring Detectives Charlotte "Charlie" Zailer and Simon Waterhouse—will enthrall Hannah's ever-growing readership.

Kind of Cruel Details

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Author : Sophie Hannah

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From Reader Review Kind of Cruel for online ebook

Puni says

like many other books i read, i was intrigued by the title at first. and when i found out that it has a somewhat high rating, i decided to read it.

the overall story is okay, believable enough. seeing the references the author added at the end of the book made me appreciate the fact that she did a thorough research in order to present such a complex story.

but what bothered me (so much, that i had to take away 2 stars from 5) were the characters. the main character, Amber, irritated me so much that i could barely move on to the next page after the first 2 pages of her story. after a long while, i finally could get the hang of it and start to enjoy the story without a care to what Amber thought/said, but then i found other characters to be just as irritating, and some conversations were just too unbearable since everyone seemed to aim to be the #1 sarcastic/smart speaker. whenever 2 characters (or more) talked to each other, what started to be a point A to point B conversation turned to be A through C D E F G to B (or sometimes they didn't even get to point B after all), which really tired me and made me want to skip to the end of the book.

actually, even the end of the book was just the same. when it got to the part that the whole mystery was unveiled, i felt like i was again taken from point B to F and then back to E and back again to C and then forward to D... and, uh, what was the last point again?

it's probably just me, though. maybe if you're a smarter reader than me, who longs for smart & snappy & sarcastic conversations regardless of the topic, you'll enjoy this book more than i did. but since this is my review, i just have to say that i had too high of an expectation before reading this book, and was a bit disappointed with it. it's less entertaining and more annoying, that 'wanting to know who did it and why' was the only reason i kept reading on till the last page.

H.A. Leuschel says

Following the feedback that I received from a number of readers for my anthology 'Manipulated Lives', I am very pleased that I chose to write fictional stories, as I feel that this was very effective and helpful in relaying the very important message that I was trying to convey on a serious subject such as narcissistic abuse. I picked up Sophie Hannah's book 'Kind of cruel' as it looked like she chose a similar mix in her book between fiction and aspects that could pass as sound self-help advice.

The author did a fantastic job in conveying the devastating consequences of narcissistic abuse in her book here and the story was compelling, intelligently written and the characters intriguing and complex. Narcissism is on the rise and there is an urgent need not only to understand the importance of healthy parenting but also how to help people with narcissistic personality disorder recognize their own behaviour so that thousands of victims are not only damaged for life but don't have to go through years of therapy to help them regain their much needed self-confidence and self-worth!

I will certainly look out for other books written by the author now as she has a unique style and her work shows thorough research skills!

Denise says

3.0 out of 5 stars -- There's a huge difference between a memory and a story...

This was a very convoluted mystery that centered on solving two murder cases that had gone unsolved for years. This is part of a long series featuring Detectives Simon Waterhouse and Charlotte Zailer, and though it is probably good if you have read previous titles in order to know the history of these two characters, I had not and so was a bit confused by their relationship (they are married) and taken aback by their personalities. "Knowing" them better might have improved my reaction to the book.

Amber Hewerdine visits a hypnotherapist as a last resort because she can't sleep ever since her best friend Sharon died in an arson house fire and Amber and her husband Luke took in Sharon's two daughters. The police have never found the killer and Amber has not gotten over her death. During her visit to Ginny's therapy office, Amber meets Charlotte before she goes in to her session and during the hypnosis is told that she has said the words, Kind, Cruel, Kind of Cruel but has no idea where they come from. Amber feels that she has seen those words somewhere before but can't bring the memory to mind. Later that day, Amber is arrested for the murder of Kat Allen, a schoolteacher she has never met. All of this creates confusion and consternation as Amber tries to recall her past accurately and somehow she becomes involved in the investigation which is apparently tied to Sharon's murder as well.

The narrative shifts back and forth between Ginny's therapist notes and Amber's first person point of view. In addition, there is another line of storytelling that focuses on Charlie and Simon and the other detectives on the case so the reader is getting many different perspectives on the investigation and various relationships the characters have with each other. Frankly, I didn't like ANY of them. Amber was, to me, unlikeable and very annoying. Simon seems like a cold odd duck, and I found it hard to believe Charlie was so in love with him.

With all the shifts in point of view, and the SLOW SLOW SLOW revelations that brought the case to a close, I found the novel to be less than engrossing and quite confusing at times. The mysteries, and there are several going on at once, aren't that compelling and there was no suspense or thrill involved in the resolutions.

So, this was an OK read. Probably I would have enjoyed it more had I read previous books with the two main characters, but I don't feel strongly enough to go back and catch up. If you're a Sophie Hannah fan, and like the series, I have no doubt you will want to read this if only to hear Simon's conversation with Charlie toward the end of the book. It explains something profound about his nature.

ARC from LibraryThing

Lizzie Hayes says

‘Kind of Cruel’ by Sophie Hannah

Published by Hodder & Stoughton, 16th February 2012. ISBN: 978-0-340-98069-9

Amber Hewerdine does not sleep, has in fact suffered from insomnia since the death of her best friend

Sharon who was killed in an arson attack. Amber has temporary custody of Sharon's children Dinah and Nonie, and is hopeful of formally adopting them. To try and unlock whatever is buried deep in her subconscious that is stopping her from sleeping, Amber decides to consult hypnotherapist Ginny Saxon. Her first session with Ginny Saxon brings to the fore the Christmas Amber spent at Little Orchard with her husband's family. Just what did happen to Jo, her husband Neil and their two children when after renting a huge house for Christmas inviting all the family, mothers, sisters, they just weren't there Christmas morning – they had just disappeared

Also at that first session she meets Sergeant Charlie Zailer, sitting outside Ginny Saxon's house. The words, - 'kind, cruel, kind of cruel,' surface during her session with Ginny. Where did they come from? Did she pick them up from Charlie Zailer? Wherever they came from, within a short time of uttering them Amber is arrested for the murder of a woman she has never met. Who is Katherine Allen? Amber is desperate to unlock the memories that will help her understand, but the mind can block out memories if they are too dark, or too painful – just what is Amber hiding?

The premise of this book is memory and false memory. As we go through life we build up memories, but are they a truthful recollection of the event. How often do we recall something with a friend and discover that their memory of the event is different from yours! It has certainly happened to me. I can recall looking in amazement and saying it wasn't like that, but my friend is adamant that it was.

This is a tantalising mystery, where everything is beyond your grasp. Just as you think OK yes, you realise that it is not so. Eventually you question everything, except that this is an exceptional book.

Lizzie Hayes

Jane says

Amber Hewerdine was losing sleep, and it really wasn't surprising.

Her best friend died in an arson attack, the arsonist had never been identified, and now Amber and her husband, Luke, were bringing up her friend's two young daughters.

An incident that happened at a family Christmas spent in a holiday cottage was still troubling her. Luke's sister, her husband and their two young sons disappeared on Christmas day, not returning until the next morning when the refused to give any explanation of what had happened.

And things got worse. When Amber took positive action to deal with her insomnia, visiting a psychotherapist, she found herself under arrest. 'Kind, cruel, kind of cruel,' she said. She didn't know what it meant, where the words came from, they just came into her head.

The impression of those words had been found on a notepad in the room where Katherine Allen had been found, beaten to death with an iron bar. The police had no idea what they meant.

That's how Sophie Hannah set up another fiendishly complicated mystery.

She gave it a few clever twists, and then she offered up a solution that was entirely credible but pretty

unguessable. I realised about two-thirds of the way through the book who the murderer would probably be. And I was right, but I couldn't put all of the pieces of the puzzle into place until the very end of the book.

I loved watching those pieces fall into place.

There were one or two niggles but they were more than made up for by many, many wonderful things. I'm not mentioning specifics, because they really aren't things you'd want to know before you read the book.

I loved observing the characters. They weren't overly likeable, but they were interesting, believable and complex. Real, three-dimensional human beings.

And there was none of the slight feeling of ennui I've experienced once or twice with Sophie Hannah's leading ladies: Amber was definitely a one-off. She was an intelligent woman; she was a professional; she'd clearly worked to build a strong relationship with the daughters she inherited; she had with strong – and sometimes unconventional – opinions, and she wasn't afraid to speak her mind, though she understood that sometimes it was wiser not to... A great character.

I was enthralled by some wonderful dialogue: between Amber and her two girls, between Amber and the Spilling detectives, between Amber and her usually warm but sometimes spiky sister-in law, Jo. There were times when I could have happily just followed those conversations even if there had been no mystery to be resolved.

The stories of the various members of the Spilling police force evolved nicely, and the mix of their story, Amber's story and the psychotherapists' narrative worked very well.

I'm a little tired though of the troubled relationship between Simon and Charlie though, and I think it's time to call a halt. It's become a little tiresome, and it so clearly isn't going to work out.

Otherwise though Sophie Hannah was at the top of her game, and Kind of Cruel was pretty much perfect.

An intriguing puzzle and a psychological thriller perfectly balanced.

And all I have left to say is – MORE PLEASE!

Philtrum says

A couple of years prior to the events of this novel, Amber's best friend, Sharon, dies in a house fire and, as she had agreed so to do should the need arise, Amber and her husband, Luke, take in Sharon's two daughters.

Seeking help for her insomnia Amber visits a hypnotherapist. She is also obsessed by events several years earlier when she and her extended family stayed one Christmas at a large, rented house. Inexplicably, Amber's sister-in-law, Jo, Jo's husband, and their two sons, went missing for 24 hours. Though they returned unharmed, it was understood that this event must never be spoken of again.

The police are investigating the murder of a woman. They have few clues. In the murdered woman's flat, on a notepad, were found the imprints of the words: "Kind, Cruel, Kind of Cruel".

Amber is upset by her first hypnotherapy session. As she leaves the hypnotherapist's office she encounters the woman who apparently has the next appointment. In a kind of stupor she mutters the words found in the dead woman's flat, and the woman who has the next appointment just happens to be a police officer.

This somewhat unlikely coincidence is just the first of many in a book I found to be, in turns, disconcerting, disorientating, beguiling, fascinating, irritating and annoying.

I had not read one of Sophie Hannah's books before, nor had I read a book like this one before – psychological crime novel?

I had little clue what was going on for the first 50 pages. I think this was intentional. The narrator – mainly Amber, but not always – is of the unreliable kind. Each chapter is introduced by another narrator and we don't realise that this is the hypnotherapist until about a third of the way through. Once a few of the pieces fell into place, the pace picked up, my interest was piqued, and I was keen to get through the book.

The problem was, really, about three quarters of the way through, once the murderer's identity became clear, a lot of the faults in the book also become clear.

Had I rated the book at the 75% point I would have given it 8/10. Immediately after reading it, I would have said 6/10. Now, several hours after finishing it, and having thought about the story in more detail, I realise how unsatisfying it was.

SPOILER ALERT

The murderer is Amber's sister-in-law – her husband's brother's wife – Jo. The reason for the murders is that Jo's sister, Kirsty, has severe learning disabilities and is looked after (full time) by Jo's mother, Hilary. Hilary made it clear to Jo when Jo was 16 that Jo would have to take on the full-time care of the sister when Hilary dies. Jo can't live with this prospect and ends up killing two people as well as setting fire to Amber's house.

Hannah goes into the psychological reasons for all of this in great detail – over the last 20-30 pages of the novel – but, in essence, it's all supposition. At no point do we see things from Jo's point of view. Exactly why looking after Kirsty would be so dreadful is never explained. This would not sit well within anyone who has to care for such people. Jo's Mum, Hilary, is painted as a villain of the piece, putting too much pressure on Jo, but we never hear her side of the story either.

The police just seem incompetent. Amber seems to easily assume the role of investigating officer – this is surely incredibly unlikely. Furthermore, the sister of one of the police officers also seems able to do the same.

I can see what the author's done – read about some kind of psychological problem (emotional/covert incest) – and then sort of reverse engineered the story.

When you don't know what's going on, your interest is maintained, and then once you find out, you can think "Ah, clever, I see what she's done here", but then afterwards you just end up thinking "Hang on, THAT never would have happened", "Wait, the police would NEVER have let a suspect do that", "But there's no good reason why she should have reacted so violently to that situation", and "Nah, that's just too unbelievable."

Ultimately, a highly promising book for the first 75% and then, after that, very disappointing indeed.

2/10

Phrynne says

This was such a good book I just could not put it down. The main character was actually allowed to be intelligent and in control. She didn't go to pieces and do stupid things when the police were involved. She didn't put herself in dangerous situations when she should have known better. She acted like a normal, thinking person and yet there was still an exciting story left to tell. Loved it.

Kathryn says

Where to begin...?

I stumbled across Sophie Hannah's book Lasting Damage and thought "WOWZERS! That looks like my kind of mystery... it was! I have now read all of the Spilling CID series (to date) but I did feel like Hannah lost her way during A Room Swept White and Hurting Distance so I was a tad apprehensive about picking this one up.

Hannah is back on form!

I will get my cons out of the way first...

Hannah seems to have this ability to create really annoying protagonists. In this case she comes in the form of Amber Hewerdine, an insomniac with a real attitude problem! I could have done without all of the snide comments when she was talking about Hypnotherapy - I get that many people do believe it is hocus but do we really need to be reminded over and over and over and....

...you get my point!

Amber hasn't slept since the murder of her best friend 18 months ago, leaving her in charge of her two daughters Dinah and Nonie (who are also just as annoying!)

Anyhoo, the big mystery for me was why Amber woke up on Christmas day 7 years ago to find her sister-in-law has disappeared and taken her husband and two children with her... *gasp* ... to then reappear on Boxing day and reassuring everyone that it was all fine and pretending it didn't happen

So you'd think the book would focus on the whole disappearing family as its main mystery??

Basically *****DO NOT READ ON IF YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW WHAT HAPPENS!*****

Jo (the woman who disappeared) murdered Amber's best friend and then murdered another woman a few years later (to cover up first murder) so she wouldn't have to look after her handicapped sister....

I read the books mainly for the permanent CID characters. I like seeing how they have developed and I enjoy seeing them work together.

Do I care about Simon and Charlie's sexual problems?

But... I do enjoy Proust's meltdowns...he's all like...

So why 4 stars? Well, it's more like 3.5... I enjoy Hannah's style - it is easy to read and it is easy to understand who you are following next. I like the main Spilling characters (though I would love to know where Spilling is!) and her books are good to push through in a few hours. A bit of a guilty pleasure!

Tatterededges says

This book started off ok but very quickly went downhill. There are a couple of very glaring problems. The first being that Ginny is a hypnotherapist, someone who helps people quit smoking, lose weight etc by using hypnosis to alter their automatic thought processes. She is not a psychoanalyst. The two are very different with very different training and purposes, yet Ginny behaves as though she's a psychoanalyst who dabbles in hypnotherapy. She psychoanalyses everyone in the book from just meeting them briefly which is just preposterous. There's a reason psychoanalysis takes years.

It's as though her character's main function in the book is to explain the motives of the other characters, which is fine if it's absolutely necessary, but at least get the characters profession right. Make her presence in the book vaguely plausible. Or better yet, don't make the characters behaviour and motivations so ridiculous that they need third party explanations.

The second being that the words kind, cruel, kind of cruel are not so obscure. To suggest that somebody uttering them under hypnosis would attract so much attention that the police be involved is pretty far fetched. That it would be considered so strong a lead that a detective would spend the whole day sitting in while the suspect/witness undergoes hypnosis is ridiculous.

I call bullshit on the extent of Ambers insomnia. If she really did sleep as little as is claimed, she could not function, she would not be able to hold down a job or look after two kids. You need a certain amount of

sleep for brain function. Amber would have been physically sick, depressed, forgetful, accident prone, paranoid, if not experiencing some degree of psychosis. I also think the reason given for the insomnia was weak.

What was the relevance of the pages and pages of psychoanalysis of Simon's character? Why do we care how he feels about having sex with his wife? In fact, what is the relevance of that whole Charlie and Simon relationship? And the Charlie and Olivia relationship? And while I'm on this Olivia character, why would a non-cop be involved in a murder investigation? Let alone solving it.

Which brings me to the killer. Who didn't see that coming from the first few chapters? Jo's motives are asinine. If she really didn't want to look after her disabled sister sometime in the distant future, she'd have killed her sister and not a slew of strangers, in an incredibly convoluted and dubious plot to have people think she has her hands full. Or she'd just plant the idea that she's got her hands full in people's heads. She's a narcissist, they're very good at spin. Her "plan" is just so ludicrous that she'd probably get off in court because you can drive a truck through the holes in the logic.

I don't think I'll be reading any more of these Spilling CID books.

Sheila says

4 stars, I really liked it. Probably my favorite Sophie Hannah book.

Though Simon and Charlie are as weird as ever, their perplexing relationship is on the back-burner in this book. Instead of one central mystery, there are several (ranging from murder and arson to family secrets), and I was fascinated by all of them.

You have to really suspend your disbelief, but I personally enjoyed the melodramatic, over-the-top plot. I also really liked Amber, the prickly, obstinate protagonist of this book. I enjoyed her fierceness and her relationship with her children. Lots of gothic trappings to this mystery.

Melissa says

Reading some of the other reviews for this book, I see the problems I have with it must be within myself. This is the first Sophie Hannah novel I've read and it will be the last. I found myself skimming through it. I found some of the scenes particularly claustrophobic, especially those involving the whole family and page after page of dialogue that seemed to go nowhere. I found that if I just read the last few lines of it, I got to the point a lot faster. The chapter separators were equally annoying since at first I had no idea who the narrator was or why they were even in there. Once the killer was "named", about 40 pages from the end, the rest of the book was psychoanalysis of the motivation of the crimes which I found ludicrous. It felt as if Ms. Hannah was saying "Look how much research I've done and look how clever I am". It was as if a good chef throw loads of ingredients in the pot together and expected to pull out a five course gourmet meal. The whole book just felt mashed together and tedious.

If you're a fan of her work, more power to you. This isn't for me but, thankfully, there a million other books out there that are.

Courtney says

I was happy to win this book through Goodreads as I've read and enjoyed the earlier books in Sophie Hannah's series. *Kind of Cruel* is more of the same-- and that's both good and bad.

Sophie Hannah doesn't write straightforward plots, and when the complexity works it's pretty impressive. When it doesn't, her books can feel a bit like an overly-complicated, tangly mess. *Kind of Cruel* ends up leaning toward the latter while still remaining enjoyable. There were parts, particularly in the middle of the book, that rambled and lacked cohesion. As usual with Hannah, all of the point-of-view changes, twists, and misdirections can get a little confusing and overwhelming, but it makes sense(ish) by the end (though to be totally honest, I found the ending flimsy, even factoring in the necessary suspension of disbelief).

That being said, I do enjoy Sophie Hannah's writing, and even when I'm not totally convinced by her story, I enjoy watching the pieces fall into place. She does a good job of writing compelling, flawed characters whose relationships feel real.

Bibliophile says

Liked this one much more than the last few Hannah books. As always, it's necessary to suspend disbelief in regard to the unlikely coincidences and bizarre plot twists, but once you've done that, it's a very entertaining read.

Kind of cruel stars the usual dysfunctional middle class families keeping secrets from each other, as well as the equally dysfunctional detectives completely disregarding proper procedure. There's also a hypnotherapist, a locked room, mysterious scribbles in a notebook, insomnia, arson, murder and general craziness. Really, who could ask for more? Well, I could, come to think of it. I wish Charlie and Simon would resolve their issues already. Maybe Hannah's dragging it out because she doesn't know how to redeem Simon after his boorish behaviour in the past years? We get an inkling on why he might be the weirdest, most repressed guy in the Northern hemisphere, but at this point I'm not sure I care.

On the plus side, I liked Amber, the stubbornly rational protagonist who calls bullshit on the lies, inconsistencies and irrational behaviour of cops, teachers, other parents as well as the hypnotherapist. She and her almost adopted daughters bring a delightfully dark humour into this excellent thriller.

Barbara Elsborg says

Two and half stars. I like Sophie Hannah's books though I didn't like this one as much as some of the others. It seemed to ramble at times and lack cohesion and any impetus to drive the plot forward. The intertwining of the two plots - the part with Amber, Jo etc and the policemen and women investigating, didn't always work for me. I can see the link that Ms Hannah was making with regard to children's relationships with parents affecting adults in different ways but it all seemed to run alongside rather than be twisted together. I really like Charlie and Simon - I enjoyed hearing more about them. I think I'd rather hear about them than the others who were a really weird bunch. I felt a bit cheated at the reason for the Christmas day disappearance

too.

But it was an involved plot in some ways, made more complicated by the sheer number of characters. I did lose track of who was who a few times. I still enjoyed it but it's not her best.

Vivienne says

could not get into this book so decided not to read it

Smitha says

Just loved this dark, intriguing psychological thriller. Learnt much about narcissistic personality disorder and emotional incest. I knew about physical incest, but never knew of the emotional counterpart. I read about it and was horrified to know that most parents practice it at one level or other, and if its too much it makes an emotional cripple out of your child. I loved the story part. Till the end, though there were subtle clues, I couldn't fathom why the characters acted out like they did. All in all, a wonderful book, perhaps the best of Sophie Hannah I've ever read so far. The first few pages were really difficult (like all her books), but when I started understanding the story I was hooked.

A must for all 'psycho' lovers.

Carol Vincenty says

I was really looking forward to read this book, but I was very disappointed. I thought it was too wordy, very boring, and totally unsatisfactory as a mystery. I also found that I didn't care about any of the characters, except the two young girls. I have read two other books by Sophie Hannah, but I doubt if I will read any more. Basically, I thought it was a waste of time.

Barbara says

This is 3.5 stars for me. It took until the last 100 pages to really get me hooked which means I had to read over 300 pages to get into it. This is a psychological mystery with a very convoluted plot. Detective Simon Waterhouse turns out to be a psychological mystery himself. His wife Charlie Zailer has her neurosis. The plot revolves around a hypnotherapist. I had no idea hypnotherapy was a psychological treatment. I thought it was something people did to change behaviors like smoking and overeating. The story begins with a mystery of a family member who invited her extended family to a Christmas getaway and then disappears for more than 24 hours with her husband and children before reappearing. There are some very psychologically disturbed people in this novel. I am intrigued by one of the personalities described, who masquerades as generous, charismatic, and considerate. Although there is a character described as a narcissist, the characteristics of narcissist and sociopath overlap to some extent but are different. I am not sure why I find these personality disturbances so interesting, but if you do as well, you will probably like this book.

Ankur says

Well, i would really say that title of the book has more relevance to what the reader might feel after reading the book then it having much to do in the story itself.

I really wonder if "Psychological" thriller means reading pages after pages about the protagonist thought process, making very little sense to the reader and wondering whether i am reading case file of a psychololgist.

80% of the book is devoted to problems of Amber and in the end very little gets explained of its reasons and origins.

Even the police investigation part further dwells on the thought process of various cops, again making very little logical sense to the whole plot.

In fact, the plot itself is much blurry throughout the book as one wonders whether what Amber says and believes is actually true or not?

Last 70 pages bring to light a complete new twist to the plot and Amber is shown living happily after, leaving reader to guess if the problems of Amber were real or her imaginations? As it disappears from the climax without a trace.

As you can possibly make out by now that i am terribly disappointed in having reading the book
