



## Seashell Season

*Holly Chamberlin*

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## **Seashell Season** Holly Chamberlin

*A picturesque Maine beach town is the setting for Holly Chamberlin's touching and thought-provoking new novel, as a mother struggles to reconnect with her long lost daughter...*

Every year on March 26th, Verity Peterson visits Ogunquit Beach, where she puts a handwritten message into a bottle and launches it into the waves. It's a ritual of remembrance for the daughter she hasn't seen in sixteen years—not since her baby's father, Alan, took two-month-old Gemma and disappeared. Verity keeps searching and hoping, sustained by the thought that someday she might get to be a mother to her own child. And finally, one phone call may change everything...

Verity learns that Alan is now in jail on abduction charges—and Marni Armstrong, born Gemma Peterson-Burns, is coming to live with Verity in Yorktide, Maine. But this isn't the joyful reunion Verity imagined. Gemma has been raised to believe Verity was an unfit mother who left Alan no choice but to take her out of harm's way. Over the course of one summer, Verity tries to reach a tough, wary young woman who's more stranger than daughter. And Gemma must reexamine everything she thought about her parents—and decide whether to trust in a relationship that, though delicate as a seashell on the surface, could prove to be just as beautiful and resilient.

## **Praise for the novels of Holly Chamberlin**

“Chamberlin's latest is a great summer read but with substance. It will find a wide audience in its exploration of sisterhood, family, and loss.” – *Library Journal* on *Summer With My Sisters*

“Nostalgia over real-life friendships lost and regained pulls readers into the story.” - *USA Today* on *Summer Friends*

## **Seashell Season Details**

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Author : Holly Chamberlin

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## **From Reader Review Seashell Season for online ebook**

### **Tonya says**

A picturesque Maine beach town is the setting for Holly Chamberlin's touching and thought-provoking new novel, as a mother struggles to reconnect with her long lost daughter...

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--My thoughts. Every mother's worst nightmare. What Verity thinks will be a good reunion, turns out to not be. Marni has been told lies her whole life. Thinking her mother was a drug addict. So this reunion is not a good thing. "Would there have been any good way to tell me my life was a lie?" What a good quote! This book was so full of emotion and I loved every single page. Quote after quote, I kept saying to myself, yes yes this is WHY I read.

Holly always does a good job with characters and I loved the different points of view. "I am not saying I loved her or anything." I could understand how Marni felt, but at the same time I could understand how Verity felt. This book would make an excellent book club discussion!

I love each book by Chamberlain, she really hits nerves and makes you think! Bravo!!

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### **Marti says**

Seashell Season by Holly Chamberlin is a story about loss and renewal. It is about a mother's love and hope. It is about a daughter's life that was a lie and is now a mass of confusion. It is about the indomitable human spirit.

Verity's daughter was kidnapped when she was two months and was never found until she was 16. Her name was changed, her history a lie, her family unknown and yet Gemma was found and returned when her father was arrested for another crime. The difficulty of the situation was not lost on either the mother or the daughter, but that does not change the difficulties involved with starting over.

Holly Chamberlin's book contains characters struggling to find their way. The emotions are heartfelt and have you feeling with them. I found myself worrying about Gemma and Verity's relationship as if I were a

part of the story. A wonderful story that brings you on an emotional journey with mother and daughter.

Oh and a cool element is that it takes place in Maine near York and the Nubble!

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## **Patty says**

Seashell Season

By

Holly Chamberlin

What it's all about...

This is one of those books that can be devoured in a day...a day on the deck...a day at the beach...even a rainy day cuddled in the sunroom. It's the perfect setting...Maine. It's about Verity and how when her baby daughter Gemma was two months old her husband ran away with her. Took her out of her crib and disappeared...fed Gemma lie after lie after lie about her name, her life her mother. Verity mourns her daughter and doesn't see her again for over 17 years.

Why I wanted to read it...

The best part of this book and the reason to keep the pages turning is that teenage Gemma is a disaster. She is mean and guarded and hateful to Verity. It's sad yet addictive to watch this tentative relationship grow.

What made me truly enjoy this book...

Again...the setting and these characters made this book totally addictive. Gemma was that teenager you wanted to scream at but Verity was infinitely patient with her.

Why you should read it, too...

Readers who love a totally tense family saga...should pack up this book for an ultimate beach book!

Fondly...Patty

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## **Sarah says**

I was given a copy of Seashell Season from NetGalley for an honest review and this is my review. This book had me battling with what I wanted to give it for a review and truthfully I am still on the fence with my final rating.

This book was told from the point of two characters, Gemma/Marni who was kidnapped by her father when she was an infant and then was returned to her mother seventeen years later after her father was arrested while he was stealing a car and it was learned he was wanted for kidnapping and her mother Verity who has been searching for her missing daughter all those years.

Gemma/Marni had no idea that she was kidnapped. Her father told her that her mother was a drug addict and that she was dead and they had no family so they pretty much have been living on the run for her entire life not staying in one place long enough to be caught, never having their pictures taken and more or less never making any friends. Needless to say Gemma has a bit of an attitude about what happened to her and finding out her whole life was a lie and she does not know if she can trust her mother so she is making their reunion not so happy.

Verity is excited to have her daughter back. She has been searching for seventeen years for her missing daughter but the reunion is not what she dreamed of. Instead of having a sweet loving child she has a sullen bad mannered child she is not even sure if she can love.

Ok that is a bit about the book now my feelings. I felt it dragged on way to slowly. There was parts where there was no action at all that I felt could have been left out just to speed things up. I also had a love hate relationship with the characters. Gemma was a little witch without much of a personality. I wanted to slap her. I will admit towards the end she grew and became more likeable and grew as a character. As for Verity she boarded on a weak to strong character. She put up with a lot from her daughter but I think she should have been honest with her about her dad from the start because keeping the truth from her made her no better then the man that took her daughter from her. Also the girl is almost eighteen, an adult, I would hope someone would treat her like one.

I am giving this book three out of five stars.

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## **Sherri Lewis says**

\*\*\* I received an advanced e-copy of this book from Net Galley in exchange for my honest review

When Gemma was just 2 months old, her father abducted her and successfully stayed hidden for the first 16 years of her life. Then Alan made a dumb mistake that sent him to jail and sent Gemma back to live with the mother she never knew. The story is told in alternating voices of the mother and the daughter as they try to move forward. Gemma has to come to the realization that everything about her life was a lie, and let go of the anger she has because of it. Verity has to make peace with the fact that her daughter does not like her or want to be with her, and although she would love nothing more than to throw her arms around her and hold her tight, she has to take a few steps back and approach everything with caution. The book is really thought-provoking and you felt invested in the characters and their lives. This is definitely a must read.

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## **MaryAnn says**

4.5 solid stars for Seashell Season. This story was hard for me to put down because I kept wanting to find out how Marni/Gemma would fit into Verity's life. Would it be an easy transition for her or would it be a struggle?

The message in a bottle part really broke my heart. Granted there wasn't much that was going to happen because of them, but it was important to Verity after her ex kidnapped her infant daughter and disappeared without a trace. What a scum bag he turned out to be! I kept reading really wanting to see him get his

comeuppance and I have to admit to being very happy with the way that bit turned out!

I think every parent lives with a small bit of fear that something may happen to their child, whether an abduction, an accident or whatever and this book covered the wild swings of emotion that would result from losing a child. The author handled all of this very well and I enjoyed the book. I'd definitely recommend it.

Thanks much to the publisher, Holly Chamberlin and Netgalley for allowing me to read an early reader copy in exchange for my honest review.

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### **Dottie Legatos says**

As a mother, I was a bit tentative to read a book about child abduction. However, *Seashell Season* dealt with the subject after the fact, when thankfully the child is reunited with her mother. Verity's daughter Gemma was taken by her father 17 years ago, never to be seen or heard from until the day the father made the mistake of getting caught stealing a car. When she returns to Maine to live with Verity, she learns that everything her dad told her was untrue. He filled her head with horrible lies about Verity. Gemma is so conflicted, as can be expected, especially being a teenager. Holly Chamberlin tells the story alternating between mother and daughter; I always like this style of storytelling, as you get to experience both points of view. As the story progresses, Gemma and Verity go through the highs and lows of the mother/daughter relationship. I thought Verity wasn't strong enough in dealing with some of the defiance she encountered with Gemma, but I realized the author wanted her to come across as a mom who has the patience of a saint, especially after waiting for so long for her daughter. All in all, this was a feel good, although at times slow moving tale of the never ending love a mother has for her child.

Thanks to Netgalley and Kensington Publishing for an advanced copy of this book.

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### **Marlene says**

An emotional story about a mother's love, loss and determination to piece back together the family that was so abruptly taken from her.

On the same day, every year, Verity puts a message in a bottle and releases it into Ogunquit Beach. She has done this for the past 16 years, ever since her two month old daughter was kidnapped by her ex-fiancé, Alan. It's not until Alan is arrested for a similar crime and incarcerated that Verity's daughter is returned to her. Now 16 years old and going by the name of Marni, everything she thought to be truth, she's now learning has all been a lie.

Marni was raised to believe that her mother was a drug addict, forcing her father to flee with her in order to keep her safe. Now both essentially strangers to each other, their reunion is anything but smooth. But despite Marni's confusion and walls that she's built up, Verity is determined to do everything she can to get the daughter that she's mourned for so long back into her life.

It's every mother's worst fear to have their child taken from them. The pain and heartache of having your baby taken from you, only to be reunited and work harder than you ever thought possible to form a relationship that should've been effortless is unfathomable. Although of very dark subject matter, I found this book very engaging and difficult to put down.

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## **Memphistigergal says**

Just imagine.... You go to work one day, leaving your 2 month old child with a close trusted friend. Then, you get a call... Your baby is gone.

Now imagine 17 years later. You have lived half your life sending blessings into the oblivion hoping they reached your child. You know your ex-fiancee took off with your baby and you haven't heard from the since. The phone rings... Your child is found. Now what?

Verity was the mom who lived through this nightmare. Alan is the jerk that took off with their daughter and told her that her mother was a crack whore who abandoned her. Gemma is the 17 year old who is living a lie.

My heart broke when I read this novel. I can't imagine having my child stolen from me. I can't imagine a man so diabolical, twisted, and evil, that he would take his daughter away from its' mom and not have any contact. I certainly can't imagine being Gemma and having to choose between the father she has known her entire life (a lie) and the mother that she always thought abandoned her (another lie).

This novel grabbed me from the very start. I was actually in the middle of another book when I started this one. It's still at the same point as when I started this novel. This has been one of the most enjoyable and engaging reads I have had this year. I alternated between wanting to cry and wanting to punch people.

I highly recommend both this novel and this author. 5 out of 5 stars.

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## **Joyce (Chloe) says**

Great! Will be reading more by this author.

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## **Jamie Holzberg / Fluff Smut & Murder says**

Thank you to NetGalley.com and to the publisher for the ARC of this novel in exchange for my honest review.

While child abduction/missing children novels are a hot topic right now – they typically only deal with the



suspenseful search of finding the missing child. Very few books deal with the aftermath of the situation and the daily trials of building a relationship between parent and child. "Seashell Season" moved at a really slow pace – too slow for me and I began to get annoyed and frustrated by the book. I had felt like I had been reading forever and had to be at least halfway through the book. I looked down at my Kindle – nope – 27%. UGH!

What I loved: Both Verity and Gemma/Marnie kept addressing the reader directly within their chapters. Are they talking to me? Am I like their therapist? It's a little weird to be talked to but really never addressed when you first start reading the book but its different – and different can be good.

What I didn't love: Verity sucks as a mother. I get it – her child was ripped away from her as an infant and she never had a chance to become a mother but I think even if Gemma/Marnie was there for the full 17 years she still would have sucked as a mother. She's too rigid, too afraid of her feelings, too judgemental, too ANNOYING! She doesn't accept her daughter as her own person but rather expects G/M to be an automatic extension of herself and is offended when G/M is completely different.

What I learned: Nurture wins over nature – almost every time  
Overall Grade: B-

[www.FluffSmutandMurder.com](http://www.FluffSmutandMurder.com)

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## **Julie Barrett says**

Seashell Season by Holly Chamberlin

Have enjoyed other books by the author. This one starts out with Verity and she's staying at her friends house while she gets her life back in order after leaving her boyfriend Alan.

Her daughter Gemma is with her and Barbara will babysit while Verity works. One day she gets a call that Gemma is gone, Alan took her.

She gets on with her life after many years go by getting back into her artsy side and actually getting a job at the local college. The call she thought she'd get it's 17 years later and they have her daughter and will board you on a plane from AZ to ME.

She is beside herself as the town has backed her the whole 17 years with support. She has so many unanswered questions about how her daughter was raised. Alan is put in prison and he's lied to Gemma about everything he told her. Her mother is alive and so is her grandmother...

Alternating chapters on how each one is dealing with being reunited. Love the beach and the collecting of the seashells.

At times the book gets boring as it's over 400 pages long. There's a huge story behind the pages though and glad I was able to get through all of it. As it's boring there are also many twists and turns along the way, helping to tell the story of the two females as others come and go into their life's.

Q&A at the end and discussion questions.

I received this book from The Kennsington Books in exchange for my honest review

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## **Sandy \*The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice\* says**

How would you feel if you found out your whole life had been a lie? That even your name wasn't your own? At any age that would be devastating, earth-shattering, but at seventeen?

She thought her name was Marni Armstrong. That her mother was a violent drug addict. That she had no other family, only her father. But when her father is picked up for auto-theft Marni discovers that she is actually Gemma Burns-Patterson, that she has a mother and a grandmother and even a grandfather. That nothing her father told her is true.

Verity has never given up hope of finding her daughter. But their reunion is not the one she imagined. Marni/Gemma is surly and resentful, and frightened of this alien lifestyle, these people who are totally different to those she has known in the past.

Apart from the few first chapters, which I found not well written and almost caused me to discard this book, this is a wonderful YA story. Told from the points of view of both Marni/Gemma and Verity it chronicles the raging emotions of both mother and daughter, the conflicts, the triumphs.

I am so glad I did not give up on this. Thank you to NetGalley and Kensington books for a digital ARC of Seashell Season in exchange for an honest and unbiased review.

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## **Dee Werner says**

While the book kept my attention enough so that I finished it, I felt the character development was weak. I felt the author had no clue what really goes on in the mind of a teenage girl, let alone one who has been uprooted from her parent and home. Also, the mother, Verity, was such a wimp. I found her to be annoyingly bland - no depth to the character at all. And then the bizarre offer from cousin Ellen.....didn't even fit into the story. Maybe if Ellen's motivation had been developed, it would have made more sense. But it seemed like an editor suggested a plot twist and the offer was thrown in to prove some conflict. The book just wasn't well written in my opinion.....no, I take that back. The writing was enjoyable.....I think the editing could have been better. If someone had suggested to Chamberlin to tighten up the characters, then I think this would have been an outstanding story.

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## **Bette Hansen says**

A poignant story of a woman trying to reconnect with the daughter who was stolen from her 17 years prior. The journey Verity and Gemma travel is long, difficult, and trying but the love of a child is something that is not easily broken and Verity will do whatever is necessary to get through to Gemma. Gemma is rough, rude, and completely confused. Finding out that everything you've been told about your mother your whole life is a lie isn't easy to deal with and she doesn't plan on making anything easy for Verity. In the end though Gemma knows she has a decision to make. Trust in this fragile new relationship with Verity or live life alone.

This book is wonderfully done. My heart broke for both of these characters. This is a book I recommend to everyone!

