



The Forbidden Garden

Ellen Herrick

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Every garden is a story, waiting to be told...

At the nursery she runs with her sisters on the New England coast, Sorrel Sparrow has honed her rare gift for nurturing plants and flowers. Now that reputation, and a stroke of good timing, lands Sorrel an unexpected opportunity: reviving a long-dormant Shakespearean garden on an English country estate.

Arriving at Kirkwood Hall, ancestral home of Sir Graham Kirkwood and his wife Stella, Sorrel is shocked by the desolate state of the walled garden. Generations have tried—and failed—to bring it back to glory. Sorrel senses heartbreak and betrayal here, perhaps even enchantment. Intrigued by the house's history—especially the haunting tapestries that grace its walls—and increasingly drawn to Stella's enigmatic brother, Sorrel sets to work. And though she knows her true home is across the sea with her sisters, instinct tells her that the English garden's destiny is entwined with her own, if she can only unravel its secrets...

The Forbidden Garden Details

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From Reader Review The Forbidden Garden for online ebook

Tina says

What I liked about this book:

1. It's set in England. The descriptions of the country estate and the London museums were interesting to me.
2. There is a mystery about the failing garden, something about a Kirkwood family curse. The idea if a mystery intrigued me.
3. The descriptions of gardening and the ability to grow so many herbs, flowers and vegetables – how I wish I had that talent.
4. The cover is colorful and invites you pick the book up for a quick look, especially if you are a sucker for a pretty book cover.
5. There are passages about food throughout the book. Eggs with chives, Shepherd's Pie, Roasted chicken with potatoes and veggies..... I prepared a Shepherd's Pie as my representative dish. It's the first meal Andrew prepared for Sorrel Sparrow.

What I didn't care for:

Unbeknownst to me there was a previous book called **The Sparrow Sisters**. When I started reading **The Forbidden Garden** I felt like I was missing something, a backstory that wasn't explained by the author. After looking online I saw there was a previous book. That would have fleshed out the characters more for me if I'd known and read it first. Mystery solved.

This book was advertised as "*Perfect for fans of Kate Morton and Sarah Jio, comes a lush imaginative novel that takes readers into the heart of a mysterious English country garden.*" Well.....there is a garden in England and there is a bit of mystery but, not at all like Kate Morton in my opinion. That may come as a disappointment to some readers if they absolutely love Kate Morton, so I wanted to mention that. The mystery has more to do with enchantment....think about Alice Hoffman books instead.

The allusion to magic had me shrug my shoulders – *Meh*. Witchcraft wasn't mentioned but it's hinted at as an innate magical and mystical ability within each of the Sparrow sisters as they handle the soil in the gardens and make potions.

Predictable ending but that doesn't always put me off a book. Sometimes you can figure it out and sometimes it's obvious who the love interests and culprits will be.

Overall a solid B rating for the writing and descriptive passages.

Here is the vegetarian version of Shepherd's Pie. Lots of beans and freshly cut vegetables. Now Andrew prepared a version using ground lamb. We have also done that and it's quite good. That recipe may be

found [HERE](#).

*I won an advanced reader's copy of this book from LibraryThing.

❀?Rory?❀ says

I won this book from the Goodreads Giveaways.

3.5 stars.

This is an enjoyable magical realism/paranormal story about the restoration of a Shakespeare garden on an English country estate.

The Kirkwood family have owned Kirkwood Hall for hundreds of years and within the extensive grounds is a walled garden that refuses to thrive. Everything that's planted in it dies and the garden is said to be cursed. Lord and Lady Kirkwood hire Sorrel Sparrow, an American gardener with a special gift, to restore the garden to its former glory. But Lord Kirkwood isn't telling her the whole story about the curse and its very real dangers. Dun! Dun! Dun!

I loved the history surrounding the garden and estate, and all of the plant lore. Most of the characters are well fleshed out, with interesting back stories. Poppy was someone I'd love to have as a friend and Stella was such a kindhearted and generous person, it's too bad she isn't real. Delphine should have had a bigger part in the book; she was, for me, the most fascinating character. The best part of the book was the story of the tapestries and what caused the garden to be cursed and haunted. It's well worth reading just for the mystery.

This book lost a half star because Sorrel is not someone I enjoyed spending time with. It's almost as though the author wanted to paint us portrait of an ugly American in Britain. Imagine being hired for such an amazing job and then being unnecessarily rude to your employers and their daughter. Poppy didn't need to be "schooled" for saying "I am rather enjoying this whole mysterious thing we've got going." So was I Poppy! It's not for one moment possible that Poppy and Stella would consider themselves "schooled" by Sorrel in this situation. And Sorrel's behavior with Stella's brother was unprofessional and selfish. (view spoiler) Having a special gift doesn't excuse you from good manners and behaving responsibly. There are plenty of obnoxious characters who are a pleasure to read about, but we're supposed to like this woman and that wasn't possible for me.

Altogether, a rather good book.

Sue says

Thanks to LibraryThing for a copy of this book to review. I found this a very interesting book to read but I wish I had read Sparrow Sisters before I read this because there were so many references to what occurred in that book. I have just ordered Sparrow Sisters and that should fill in the gaps for me.

"Every garden is a story, waiting to be told..."

This is the belief of the main character, Sorrel Sparrow, who runs a nursery with her sisters. Sorrel has a remarkable reputation in Granite Point for being able to nurture and grow beautiful plants and flowers. She is still trying to find her way after a family tragedy (unknown to me because it's part of the story of The Sparrow Sisters) and when she is offered a chance to go to England to help restore a garden that appears to have a curse and hasn't bloomed in 200 years, she decides that she needs to go despite the closeness that she has with her sisters. The people at Kirkwood Hall in England are all pretty quirky but they are accepting of Sorrel and try to help her with the garden in their own ways despite their fear of the curse.

This is an interesting and compelling book to read. There is a little history, a little romance, a little magic and a lot of family history. If you are a gardner, you're going to love this book because the author goes into lots of details about them. I enjoyed this book but think I will enjoy it even more after I read The Sparrow Sisters.

Christine Zibas says

What worked was brilliant (gardening and characterization), but there were large bits of this novel that just failed for me.

Complete review to come.

Laurie says

Sorrel is one of the Sparrow sisters, a trio (once a quartet) of preternaturally gifted women who have a connection with plants. Their nursery in New England overflows with gorgeous plants that grow and bloom fast- that's Sorrel's realm. Another sister works with herbs and healing; the third can make any food related plant bear lushly. For this reason, Sorrel has come to the attention of a wealthy British manor owner. Kirkwood Hall has been renovated and made open to the public part time. All is lovely- except for one spot. The old Shakespeare garden lies in ruins, as it has for a couple of centuries. Within its walls, nothing grows. Sir Graham Kirkwood asks Sorrel to come over and make it right.

Once she gets there, Sorrel finds a happy extended family. There is only one grim spot- Lady Kirkwood's brother, Andrew. An Anglican priest on sabbatical, he's recovering- poorly- from a broken heart. He provides the romance in this combination romance/mystery, as Sorrel and the Kirkwood's try to not just make the Shakespeare garden beautiful again, but to find out *why* it's lain fallow for so many decades. Then there is the legend that any Kirkwood entering the garden will fall ill and die...

This is a pleasant enough story, with the extended family (that includes the head gardener, the inn keeper, and Lady Kirkwood's brother) searching for clues while Sorrel designs and plants the garden. Basing it both on other Shakespeare gardens and glimpses of it in the tapestries, she creates a formal arrangement of parterres and knots that bursts into growth and bloom the minute she puts the plants in the ground. But things don't work out easily; the garden's curse is still alive.

As a gardener and a foodie, I couldn't help but love the descriptions in this story. Herrick brings to life the look, feel, and scent of the plants. The meals the family eats are described just as lushly as the plants; I was

hungry most of the time reading this! The mystery was interesting, although it largely came down to people deliberately hiding information. But the book is not without its faults; this is the second book of I assume a series, and as such referred constantly to events of the first book. Those references took up far too much of the narrative, and it's far too repetitious. Also, for a mystery, it's not a very tense story- it dwells on the relationships too much to make us worry much. It's like the book couldn't decide if it was a mystery or a cozy woman's story. Still, I'm going to find the first book and read it. Because plants.

Michelle says

The second story featuring the Sparrow Sisters, this one focuses on Sorrel's story.

If you haven't read The Sparrow Sisters, you should. It's one of the best books I've read recently.

Each of the sisters is known for her possibly magical abilities in the garden.

After the rough year they faced in the first story, Sorrel accepts an offer to restore a Shakespeare Garden in England.

When she arrives, she is warmly greeted by the Kirkwood family. Graham and Stella are the married couple that hired her, Poppy is their college aged daughter.

Sorrel is less warmly greeted by Stella's brother Andrew. He's been through a rough time himself.

Stella hopes that Sorrel can pull Andrew out of his funk. Graham hopes that Sorrel can restore the garden. But what Graham doesn't tell her is that his family's garden has a dark history. He is concerned whether the garden is cursed. He wants to keep Stella away from it. He thinks Sorrel may be able to fix the problem without knowing the full story.

I enjoyed the new characters but I missed the dynamic of the three sisters always together in the first book. This book felt darker than the first book, but it is not without its own light.

I loved the descriptions of the food so much that I feel like there should be a third book devoted to a newfound love of cooking.

If the author keeps writing them, I'm going to keep reading them :)

Suze Lavender says

Sorrel and her two sisters are famous in New England for their gifts with plants. When someone overseas asks for their help with a problematic garden Sorrel takes the opportunity and travels to England. She will stay at Kirkwood Hall together with the people who hired her. To find out what's wrong with their garden Sorrel needs to learn all there is to know about the family's history, so she has an idea of what she's getting herself into. She has to unravel secrets and she'll have to restore the garden with her own magic hands to have a shot.

Are Graham and Stella Kirkwood telling Sorrel the whole truth? What will Sorrel be able to discover about the garden and is it the only thing she will find at Kirkwood Hall or is there something more for her to

experience while she's there? Stella's brother Andrew is having a personal and professional crisis and maybe it's up to Sorrel to heal both the garden and his heart. Will she succeed or has her journey been in vain?

The Forbidden Garden is an intriguing story. I love the Sparrow sisters and was very happy to be able to read about one of them again. Sorrel is a strong woman who deserves some happiness in her life. She's always there for others and has a caring and nurturing personality. She's amazing with plants and she can make everything grow in a magical way. She's a special person and I found her calm and comforting personality absolutely wonderful. Sorrel is trying to unravel a mystery and I liked the combination of a gripping family history and her loving and nurturing relationship with plants. While trying to make things grow Sorrel also grows on a personal level and that was fabulous to witness.

Ellen Herrick has written an enchanting story. She writes about magic like it's the most normal and most enigmatic thing there is, which is what makes me enjoy her stories so much. Sorrel is actively using all of her senses and experiences even the most ordinary things in a fascinating way. It was beautiful to see the world through her eyes. I liked reading about the plants she loves so much and Ellen Herrick's vibrant and colorful descriptions make them come to life incredibly well. I also loved the romantic aspect of The Forbidden Garden and the secrets that are being kept are quite interesting. Ellen Herrick has written a complete and unique story. I really enjoyed reading The Forbidden Garden, it's a gorgeous spellbinding story.

Rachel says

The Forbidden Garden was a delight to read. I felt immersed in life at Kirkwood. Herrick beautifully captures the imagination with descriptions of the grounds, the well-developed characters, endless, mouthwatering details about the food, and, of course, the planting knowledge of a true master gardener. The magical touches of the Sparrow sisters are woven throughout this rich novel. While the reveal of the mystery isn't much of a surprise, the journey to the book's climax is well worth it.

Having just finished The Secret Garden, this book was a brilliant follow up. The father, Graham, constantly reminded me of Lord Grantham from Downton Abbey. There are definite comparisons to Sarah Addison Allen and Kate Morton. I was just completely charmed. Highly recommended.

Marne Wilson says

I actually liked this book much more than The Sparrow Sisters, the first one in the series. The writing in this one was much more lyrical and descriptive. I also think I liked the rural English setting much better than the seaside New England village of the first one. However, this book was still far from perfect. A lot of the conflict felt manufactured to me, and I sometimes had trouble believing that any reasonable person would make certain decisions presented here as obvious. Still, if you like gardens, rural England, and romance, this isn't a bad way to pass some time.

(Note: I received an uncorrected proof of this book through a Goodreads First Reads giveaway.)

Trish says

The Forbidden Garden begins with an intriguing epigraph:

"Hiraeth

(n.) a homesickness for a home to which you cannot return, a home which maybe never was: the nostalgia, the yearning, the grief for the lost places of your past."

Sorrel Sparrow is a gardener, working with her sisters in New England. When she gets an unexpected opportunity to restore a Shakespearean garden, she travels to England. Her travels to Kirkwood Hall introduce her to a quirky and mysterious family. There is a long dormant garden with a dark, unknown history.

There are so many layers in this novel. There is Sorrel, with the unspoken sorrows in her past. There is her attraction to Andrew, Stella Kirkwood's brother, and the sadness and distance in his past.

There is the rumor of a Kirkwood family curse. There is the hall of tapestries with dark and frightening images, and a missing tapestry. There is a mysterious missing book.

There are also beautiful, lush descriptions of gardening and plants, as well as mouth watering descriptions of food and meals.

I loved the lyricism of descriptions in The Forbidden Garden. One perfect example:

"Here she was standing in the churchyard surrounded by headstones and a carpet of wandering bluebells. The young roses that climbed along the church walls and the bushy stands of rosemary at the door were as familiar as old friends. Wisteria, heavy with buds, twisted and clambered over the pergola. Sorrel was surprised to see passion-flower scaling the low iron fence surrounding the graveyard. Beloved plants - chamomile, lily of the valley, nigella, even dandelions - grounded her" (pp. 137 - 138).

The characterizations are equally nuanced. I cared about Sorrel and Andrew, and waited for their unknown pasts to unfold. I did not realize that another book, *The Sparrow Sisters*, preceded this one. Although *The Forbidden Garden* worked as a standalone novel, I feel I missed a lot of details because I have not (yet) read the first novel in this series.

That said, this was a fascinating read. I loved the sense of history (both personal history and history of a place) unfolding. There is an appealing element of fantasy, almost like a fairytale, about the Kirkwood garden and the Sparrow sisters. This quality was particularly appealing mixed in with the memorable characters and mysteries waiting to be solved. I enjoyed *The Forbidden Garden* and recommend it to other readers.

Deb says

"Hiraeth: a homesickness for a home to which you cannot return, a home which maybe never was: the nostalgia, the yearning, the grief for the lost places of your past."

The Forbidden Garden had me with the above epigraph. I have always believed the old adage, "you can't go home again"--at least not expecting it to be the same home that you left. Sorrell Sparrow hasn't left home quite yet when we meet her at the beginning of the book, but with some traumatic events that have occurred at the Sparrow family home and nursery in New England and her sisters both finding love, she hasn't felt at home lately. This makes the letter she receives from Sir Graham Kirkwood, offering her a professional opportunity to spend six weeks resurrecting the Shakespearean garden on the Kirkwood estate outside of London an opportunity to find her wings and she sets off on an adventure. It turns out that the garden is a disaster, there are dark secrets being kept at the manor along with a potential curse--but there is also a new group of friends, a potential love interest, and perhaps more than a little magic in the works.

The Forbidden Garden is a lovely book from the beautiful garden descriptions (it's strange since I don't have any kind of green thumb but gardens and novels with gardens always fascinate me) to all of the detailed food descriptions, making it a book I can easily curl up and get lost in. Ellen Herrick has a way of describing things that had me smelling the sweet peas and lavender and tasting the delicious bounty of fruits and vegetables in my mind. Not a book to read on an empty stomach! I took over three pages of food notes, so I am putting it on my foodie fiction shelf. The magical realism is woven into the story well--both the garden's magic and the magical gifts that Sorrel and her sisters seem to have. I like books where the magic is there but not too the point where it is too unbelievable. Sorrel is a likable character, as are the supporting characters--the Kirkwoods and their friends and family--even when they are not behaving at their best. My only real disappointment is that although I knew that Herrick had a previous book, The Sparrow Sisters, I for some reason didn't pay attention enough to realize that this book picks up where that one leaves off. It's a pet peeve of mine to read things out of order so I usually avoid it--but it's my own fault. I actually have The Sparrow Sisters downloaded on my Kindle to read but The Forbidden Garden was a bit late to arrive and by the time I figured out that reading the first book before The Forbidden Garden would make me happier, I didn't have the time. There is enough background given by the author that you have the gist of what happened to the sisters in the previous book, but that kind of bummed me out as now I know the outcome before I read that one. Anyway, all of my bookish OCD issues and need for order aside, it's a wonderful story that I recommend if you like stories set in the English country side, mysterious gardens, delicious food, and a little magic and mystery thrown in--I would just make sure to read The Sparrow Sisters first.

You can see my review, along with a recipe for an (absolutely delicious if I do say so myself) ;-) Asparagus Risotto with Sorrel-Spinach Pesto inspired by my reading on my blog post here:
kahakaikitchen.blogspot.com/2017/04/t...

Note: A review copy of the "The Forbidden Garden" was provided to me by the publisher, Harper Collins, and TLC Book Tours. I was not compensated for this review and as always, my thoughts and opinions are my own.

Jessica says

First off, let me say that The Forbidden Garden is both an absolutely enchanting and effortless read. It's the type of story that a reader can easily sink into, and while away the hours with. To me, it would be the perfect outdoor read. Something to spend those beach days, hammock days, or even camping days with. Ellen Herrick has made something beautiful here, and it's honestly rather intoxicating.

As a reader, I tend to gravitate towards characters who feel genuine. If the people I'm reading about attract me, I want to keep reading. Herrick has accomplished that handily. Sorrel and her sisters, despite the fact that

I hadn't yet read the book they are featured in, stole my heart. Their love was evident, as was the heartache that Sorrel still harbored. When Sorrel, and I at the same time, met the Kirkwoods I was head over heels in love. This family, despite their secrets kept, were just delightful. The romance that bloomed between Andrew and Sorrel especially stole my heart. It felt genuine, sweet, and honest, which is hard to do.

The story itself, that is the plot portion of it, started out really strong in my opinion. The rambling estate of Kirkwood Manor was just as charming as the people in it, and as the history began to unfold I was intrigued. However, as the book neared the mid-point, I felt like everything was being rushed to the conclusion. I would have loved to see more about the research that Stella was performing into the past, and possibly more about the whole mystery itself. The ending just felt anti-climactic, after all the tension leading up to it.

For a beautifully written setting, wonderful characters, and a rather interesting plot, I'll happily offer this book three stars. As I mentioned, it was an effortless and honestly enjoyable read. If you're looking for something light and airy, with characters who will make you fall in love, this is your next read.

Laura Valentine says

Slow, predictable and far too many references to the previous book (it really could have been a standalone). But overall a good semi-Gothic beach read.

Onceinablue moon says

4.5 I love an English garden and I was totally smitten in the Shakespearean garden recreation. First I must say I have two homes, one by the sea, and one in the inland heat with a bountiful but completely neglected garden. For twenty years all I did was toil in my garden from sun up until sunset, the last 7 years I have lived in a cold wet foggy coast where nothing can survive the ceaseless winds, cold and deer. I happened to be inland while reading and listening to this, which made it almost a five star experience for me. I read curled in a gazebo while the fountain tinkled, surrounded by figs, berries, blossoms and blooms. I put on my headset and trimmed boxwood, vinca and burgmansias, all the while listening to them toil in the garden and greenhouse. I WAS LOVING IT! I am not sure I would have loved this on the cold coast, but today I was utterly delighted to feel the warm sun while listening to this perfect in the garden book. Although I wasn't wild about the sparrow sisters, it's great to read that first book to have the sisters in context. I totally enjoyed this, even if predictable it was a wonderful day in the garden to enjoy this fine book.

Patty says

This is the second book from the author featuring her mystical, gardening sisters. In the first book, The Sparrow Sisters, the women were introduced and with this book the eldest surviving sister, Sorrel is featured. There was much trauma in the first book that leads to the actions in The Forbidden Garden. You can easily read this book without having read the first but as is usual with a continuing series, having done so will enhance the experience.

Sorrel Sparrow has an uncanny ability with flowers. Her bouquets bring joy and her gardens are a joy to behold. There is no simple explanation for how she does what she does but her talents are sung far and wide.

She does make some people nervous but she tries to not let it bother her. A man in England with a garden in desperate need of help learns of Sorrel and writes to her to come and bring his Shakespeare Garden back to life – his family history is dark and he fears that there is something evil that only a stranger can fix.

Sorrel agrees and finds herself falling in love with England, the estate and a special someone – but can she trust any of it? Or is it just being out of her element and away from her sisters?

I did enjoy this book. I really enjoyed The Sparrow Sisters and this sequel is also good – not as good in my opinion but still a good book. Ms. Herrick really brought both London and the English countryside to life for me as a reader. I wanted more history though – since the premise of the story was the evil in the garden and that evil was due to something that happened in the past I wanted (needed?) more of that part of the story. Maybe it's my love of historical fiction and I'm in the minority here, I don't know, but I feel that there was not enough. Other than that it was a good story with a bit of romance, a bit of magic and a touch of history. I do hope there will be further Sparrow Sisters books.
