



House of Dreams

Fanny Blake

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It's only a long weekend - what could possibly go wrong?

'House of Dreams is a heart-warming tale of secrets slowly revealed and family tensions in a beautiful Spanish setting. A compelling and delightful read' - Santa Montefiore

In the hilltop villa with its spectacular views across rolling countryside to the straits of Gibraltar, Lucy anxiously awaits the arrival of her brother and sister.

They're spending the weekend together to say farewell to Casa de Sueños, the house in the mountains of southern Spain where they grew up.

Her sister, Jo, landing at the airport with her fractious four year old, dreads the prospect of this time with her family which will fulfil their mother's last instructions that they celebrate her birthday together. Only this time their mother won't be there.

Tom, their brother, remembers the chaos of his bohemian upbringing and wants nothing more than for their stay to go off without a hitch. Then a beautiful face from his past appears at the villa . . .

Over one long, hot week weekend, past secrets will spill out, making the siblings question themselves, the choices they've made and where their future lies in this gorgeous new novel from Fanny Blake.

House of Dreams Details

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Author : Fanny Blake

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From Reader Review House of Dreams for online ebook

Ana says

Originally posted on This Chick Reads

** Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review **

3.5./5

‘House of Dreams’ is the first book by Fanny Blake I’ve read, however it definitely won’t be the last one. While being light hearted and easy to read, it still had a serious note to it and portrayed the complex relationship between siblings after the loss of their mother. I honestly thought it would be more of a fluffy book (which by no means is an insult) however I was pretty surprised once I found out it’s more of a layered and complex women’s fiction.

The story happens over a time span of five days (brought in different parts of the book) during which time Lucy, Jo and Tom have come to sunny Spain and their old house to pay their last respect to Hope, their mother who recently passed away. Her last wish was for her ashes to be scattered away in this beautiful country house she spent most of her life and then for the kids to sell the house and divide the money. It’s through the siblings’ memory that we find out more about Hope, who seemed like a wonderful, sassy lady who really enjoyed life. However, we also find out that Hope was indeed a lady of mystery with some secrets her kids are yet to find out.

Tom arrives in the country house together with his wife Bella and two teenage kids. Bella is really something, she’s so demanding and such an up tight person I really wanted to slap on more than few occasions. Being long in the family doesn’t give her the right to interfere with how they siblings will divide the things their mother owned and she seemed so greedy. However, Tom is allowing it and because of this I really didn’t warm up to his character.

Jo is the total opposite of her brother, she’s a single mother and arrives at their old house with her little daughter she conceived with at a rather mature age and by accident. But she’s bold and cares deeply about her daughter and her siblings, despite the fact she causes a little drama at the airport, which as a book scene had me laughing out loud.

But most likable of them all was Lucy, the youngest of them all and the daughter Hope spent her last days with. Lucy is kind of at a crossroad now, having some serious problems in her marriage which doesn’t seem to work for the last couple of years. Being the one who lived with her mum when she passed away, I had a feeling she’s the one who mourns the most and who’s doing everything to make Hope’s last wishes come true.

During their stay in Spain, the siblings will learn a lot about their mother, things they didn’t know and that were kept a secret for so many years. However, as these secrets reveal, they also learn a lot about their own selves and their mutual relationship. As they unravel the mysterious veal of Hope’s life, they all go through a transformation and kind of grow. I absolutely loved this!

The setting couldn't be more perfect and I loved reading about sunny Spain. I loved that there were many characters and yet I wasn't confused and the story flowed. However, I found the book slightly slow for my taste. The story happens over just five days, and while there's a decent dose of mystery and family drama I expected more of a shocking outcome or twists. I'm totally convinced I would enjoy the story more if the pace was faster. I was very pleased with the ending though, and think it's a wonderful way to end this story.

Overall, 'House of Dreams' was an interesting and enjoyable tale which contains just the right dose of humor and seriousness. They are perfectly balanced and make this story so easy to read. Ms Blake has a knack for creating layered characters and I loved how she peeled a layer by layer of their personality, portraying the complexity of their relationship and how they influence each other. I'll definitely be reading more of Ms Blake's books in the future.

Trish at Between My Lines says

This review was originally posted on [Between My Lines]

Elizabeth Ducie says

This really is a feelgood read; and although it would have been a perfect accompaniment to a holiday on the beach, it was almost as good reading it in the middle of winter. It brought back memories of long warm nights and day-time summer parties that go on for hours after dark.

Tom, Jo and Lucy have returned to the house in Spain where they spent much of their childhoods, for one last party and to sprinkle the ashes of their recently-departed mother. Is this the end of an era, the start of a new one, or merely a step along the way? There are some great characters in here, not least Tom's wife, Belle, and Jo's daughter, Ivy. Moments of laughter, moments of sorrow, moments of anger and regret, all are covered in this tale of four days in the life of a diverse family.

Jane Watson says

Really liked this one although I wasn't expecting too much from it - it was one I bought in the cheap bookshop where you get three books for £5 and I am a sucker for that I know! But it was great, a real feel good book with some of the best characterisation I've read in quite a while. I really empathised with all the characters, Tom, Jo and Lucy and their respective families - they were all drawn really well and you could imagine yourself easily in their situation with selling their Mum's house and all the problems therein. Love it when a book you don't expect too much from apart from the pretty cover turns out to be a real winner.

Kate's Book Spot says

Firstly I'd like to thank the publisher for approving my NetGalley request for this eBook. I previously read, reviewed and enjoyed Women of a Dangerous Age by this author so I was looking forward to reading more from her.

It took me a little while to get into the storyline but once I did, I was hooked! I found myself thinking of the House of Dreams even when I wasn't reading.

The story follows siblings Jo, Tom and Lucy as they prepare for their mother's annual birthday party at her house in Spain but this time there's quite a dramatic difference to the proceedings.

Each character dealt with events in their own way and, as with all families, occasionally there was conflict between them. Who knew coloured stickers could be so controversial!

I particularly enjoyed reading about all the memories each character had from growing up in the house, they were vividly described so I felt like they were taking me with them as they reminisced.

Finding answers was a major theme of the storyline so if you enjoy reading about complicated family relationships and secrets, this is definitely a book for you. It also touched on some sensitive subjects, all of which I thought were beautifully written.

This was an interesting and thought-provoking read that leads you on a journey of discovery and truth.

Anne says

Lucy, Jo and Tom. Siblings who are meeting for a long weekend at their childhood home in southern Spain. They are gathering together to celebrate their mother, Hope's birthday and to scatter her ashes. This will be their last weekend in Casa de Suenos, their own House of Dreams, before she died Hope made it clear that she wanted them to sell the house. This weekend will be spent remembering the happy times, it will also be a painful reminder that their vibrant and loving mother is no longer with them. It will be a celebration, but it will also be a memorial.

Fanny Blake excels in creating huge and colourful charismatic characters, the reader is soon absorbed into their lives, identifying with their little quirks and empathising with their sorrows. This weekend uncovers many long-hidden secrets for the family, turning their memories of Hope upside down and also helping them all to discover more about themselves and what they want from life.

Although Hope dies before the story begins, she is the largest of the characters within this story. She's a little eccentric and different, sometimes selfish and unaware, but always the centre of the room. Parts of her colourful character are replicated in each of her children. The story takes place over just a few days and the author cleverly exposes each character, the reader will change their initial opinion of each of them as their inner vulnerabilities and worries are revealed.

Fanny Blake explores serious themes in a most compelling way, she adds a dash of humour and creates a setting that is so sunny and warm and inviting. As in her previous novels, the female characters take centre stage and Fanny Blake always makes sure that her readers know that woman can still be fabulous, at any age.

<http://randomthingsthroughmyletterbox...>

Emma Crowley says

House of Dreams is the new release from Fanny Blake who as well as writing is also the books editor of Woman and Home magazine. God how I envy her this job! I had only read one of her books before The Secrets Women Keep and found it an ok read. The title and cover for this new book was eye-catching and colourful. After reading the blurb I really wanted to delve in. The story takes place over a very short period, in fact just a long weekend in Spain. Although the time frame is short, the story and all that happens is fairly intense and the author has packed an awful lot in but still had room to develop her characters really well. I can't say I enjoyed all aspects of the book as I felt the middle was really drawn out. I changed my mind several times over as to whether I actually like the book but the later half cemented my opinion and after finishing this read and stepping back to appreciate what I had read it turns out I did like the book but maybe identified with some characters more than others.

Centred around a party and memorial service for the matriarch of the family Hope, a group begins to gather at Casa de Suenos the family home for many years in the beautiful, warm, dry landscape of rural Spain. Two sisters and a brother reunite after the death of their mother to scatter her ashes as requested and to have one last party at the villa which holds so many memories of growing up. But Hope has a few more surprises in store and by the end of the weekend the family will be changed. But will it be for the better or worse?

The book opens as Lucy is alone in the house preparing for the arrival of her brother Tom, sister Jo and various cousins and friends. She has been through a tough time and has still not come out the other side stronger. Caring for her mother in her final days has taken its toll and now the last stage of packing up the house and scattering the ashes are upon her and she is just not ready to let go. Apart from what herself and the family have been going through, Lucy's marriage is not what it once was. Lucy is married to Art who works on a semi successful medical show. They once were happy and she loved him deeply but the strain of trying for children is beginning to take its toll and they are drifting apart. Lucy is not sure the marriage will last and feels this weekend will confirm an awful lot as there are plenty of revelations to come. Lucy herself runs a successful catering business but this has gone on the back-burner as she cared for her mother. I liked Lucy as a character although she wasn't my favourite she did seem to be taken advantage of by Jo and Tom believing she could do most of the work setting up the house and party and looking after her mother. I think the fact she had no children her siblings believed she had no ties so she was free to step into the breach when needed. Her opinion seemed to matter the least but yet I think she might have been the wisest and most clued in terms of the whole picture. This sums up perfectly how Lucy feels about everything 'Within moments of Tom and Jo's arrival at the house, she had felt herself slipping back into the role of little sister whose opinion mattered most'.

Jo is the character I liked the most which is strange considering I have no children myself and she has a four year old daughter Ivy. Jo is a single mother and does her best whilst balancing a career in advertising. Alongside the family dog Bailey, Ivy simple stole the show. She was so well written and had me laughing out loud numerable times, Fanny nailed it when writing Ivy with all her funny sayings and at times her petulant demanding ways. Jo only hopes she can continue to do a good job bringing up Ivy in the future. Jo did have a good connection with her mother but what is really eating away at her is the fact she never knew her real father. Walter her stepfather did a good job but he to is gone and she wants some answers. Will she find them over the course of the weekend especially considering there is a chest with presents waiting patiently to be opened?

Tom is now the only male figure left in the family, he is married to Belle who dotes on her dachshund Ferdie and two boys Ethan and Alex. At first I thought Belle was going to turn out to be one of those clichéd wife characters we so often read about, someone who was a bit dim and just concentrated on her appearance, make up and clothes and the dog. But no the further I read I realised she had an awful lot more depth than at first appeared and in fact Tom didn't always give her the respect or credit she deserved. Yes Belle did want the best of what was on offer the in the villa to bring back to her own house in spite of the wishes of Jo and Lucy but underneath it all she did show her compassionate and caring side at times when needed the most. With the arrival of Tom's former flame Maria and her daughter to celebrate for one last time at the house doubts begin to manifest themselves in Tom's mind. Did he make the wrong decision all those years ago or is being married to Belle the right thing? To be honest I found Tom to be a bit of a wimp most of the time he couldn't stand up for himself and say what he was feeling and seemed to be on the verge of giving into temptation so easily. Like Jo he didn't know who his father was and maybe he didn't comprehend how much he cared about that fact. Instead he seemed to concentrate on getting the weekend out of the way so the house could be sold, money received and then return back to normal life.

House of Dreams is really a character driven novel. At first I did see similarities with a Catherine Alliott book I had read earlier in the year and was hoping it wouldn't venture down the same path as I had found that book quite boring. This book was vastly different as the family weren't on a holiday, the casa had been their home for so many years and held such special memories and now the glue that held them together has gone. No matter how far Tom, Jo and Lucy travelled or whatever problems they encountered the house of dreams itself was always the one constant. Standing there resilient, solid and waiting for them. It was a special place and much needed in their lives considering both Hope and Walter were such free spirits. This was such a striking description of just what the house meant to people 'Hope had once pinned her hopes and dreams for the future on it while Lucy's own dreams had been born there'. Even though we never hear from Hope herself as she has passed away just before the beginning of this book I felt Fanny did such a brilliant job of creating her character that I got to know her in depth. She obviously made such an impact in her children's lives (although maybe not always in a positive way) and in those of the people and friends she met. Hope manages to cause lots of mischief and surprises from beyond the grave plenty of which made the book speed along at a nice pace towards the end.

The House of Dreams is a really enjoyable book, as I've said it does take it's time to get going as there was a lot of characters to become familiar with. I admit I did have to keep checking who was who as there were numerous characters introduced over the course of the book apart from the three main siblings. There are several plot lines woven carefully throughout the book and they do pay off but you need to pay careful attention to keep up with all the strands. There are such beautiful descriptions of the house and surrounding countryside that easily make you feel that you are there alongside the characters at the party and also when they get to scatter the ashes. You feel as if you are not just a visitor getting a glimpse into a family at a pivotal, life altering moment in their lives but rather that you become almost like a member of the family itself. The weekend proves challenging and emotional for all involved and the surprises and revelations come thick and fast towards the end but I enjoyed all of them and in fact they made me view several characters in a different way.

If you want a break from all the Christmas reads out there at the moment this would be the perfect alternative, it has a good solid storyline with characters and a setting you couldn't fail to fall in love with and makes for an enjoyable read.

Dawn says

was sent a copy of House of Dreams by the publisher in exchange for an honest review. Something that I'm more than happy to do. Jo, Tom and Lucy, siblings, are heading to their family villa - a place of happy memories for one last holiday in remembrance and at the express wish of their recently deceased mother.

This is such a lovely book, a story that explores the dynamics of family life. The stereotypical dynamics of sibling rivalry - it never ends but is taken mostly as banter and not personal. Three children, now adults - three very different characters who don't realise that deep down they actually beat from the same heart and share the same values.

This was a beautiful story, woven around a setting that from the cover of the book alone just oozed warmth, lazy days, sunshine and smiles - a happy book despite the reason for the visit. Jo, Tom and Lucy come together to have one last holiday in a house that holds so many happy memories - they are to scatter their mother's ashes, party one last time in her memory - unsure exactly who will turn up and then divide the contents and move on. Something that each of them was dreading.

I loved how Fanny created so many stories within the story and managed to tie them all up nicely over the course of just one long week-end. Each of the siblings at stages in their lives where decisions needed to be made, three very different characters who don't always share the same opinion nor strength of character. Tom who seems to let his wife and family ride rough shod over him. Jo, madcap and funny but devoted in her role as single mother to daughter Ivy and lastly, Lucy, the swan - gliding gracefully on the surface taking everything in her stride and paddling like mad underneath. I simply loved how each thought they couldn't cope or move on without their mother to guide them - little realising that the quality time spent together would unearth some secrets and change opinions not just about each other but themselves too and from this gain the strength to help each other.

I was so looking forward to this book and Fanny Blake delivered ten fold - if you like reading about the intricacies and dynamics of family life and everyday real life situations then you'll love House of Dreams. It's not all candy floss and gloss, it delves into real life situations and I can guarantee you'll form opinions on each and every one of the characters and for most you'll change that opinion. First impressions are not always what they seem because the family, very much like most of us, puts on an outward face. Using it like armour to portray a positive image and to protect. Fanny taps away at the chinks until the real characters with their vulnerabilities are uncovered. Each of them giving and receiving the love and support of each other, strengthening them individually and as a trio. Ultimately the memories of their mother, the secrets they uncover brings questions and answers that give them the strength to carry on - the passion to look to the future instead of dwelling on the past. It really was such a good read. I highly recommend this book to everyone as a light read that delves quite a bit deeper than you'd probably expect.

Gill Brown says

Lovely story in the sun with secrets. I really enjoyed it.

Thebooktrail says

Booktrail the locations here: Welcome to the House of Dreams

I've enjoyed all of Fanny Blake's novels but this one was particularly heartwarming as it reminded me of emotional times in my own past. This added another layer to my reading I guess, but it would still have been an emotional journey without them. A really warming read despite the sad subject matter but what I really love about Fanny's novels is that they are multilayered -a lot more than the cosy covers suggest – and that once you're involved with the characters, it's very easy to care about them.

I enjoyed getting to know this family and thought it clever how we met them one by one before all going to the hilltop to gather everyone together. The reason for getting there is sad but I have to admit, I kept remembering the opening scene at Malaga airport and this kept me company. It's just like that with grief – sometimes something so strange or comedic gets you through, something unsuitable – and this 'scene' made me laugh, hold my hands over my mouth and squirm all the same time.

I really felt as if I had gotten to know these people one by one and really cared for them. Spending a family weekend in Spain is not my idea of fun but with this family it was a nice yet poignant time and I was sad to leave them!

Although I read this on kindle, I did download a picture of the cover halfway through and then realised this was exactly how I had imagined it. That cover is enough to draw you in and the writing will definitely keep you there. Once inside there are so many layers to enjoy and relationships to explore and it was a heartwarming read.

Mairead Hearne (swirlandthread.com) says

Published in November 2015 by Orion Publishing Group, House of Dreams is a novel that will transport you to sunnier climes. It is a very uplifting story of family & how the death of a parent is dealt with by those who remain behind.

Admittedly, what attracted me to this book originally was the cover. After a long winter, a bit of sunshine in a book is always a necessity!!

Fanny Blake takes us on a trip to southern Spain to Casa de Suenos, the childhood home of Lucy, Jo & Tom. Their mother Hope has passed away & her last wish was for her ashes to be scattered near her Spanish home following her traditional annual birthday party. The only thing is Hope will not be there as she once would have been.

From the beginning, we can see the different characteristic of each sibling. Tom is the big brother, the accountant. He lives his life in quite a regimental fashion, constantly overseen by his somewhat overbearing wife Belle. Everything, up to this point, has been very black & white in Tom's life. He gets up at a certain time, has his meals at a certain time, takes his vitamins daily and lives a very straight up existence.

Jo, the big sister, is a completely different character. She works hard & plays hard. She is single now with a little girl Ivy, who has become the centre of Jo's universe.

Lucy, the baby (always!!), is the person who would have had the closest relationship with her mother. She lived in Spain the longest & it was to her that Hope came to spend her dying days with in the UK. Lucy, unable to have kids, and with a husband who works away from home, was the 'obvious' choice. It is Lucy who finds this whole process the hardest.

As the three prepare to sell the family home, it becomes evident that each one of them has baggage from their youth. Jo & Tom have no idea of whom their father is. Hope would never discuss it with them when she was alive & they now are hopeful of unearthing something of her past as they sort through & divide out her belongings. Lucy, on the other hand, is very sure of her past, as her father was Walter, whom Hope went on to marry. 'The thought of splitting up their childhood home upset Lucy more than she had anticipated. The others seemed to be much tougher about facing up to what they had to do. Within moments of Tom and Jo's arrival at the house, she felt herself slipping back into the role of the little sister whose opinion mattered least. She had to pull herself together'.

Of the three siblings, it is Lucy I warmed to the most. Possibly because I too am the youngest in my family but also, more than that. Lucy just appears lost. Up to this point she had a husband, a career, a mother, a family home. In Spain she comes to realise that her life is very much in disarray. Her mother is no longer there, her marriage is in tatters & her business is in ruins. Jo & Tom systematically go through their mother's belongings and it is obvious that Lucy is finding it hard. Jo eventually seems to come to this realisation. She was too preoccupied with succeeding in her own life that she left it too late to have those final moments of truth with Hope. 'Lucy had made the effort that Jo hadn't. She had got beyond thinking of Hope as just their mother and had got on with her as any other woman would, finding out what made her who she was: something they couldn't have been less interested in when they were younger, too preoccupied with their own lives'

A House of Dreams takes place over one long weekend. It is Hope's birthday, her last party. It is a farewell to Hope from her family & all her friends. Truths are unearthed, relationships are both strengthened & destroyed but ultimately three siblings get to rediscover each other. They find a new 'hope' for the future. They find a new kind of love for their mother. They learn about her past. They learn a little more about who they are & what they have now become. I think they learn how to live a little bit more in the present.

A House of Dreams is a lovely, easy 4* read about rediscovery, about love & most importantly about having dreams & 'hope' for a future.

I received my copy from NetGalley in return for an honest review.

Pick up a copy and let me know what you think.

Til next time.

Mairéad

Anne says

Someone please tell me why I haven't read a book by Fanny Blake before. I've had a copy of this book on my kindle since before it was published in hardback - heavens, I even bought a signed copy in a charity auction, I was so sure I was going to love it. But it took the paperback release of House of Dreams - on 2nd June, by Orion - to finally get me to read it. And now I want to read everything the author's ever written...

Over one long weekend, we join Jo, Lucy and Tom - and their families and friends - as they gather in their childhood home in southern Spain for one last party, and to scatter their mother's ashes. Every single character in this book is quite perfectly drawn, however minor. They have lives, secrets, hidden depths, and interesting stories to tell. I expected a light read - and it is, in some ways, but it also has so many twists and turns as various relationships play themselves through and people learn more about each other and about themselves. Families are always fascinating things - and this family is one that draws you into its heart.

The complicated relationship between the siblings is simply fascinating, but when talking about characters I have to mention Tom's wife, Belle. She's in the forefront of every scene in which she appears, and I thought she was quite wonderful - totally real, quite horrendous, but with real depth in her characterisation and totally impossible to ignore. The other character who stands out is the mother, Hope - she's part of the story through the memories of others, part of the fabric of Casa de Sueños, and totally present throughout as the tensions grow within the family that remains and the secrets begin to tumble out of cupboards.

In this book the heat of the vividly drawn Spanish setting is totally matched by the warmth of the wonderful story telling. There are some perfect comedy moments around the lost suitcase, the claiming and stickering of the house contents, the dogs, the children - but equally moments that will move you to tears. A quite perfect read for a warm summer's day - but a book that will equally enthrall if you read it in cold winter. I loved it.

Neil says

I received a free copy via netgalley in exchange for a honest review.

This is a nice easy going story with some nice interaction between the characters.
Well worth a read.

Danielle says

Whilst I enjoyed the book, there were some things that annoyed me. Mainly that storylines were introduced, then seemly forgotten about as they were never followed up, such as the plans for the hotel, the relationship between Hope and Antonio, and Lucy and Antonio.

It was also quite slow going to start with, most of the action is in the last quarter of the book. This is tricky as some readers may not 'get into' the book and give up.

Shaz Goodwin says

<http://www.jerasjamboree.co.uk/2016/0...>

It was so easy to get caught up in the siblings emotions, not just with their current lives but when they are choosing which things they want to take from Casa de Suenos and the memories that come to the surface. Their mother's (Hope) parenting style was laid back although they all knew they were loved. The effect on their adult lives is interesting ...

Tom's family, wife Belle and sons Alex and Ethan, look on the surface to have the perfect life. He appears to be the centred and balanced of the three. Lucy and husband Art have their own issues and she is the 'baby' of the three siblings and is creative and emotional. Jo is the single parent and organised and efficient. As the weekend moves towards the party and the purpose of the weekend, I loved getting to know them and the relationships they have with each other. They knew the best way to handle each other and when to step back. Being an only child, those relationships fascinated me. Hopes friends are an interesting bunch too adding more colour to the family drama.

Fanny Blake's writing transported me to lazy, warm and social days (and yes, with undercurrents and secrets). Despite the sadness of the occasion, there are humorous moments too. I really did feel as if I had spent a weekend in Spain with a group of people who I would like to get to know better. Hoping it all works out for them!

House of Dreams is a story of three generations ... of how the past affects the future and how secrets can change what you think about yourself and change your future.

I would like to thank the publishers for approval via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.
