



The Heart of Winter

Emma Hannigan

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Snuggle up with *The Heart of Winter* and settle down for a warm, festive Irish family Christmas...

This glorious new novel from Emma Hannigan, author of *The Summer Guest*, will delight fans of Patricia Scanlan and Cathy Kelly. 'A wonderful storyteller' Cathy Kelly

With the promise of December in the air and the hedgerows laced with frost, Huntersbrook House has never looked more beautiful. Once the Craig family's beloved home, the house has been transformed into a magnificent countryside venue. And its first booking couldn't be more perfect - the Christmas wedding of a well-known film actress.

Yet, behind the scenes, the Craig children are feeling the chill. Pippa is skating on thin ice with her reckless personal life; Joey, preoccupied with the business, is blind to his fianc?'s struggles. And Lainey's future is dealt a cruel blow. As the wedding approaches, everyone hopes the house will weave its magic. But can the Craigs put their differences aside and pull together as a family once more?

The Heart of Winter Details

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From Reader Review The Heart of Winter for online ebook

Gill Brown says

This was really lovely and great having characters from another book brought back into it.

Philomena Callan Cheekypee says

This is the second book in a series but can be read as a standalone which I've done. Having said that I would have liked to have read book one first to get to know more about the characters.

I found this to be a lovely Christmasy read in an Irish setting. It's told mainly from the children's point of view- Lainey, Joey and Pippa. As an Irish girl I really enjoyed this read. It brought me back to my younger days when I inhaled books from Irish authors like Patricia Scanlon, Maeve Binchy and Cathy Kelly.

Margaret Madden says

Huntersbrook has always come alive at Christmas. A Georgian home, to a grown up family, traditions have been set over the years and winter is a magical time in this Southern Irish House. The Craigs have a plan and hope to bring the house back to one of laughter and happiness. The recession has hit everyone, but has it changed the core values and personalities that were there all along? Holly and Paddy welcome back their children, Pippa, Lainey and Joey, along with a few stragglers, as they prepare for their new Huntersbrook venture...

Emma Hannigan has brought us back into the house of her earlier novel, Driving Home For Christmas, and back into the folds of the Craig family. No longer the full estate that they used to own, Huntersbrook has been pared back and still needs more money. The family have plans, and need to work together as a unit to get it up and running. A medical emergency takes one child out of the equation and another is too busy wining and dining clients up in Dublin to be of much help. Can the third sibling pull things together or will Holly have to say goodbye to the home that has been in her family for generations?

As I live in a period house, Huntersbrook is a place I can almost touch or smell. The kitchen, with its constant to-ing and fro-ing, the hallway, chillier than it should be, the unused bedrooms, chilly with radiators switched off for months at a time. The atmosphere is tangible and just perfect for Irish fiction. There are many, many houses like this on our island, and unfortunately, their upkeep means not many are maintained, with plenty being left to ruin. This novel, like Driving Home For Christmas, shows how a family can become attached to their homestead, but may not realise how much until the threat of losing it becomes real.

Emma Hannigan has re-introduced the Craigs with gusto. The family has expanded, and some old friends are back. Once again, the supporting characters are great and the writing is smooth and extremely readable. I think I preferred the more mature Craig siblings, but Lainey was irritating at the start. She was very self centered and quick to dismiss was a bit like a dog with a bone: approach with care.

This novel can be read as a stand alone, but there is quite a bit of back story that would be missed. Not

essential, but adds to the feel of the characters and location. Overall, another great read from a wonderful author. A nice fresh approach to female fiction.

Damelapin says

At first I was annoyed with the characters: with pippa with the drugs (with which I wasn't at ease reading), and lainey with the baby obsession. But it passed and it was a really nice story overall - I couldn't put the book down. Though I wouldn't call the book a romance

Mary O'Brien says

Wonderful read

Fantastic book. So moving and most stories real to life. I would recommend to book to any type of reader

Mad White says

This was such a great book! It didn't take itself too seriously but at the same time, you really cared about the characters and the way the story twisted and turned in a really uplifting way!

Cleo Bannister says

Having enjoyed Emma Hannigan's previous book The Summer Guest I was delighted to be offered a copy of The Heart of Winter. Only on finishing the book did I realise that the Craig family previously appeared in Driving Home for Christmas which was published last year. Although this is a perfectly good read as a stand-alone book I think the early chapters would have read a little smoother if the author hadn't had to try so hard to cement the characters personalities to allow for those of us who hadn't already met them.

The Craig family are in the final stages of turning the family country house, Huntersbrook, into a party venue, the whole family has pulled together to keep the house in the family, well nearly the whole family as Pippa the youngest daughter of Holly and Paddy focus is on partying her way through life and leaving others to do the hard work.

Lainey the eldest daughter lives close to her parents with her husband Matt and father-in-law Jacob but it's clear that she feels that she was hard-done because Holly had suffered from post-natal depression after she was born and she was cared for by her Grandmother Maggie while she recovered. Following Maggie's death Lainey has thrown herself into the family project as well as looking after her young son Ely.

Joey is the only son and very ambitious, he and his girlfriend Skye are also working hard to get the house ready for its first guests but when Joey gets a promotion he seems to think Skye should change to reflect his new role. He didn't really impress me very much!

The plot is fairly predictable, with many family dramas including those of the old family retainer Sadie, who at eighty years old is still running after the younger members of the family, whipping up food at the drop of a hat or babysitting little Ely, a real marvel! This is a book about family relationships so there are moments of tension that are eased by a few well-chosen words which put the world to rights. The story is told in alternate chapters by Lainey, Joey and Pippa which is easy to follow as each chapter is headed by the character involved and has the added bonus of giving glimpses of their lives away from Huntersbrook.

I didn't enjoy this book as much as *The Summer Guest* mainly because many of the characters appeared a little flat, possibly because there were so many of them. Of the three children, the only one with any spark was Pippa, and as a consequence her story was by far the most interesting of the three. Lainey was just a bit too whiney in her constant harping back to her childhood while Joey came across as a bit of a jerk who did little except think a lot of himself. As family dramas go this is a heart-warming read which serves to underline the importance of family especially during the bittersweet ending.

I'd like to thank the publishers, Headline, who gave me a copy of this book through Bookbridgr in return for this honest review.

Adelyne says

The Huntersbrook House duo of books are really one of the best things to read over Christmas – the warm and friendly family atmosphere both set around Christmas as this is the time of the year where the mother of the three sibling main characters puts everything into decorating the house for the festive period. This book picks up on where “Driving Home for Christmas” left off, although the grandmother and matriarch has since passed on and Huntersbrook House has been repurposed as a bed and breakfast / event venue as a means of generating income to keep it in the family.

The three siblings are in a slightly different position, with slightly different problems to the first book, and it felt to me like they'd grown up immensely for different reasons. Some of the problems brought up in the first book (for instance the relationship between Lainey and her mother) are carried on through to here, but again everything is tied up with a happy festive bow by the epilogue which made me cry throughout it. Quite possibly the only one thing that really annoyed me is the one plotline that the author left hanging, even though in conversation one character said to another “I'll tell you this some other day”! I felt like the personality of each of the children became even more pronounced in this book, thankfully I did like all three to begin with (and therefore loved them more) otherwise I would have bordered on hating one of them by the end of this.

Like its prequel, this book is written in a different voice (although all in third-person) for each chapter, though there is more emphasis on the characters in the older generation this time around. Hannigan once again manages to capture a slightly different tone for each, reflecting their different roles in the story such as Lainey as the older sister. It's a slight pity that there aren't more books in this series, I would have loved to have another Christmas with the Craig family! I wonder when Holly's seemingly open invitation to every other imaginable character to spend Christmas at Huntersbrook House will eventually reach me...

Rachel Gilbey says

The Heart of Winter sees us return to Huntersbrook House, setting of Driving Home for Christmas, and a return to the Craig family. Once again Huntersbrook House is the key to the book, but this time as an events venue, and the book is set in the run up to Christmas.

Although this is a sequel, that is set around 3 years after the original, it can definitely be read as a standalone. Enough relevant information is provided, but due to the huge range of character development between the two books, it may be recommended to read Driving Home For Christmas first, purely to really get a feel for the family.

Almost everyone from the first book is back, with a couple of exceptions, 1 a lot more notable than the other (which isn't even referenced). My favourite character is still Pippa, the youngest sibling. She is unpredictable, fun loving and has a large amount of growing up to do. And this time she really does get herself into some sticky situations, which are tough for her to get out of. But at the bottom of it all she has a heart of gold, and even if she does need a bit of a wake up call, has her family's best interests at heart.

Joey, who felt rather vulnerable and a bit of a fitness fanatic, has had what feels like a complete personality transplant and is more focused on his job and trying to become partner, and the growing of the Huntersbrook House business to pay attention to his girlfriend. It felt like a complete 180 degree turnaround and I felt I liked him less than I did as a result.

Lainey is the oldest sibling and life has possibly changed more for her, than the others. She still has a rock relationship with her mother, Holly, but is now a mother of her own. However then a tragedy strikes Lainey and she has to learn to cope with a whole new reality. And its while Lainey is dealing with this, that leads to major changes in all manner of the relationships between Craig family members.

Then there is Holly, the family matriarch, who just wants to spend more time with her grandson, and is as always excited about decorating for Christmas.

The perspective jumps around between Holly, Joey, Lainey and Pippa and occasionally some of the other characters but its always easy to know who we are focused on, as its the section heading. This allowed us to get up, close and personal with all of the Craig clan, and I love getting to know my characters really well, as it allows you to feel emotionally attached to them .

The Heart of Winter, was an excellent story and was highly enjoyable, I loved the setting in Ireland of Wicklow, and also Dublin, and Emma Hannigan is moving her way up my list of Irish Fiction writers that I love. I am really hoping that this isn't the last we see of this fabulous family, or their handsome house.

Thanks so much to Headline and Netgalley for this review copy. This was my honest opinion.

Ann says

This is the first book I have read by this author and I will be looking for more of her novels. Its lighthearted but not trivial. I would have liked more about Sadie but possibly there will be another book in the series.

Gillian says

Started off by disliking one of the characters immediately, however as the book moved on I changed my mind and really enjoyed this story.

Rae Callander says

Good light read

Bookread2day says

We first met Craig family in Driving Home for Christmas. Please don't worry if you haven't read Driving Home for Christmas, I can promise you all that you won't feel lost. You will find The Heart of Winter a comforting read. Huntersbrook House has been in Joey's mother's family for three generations. Money had been poured into saving the stunning Georgian residence. Joey Craig came up with the idea to turn Huntersbrook House into a countryside wedding venue. Emma Hannigan certainly is a writer who understands exactly how women think.

Cherrie says

Just received this book and will read it and leave my review soon

Elaine says

Don't be put off by the fluffy cover on this one. Yes, it is an uplifting, easy to read family drama that is just perfect for the build up to Christmas, but it is one with hidden depths as some of the themes explored in the book are quite dark and moving. The Craig family have come to the decision that the only way to save the magnificent house that has been their family home for three generations is by reopening it as an events venue. It is a lovely read about a really lovely family, the sort you could just imagine slotting into. However, that is on the surface, underneath they have their problems. One member of the Craigs will find their life starting to spiral out of control, another will get the rug well and truly pulled from under their feet by unexpected news and yet another will need to learn to put family and loved ones first for a while. And that is just for starters, there is an incredible amount of drama packed into this book. The characters themselves all feel very real, people you could meet on any day of the week and I very quickly warmed to them, in fact I wanted them to adopt me. I could easily get used to live on an Irish country estate!

Although it can be read as a standalone it is the second in a series. This of course puts the onus on the author to give a new reader all the background information he or she might need without info dumping. This did mean that, especially in the first part of the book, sometimes the dialogue went a bit wobbly and didn't feel

quite natural. Once I had all the information I needed though, it just seemed to flow and flow and flow.

The real star of the book is the house itself, Huntersbrook. An Irish Downton Abbey setting, one that really makes you long to join the Craigs at Christmas for mince pies around a real Christmas tree beside a crackling log fire.

If you want a nice cosy heartwarming read with a real Christmassy feel to it, then this would be right up your street.
