



## **The Wildflowers: A gorgeous family saga, full of secrets and lies**

*Harriet Evans*

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**'I adored *The Wildflowers*. A sweeping, epic, moving read'** Marian Keyes

The new novel by *Sunday Times* bestseller Harriet Evans will transport you to a Dorset beach house, where you can feel the sand between your toes. Enter the home of Tony and Althea Wilde - the Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor of their generation and with a marriage every bit as stormy. This glorious tale of tangled family secrets and lies will leave you warm and glowing.

**Harriet Evans is 'perfect for fans of Jojo Moyes and Maeve Binchy' *Best***

Tony and Althea Wilde. Glamorous, argumentative ... adulterous to the core.

They were my parents, actors known by everyone. They gave our lives love and colour in a house by the sea - the house that sheltered my orphaned father when he was a boy.

But the summer Mads arrived changed everything. She too had been abandoned and my father understood why. We Wildflowers took her in.

My father was my hero, he gave us a golden childhood, but the past was always going to catch up with him ... it comes for us all, sooner or later.

This is my story. I am Cordelia Wilde. A singer without a voice. A daughter without a father. Let me take you inside.

## The Wildflowers: A gorgeous family saga, full of secrets and lies Details

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**Harriet Evans**

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## **From Reader Review The Wildflowers: A gorgeous family saga, full of secrets and lies for online ebook**

### **Julie says**

A difficult book to review as I found it enchanting yet disappointing at the same time. I loved the setting; 'idyllic' childhood at a Cornish beach house with some larger than life theatrical characters. On the other hand, this family saga was told initially from the daughter, Cordelia's, point of view. However, later on it switched to the adult's point of view and became somewhat confusing and to be honest overlong. If this had been offset by a happy ending then perhaps it would have left me with a different perspective but even the ending was sad. There is some wonderful descriptive writing, some memorable characters who show all their foibles and eccentricities yet my overall feelings were of sadness mixed with poignancy.

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### **Liv Abrams says**

This book, about the dynamics and hidden secrets of the seemingly perfect Wilde family, fully surpassed my expectations! I made a snap judgement before buying it that it was going to be a sappy, predictable easy-read. I couldn't have been more wrong! This is a beautiful, emotional and dramatic story that intrigued me from the beginning. I loved getting to know the flawed, troubled characters that spanned four generations of Wildes. Evans' message about the importance of communication, loyalty and a happy childhood struck a chord with me, evoking all kinds of emotions and nostalgia. This is such a good book, you guys. I can't recommend it enough.

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### **Paula Sealey says**

A wonderfully captivating family saga, Harriet Evans hits all the right notes here with her evocative writing and superb characters.

Acting duo Tony and Althea Wilde and their two children visit their beachside property each summer. Meant to be the ideal getaway from the pressures of life, it is in fact the place where many secrets are held and relationships formed and broken.

Following the Wilde family through the years was highly enjoyable. Tony's backstory, growing up as a young boy during the war tugged on my heartstrings, and his actions later in life were so believable, having read about the antics of true life stars of this time. Aunt Dinah was another character I loved. So kind and caring but tortured too. I really was transported to the era's and loved the overall story and character interaction. If you enjoy family epics with a strong storyline then you'll certainly love this!

A fabulous read to round off my year!

\*I received a copy of the book from the publishers via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

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### **Claire Reeder says**

I really wanted to like this book. A family saga set between then and now but for some reason I just couldn't gel with it. There are so many characters and I felt that I was always having to check who was actually speaking at the time. I also felt I got to the end of the book and was quite nonchalant about the whole thing. Sorry but this wasn't one for me.

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### **Natalie says**

To be completely honest, I thought about giving up on this book more than once. But it would be the first book I'd ever given up on. The first 50 - 60% was so slow and some of it seemed so pointless. Yes, I love a good backstory. But a lot of it just seemed to fall flat to me. Also, some of the language was honestly so ridiculous. I understand parts were set in the past but I feel these sections were too old fashioned even for the 40s and 50s. The twists and surprises were good. Although the whole Daphne situation was actually extremely disturbing. I liked the ending and how everything was all rounded up quite neatly but it took such a long time to get there and I didn't feel it was all really relevant or added much to the story. And then the chapters on more recent years felt almost rushed to me, as if everything was being crammed in and not explained fully. Also, I don't really believe that a troublesome childhood is an excuse for outright disgusting adult behaviour. So, even though Tony's actions all seemed to be forgiven by the end, I'm not too sure they should have been. 2/5 overall.

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### **Liz says**

I don't think I've ever read a book with a cast of such deep and complex characters. The tortuous, and sometimes tawdry, relationships between them was quite difficult to keep track of. The constant switching forwards and back in time was, at times, confusing but I do think it was well done and gave me a deeper understanding of the characters and their actions. It's a big read but absorbing.

3-4 stars

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### **Karen Mace says**

If you are looking for an epic family drama, full of scandal, regrets and dark secrets then you need this book in your life! The author has created an astonishing family who seem to live an extremely privileged life but when you look behind the facade, it is often no more than a nightmare.

The Wilde family are an acting dynasty. Tony and Althea are, on paper, a golden couple, with successful careers but, behind closed doors, they are two quite selfish individuals who seem to accept infidelity on both sides as long as it makes the other person happy! Mixed up in this are their two children, Cordelia and Ben, who witness the moods, the long absences, the cheating - no wonder they end up a little messed up too! The family have a holiday home 'The Borsky' that used to have such warm and wonderful memories for them all,

but that has been tainted over the years and through this book we get to look back at a number of times in their lives and put together the pieces of just what damage the dark secrets end up causing.

When I first started reading this I was a little concerned that I found I had no sympathy with the parents as they were so wrapped up in themselves, that it made them difficult to empathise with. But as the different chapters in their lives were revealed, I became more involved with them as you got to understand them, their pasts and how they turned out the way they did! And that goes for Cordelia and Ben too.

The character of Madeleine was an extremely fascinating element of the whole story! She was obsessed with the family and would make notes of their every move whenever the family moved into the neighbourhood for the summer, and Cordelia and Ben were reluctant to befriend this strange little girl from the neighbourhood, but they soon found they got used to her being around and it was a distraction from the drama in their own home, so she became more involved in their lives.

The switching of timelines was a little confusing to begin with, as was the number of characters, but I soon became swept up in all the different threads - there are lots! - that it all just blended in and created an extraordinary drama playing out on the pages. It often turned quite dark too and this just added to the impact that every secret revealed had on the family members.

It is a difficult book to sum up properly without revealing too much, but I found it to be totally enthralling and an exquisite look at a very dysfunctional family trying to come to terms with some very disturbing pasts. Highly recommended!!

Extremely grateful to the publisher for sending an advanced copy of this my way.

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### **Helen Edwards says**

Oh dear, just two stars from me, and I usually love Harriet Evans' books. To be quite honest it took me until I was over 50% of the way through to become interested. I thought about giving up, but as this was a review copy, I felt I should persevere. Thanks to NetGalley by the way for the ARC in exchange for an honest review.

My favourite character was Ben, but I couldn't warm to the other main characters. I particularly disliked Tony, and Althea wasn't much better. Selfish!

I think too much time was spent writing from the children's perspectives - I think this slowed down the pace of the book. It improved when they had grown up, and we got an adult's perspective.

Grim storylines, and I just felt sad at the end of the book, but at least there was a resolution.

There was no central romance, which was a shame.

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## **Laura says**

Book reviews on [www.snazzybooks.com](http://www.snazzybooks.com)

The Wildflowers is a sweet, absorbing story about growing up, family secrets and the effect that glimpsing something you 'shouldn't have' – even for a moment – can have such a profound effect throughout your life...

If that sounds a bit vague, good – I don't want to give too much away about this story as I think it's best to approach it without any preconceptions, as I did. It's certainly a long read (at times I felt perhaps it could have been trimmed down, but only a little) and the fact that you feel like you're with these characters for so long – some of them from kids right through to adulthood – means you feel far more absorbed in their stories; I always feel a deeper connection with characters when you experience big life events and emotions along with them – when you really see how they grow throughout their lives.

The characters in this story really make this story what it is, I feel; though some are far less likable than others, all had their own quirks and interesting aspects. We switch between characters, experiencing what life at that time was like for not only main narrator Cordelia but her mother Althea, her father Tony, and other people too! We also jump back in time, to the 1940's of Tony's youth, and this offers a brilliantly contrasting view of life, and helps link together some of the characters in the reader's mind.

There's an element of mystery throughout – just a hint of one at some times, and as a much more pressing theme at others – which made me want to read on and find out what exactly happened all those years ago...

If you enjoy family sagas with a real sense of time and place (I could almost imagine being right there with them, in 1970's Cornwall and onwards, at various points in this story, and I really enjoyed reading about the 90's too – an era I only experienced as a child but which evokes some strong memories in me nevertheless) then you'll enjoy The Wildflowers.

Set some time aside for it and really lose yourself in the characters, the time, the place... as I did!

Many thanks to Anne Cater and Headline for inviting me onto the blog tour and providing a copy of this novel, on which I chose to write an honest and unbiased review!

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## **Irene says**

A theatrical family, a house by the sea and an abandoned girl. Story told by Cordelia, how all the shenanigans affected her adult life. Normally I love family sagas but this was a bit of a struggle for me sadly. Disappointing because it sounded so good and it had a great cover, but it was much too long and wordy with such a fine set of selfish individuals, full of self entitlement. The style of writing and words used made it seem much older than the times it was set in. Loved the Dorset house though! I was given this ARC by the publisher and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Karen says**

\*4.5

Oh my goodness. What a complex and damaged family the Wildes are. The Wildflowers is an epic family drama, spanning several decades, from 1940 to 2015. Set mainly in Dorset and London, it tells the story of a family gradually being torn apart by actions from the past.

Anthony and Althea Wilde are well known and respected actors, Tony more so, as he is considerably older than Althea. To say that he gets around, is putting it mildly! His long suffering wife Althea is well aware of his affairs, although she is guilty of the odd indiscretion too. Their children, Benedick (Ben) and Cordelia (Cord) initially have an idyllic childhood, spending their holidays at the family's holiday home the 'Bosky' on the Dorset coast. The Bosky is actually a character in its own right – over the decades it plays host to every main drama and event in the Wilde's lives.

The story moves between time frames constantly, one moment we are in the 1940s with Tony as a young child orphaned during the war and then we could be in the 1970s. Although I sometimes found this a little frustrating (only because I was taken away from a timeline and desperately wanted to know what happened next!) it was easy to follow and having this structure built up a complete picture of all the Wildes – flaws and all.

The book is a rather impressive 544 pages, and although my proof copy was only a few pages shy of this, I was stressing as to whether I would finish it in time for today's blog tour post (I actually finished it last night) but for all its length, it is a thoroughly engrossing story and one which I never got bored with.

There are some fabulous characters to get to know, Tony's eccentric Great-Aunt Dinah (who I think was my favourite) and her rather creepy friend Daphne. The Wildes themselves of course – the parents so self obsessed and apparently unaware of the torment their children are suffering and also, the neighbours at the Dorset home, in particular Madeleine Fletcher. Madeleine is a very unhappy and rather feral 7 year old child when she first comes across the Wildes and her infiltration into their life will have a huge impact on all of them. Madeleine is obsessed with the family and keeps an exercise book hidden away in which she diligently records every aspect of the family's life during their visits each year, including noting what they wore and overhead conversations. I initially found this quite disturbing and more than a little stalkerish. Interspersed throughout are extracts from Madeleine's book and its through these that we see the real Madeleine.

I am deliberately trying to keep this review as vague as possible, it really is such a sweeping story encompassing events and reactions that to give away spoilers would be unforgivable.

There are secrets, indiscretions and betrayals galore in this story. I enjoyed it very much. If you're looking for a book that you can fully immerse yourself with vividly drawn and convincing characters, then look no further.

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## **Toast says**

It started off so well. Then it got really s l o w and self indulgent. The characters became stock - the know it all matyr daughter; the adulterer actor lovey father, the quiet supertalented mother; the fragile tragedy



waiting to happen daughter in law - tedious. All of them charging around with 'my secret's bigger than yours' drive leading them no where for pages, chapters, years. In the end they all could quite happily have rumbled on for another hundred or so pages but I'd had enough and I'm sure most readers would have given up way before then anyway.

Shame.

Toast

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## **Amy says**

It's been way too long since I've read a really good family saga, so when the opportunity arose to read *The Wildflowers* I just had to take it. If you're looking for a book to really sink your teeth into, look no further. This is a meaty read(over 500 pages), you really get the opportunity to know the characters as it follows the Wilde family throughout their entire lives and by the end I wasn't quite ready to say goodbye to them.

This jumps back and forth in time from the 40's, to 2014 and several places in between. Althea and Tony Wilde have two children, Ben and Cord and this beautiful story follows all four of them. Being on the longer side really allowed the author to craft highly complex characters with deep rooted issues that were able to be fully explored. The characterization was so well done that I could easily imagine any of the Wilde's as real people, they were vividly drawn.

As with anyone's life each member of the Wilde family experiences plenty of highs and lows, this was full of drama, secrets and betrayals. It's mainly set in the family's beach house which was such a lovely, idyllic backdrop for this sweeping storyline, a nice contrast to the turmoil they were dealing with. This book will truly sweep you away to a different time and place and make you invested in these characters complicated and fascinating lives.

The *Wildflowers* in three words: Dramatic, Grand and Eloquent.

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## **Anne says**

When I noticed that this book was 540+ pages, I'll admit to some trepidation – that's usually the size of two books for me. But those pages flew by, and it was a lovely experience to be in the very safe hands of such a wonderful story teller.

This book was enthralling – I found it impossible to look away from the chaotic life of the Wilde family, Tony and Althea with their glorious self-obsession and shaky moral standards, their children Cordy and Ben undoubtedly loved but beset by such levels of drama and complication as they move through childhood. The primary setting for this book was simply perfect too – the Bothy, a rambling house on Worth Bay in Cornwall, revisited across the book's sweeping timescale, a perfect backdrop for the simple pleasures of childhood and for those shocking moments on which the story turns. Mads is a wonderful creation, both as child and adult – beginning as an outsider, fascinated by the Wildes, cataloguing their every move in forensic detail in her diary, then inextricably bound up in their story.

The weaving of the story's threads – spanning time from Tony's wartime childhood to the children's adulthood and their parents' old age, the past catching up with the present – is hypnotic, the large cast of characters introduced, developed and manipulated with absolute ease. In both past and present, this story has a bit of everything: there are moments when you'd be happy to be part of the story, those carefree days of swimming in the bay and playing games of Flowers and Stones, and others where the shocks and surprises and tangled awfulness of it all make you rather glad that you're just the reader and can walk away at the end. You might walk away, but you won't forget this one in a hurry – I enjoyed this book very much.

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### **Lydia Bailey says**

Wonderful to get totally lost in this family saga. A long read at 510 pages which would be just perfect to pack into your holiday bag. Harriet Evans manages to create totally real 3D characters here whom you feel you know inside & out. She weaves a wonderful tale spanning the generations. Although parts of it during the middle section become rather disconnected/disturbing/sordid the final third brings everything full circle and ties the ending up perfectly. Towards the end I literally could not put it down.

I'm keeping this review deliberately vague as we will be discussing it on our Instagram Book Club but there was one question left unanswered which is really bugging me ??

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