



Heartbreak Hotel

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From Deborah Moggach, bestselling author of *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, comes another hilarious and romantic comedy, this time set in a run-down B&B in Wales.

When retired actor Buffy decides to up sticks from London and move to rural Wales, he has no idea what he is letting himself in for.

In possession of a run-down B&B that leans more towards the shabby than the chic and is miles from nowhere, he realises he needs to fill the beds - and fast.

Enter a motley collection of guests: Harold, whose wife has run off with a younger woman; Amy, who's been unexpectedly dumped by her (not-so) weedy boyfriend and Andy, the hypochondriac postman whose girlfriend is much too much for him to handle.

But under Buffy's watchful eye, this disparate group of strangers find they have more in common than perhaps they first thought...

Heartbreak Hotel Details

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From Reader Review Heartbreak Hotel for online ebook

Shelleystrae at Book'd Out says

When aging actor Russell 'Buffy' Buffery inherits a B&B in rural Wales he stuns his family and friends by abandoning London to run it. Buffy finds he enjoys his role as host, but the crumbling manor is in desperate need of maintenance, and a steady occupancy rate, and he needs to find a way to fix it before it all falls down around him.

The premise of Heartbreak Hotel, and the reputation of author Debbie Moggach, is what drew me to select this novel for review, unfortunately I was disappointed by the novel's structure. The drawn out stories of some of the individuals who eventually wind up at Heartbreak Hotel seemed disconnected to the narrative and the idea of the 'Courses for Divorcees' was terrific but never fully exploited. The last half of the book, when the characters are brought together, is much stronger than the first.

I did like the Moggach's characters, most of them find themselves at the B&B after a disappointment of some sort or another. Buffy is an interesting man, he had a successful career as an actor but now aged 70 he is reinventing himself as well as grappling with the missteps he made as a husband and father. For many the guests of Myrtle House their stay at the B&B has surprising consequences including new love and the kindling of new dreams.

Heartbreak Hotel is often amusing and has some charm, but ultimately it was just an OK read for me.

Shannon (Giraffe Days) says

Retired actor Russell "Buffy" Buffery is in his 70s, has been married three times and has children with four, all adults now, some of them even middle-aged. When his dear friend Bridie dies and leaves him her B&B, Myrtle House, in a small Welsh town called Knockton near the border, Buffy decides - despite his children's scoffing - to pack up his dingy London flat and move there to embark on a new venture.

The hotel itself is an old Georgian building with dated wallpaper and a leaking roof. It does come with one blessing however, in the form of Voda, a local woman who had cooked and cleaned for Birdie and who is willing to come back and continue the job - and she's an excellent cook. Buffy quite enjoys playing the host and many times on a rainy day his guests end up in his back parlour, drinking wine and discussing their marital problems with him. When his daughter Nyange, an accountant, looks over his books and tells him he needs a plan quick-smart or the place will fall down for want of repairs, he comes up with the idea of offering courses to divorcees who are lacking the skill their partner contributed, be it cooking, gardening or fixing the car. The course Buffy himself is planning on teaching is one for the men on how to talk to women.

None of the classes go quite to plan, of course, but they are still successful in their own way. An unplanned side-effect is the number of people who come for a course and end up partnered - including his own step-daughter India, who arrives to help one weekend and ends up staying on. Along the way several people find happiness, often in unexpected ways, not least of which is Buffy himself, the quintessential lover of women even now.

I knew I was in for a good read when Moggach made me laugh within the first few pages. It has the taste and flavour of a good, solid BBC drama, one with a pleasing blend of rural life, quirky characters and humour. It wasn't the same as watching *Hamish Macbeth* or *Heartbeat* or *Ballykissangel* (you can tell how long it's been since I've had the chance to watch any British TV by how dated these examples are! Such a shame that Canadians don't watch much from there) but it had that kind of vibe, a mix of gritty real life and almost flippant, self-deprecatory humour. Having grown up on British TV as much as Aussie TV, I felt right at home. Deborah Moggach is probably best known for her previous book, *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* which was made into a film with Judi Dench, Maggie Smith and Bill Nighy, among others. I haven't seen that movie, and this is the first Moggach book I've read.

Buffy - a character from one of Moggach's previous books, *The Ex-Wives* - is such a character, surprisingly subtle rather than in-your-face, who manages to stay on good terms with his many exes, even the one who took his prized painting in the divorce settlement after claiming that she, a supposed artist, could better appreciate it. His children are just as wildly different as his wives - there's Quentin, forty-five and gay; Nyange who's half-black; Celeste, the daughter he never knew he had until she turned up on his doorstep in her twenties to meet him. And his thirty-something boys, Bruno and Tobias, who like to rib him. The only woman he didn't have children with was his third wife, Penny, a journalist.

Buffy remembered a rare family gathering, Nyange and Quentin sitting side by side, the black girl and the homosexual. Penny, his wife at the time, had gazed at them. 'Very Channel 4,' she had mused. 'Now all we need is the physically challenged.' She had glanced down at Buffy, who had ricked his back and was lying on the floor, propped up by cushions. 'Oh oh, there he is.' [p.9]

This isn't just Buffy's story; it alternates with the stories of Monica, an older woman who, as she thinks of it, gave away the best years of her life to a married man; Amy, a makeup artist on film and television crews who breaks up with her boyfriend after they slowly separate as friends and lovers; Harold, a writer whose wife Pia leaves him for a Japanese woman; and Andy, a tall, attractive postman who fell into marriage almost against his will and is the walking cliche of the quiet man suffering under his wife's constant barrage of demands and expectations. They are all very different people and come to different classes at Myrtle House - except for Andy, who is actually there for the fishing even though he could really use the class on talking to women.

There were times when I baulked at the casual use of relationship stereotypes, and yet Moggach always managed to rescue the story - and characters - from slipping too far in that direction. The saving was generally subtle and between-the-lines, like henpecked Andy, probably the most cliched of all the characters, who lives with a "blousy" woman who rather intimidates him. He can never seem to speak up for himself and be honest with her, and he seems to have no desire to really talk to her. All of that is perfectly clear, but is nicely balanced by the scene where he meets a local girl in Knockton and finds himself telling her things he's never told anyone before: what is unsaid but apparent is the simple truth that you don't have to change yourself to make a relationship work, you just need to meet the right person, someone you instinctively feel comfortable with and can trust. Andy didn't really need Buffy's course on how to speak to women, he just needed the right woman.

As entertaining as the story and characters and incidents are, it maintains a hardboiled realism throughout, a warts-and-all honesty that at times has an almost cruel humour to it, which you often find when the characters are middle-aged and older. Monica is the epitome of this, with her biting cynicism and prickly

demeanour. It can be hard to get close and comfortable with these kinds of characters, but it's still easy to sympathise and empathise with them - and relate to them. This is a very human story, frank and open, and in that frankness humour comes easily. It also allowed for less predictability, and not knowing what was going to happen to the characters or where they'd all end up made it even more fun.

Running through it all is a near-constant refrain, a recurring theme regarding the financial collapse of recent years and the fat bonuses the banks gave themselves despite it. It made the ending highly satisfying, even if I find it hard to believe that any executive would go along with it. It was probably the only part of the book that wasn't realistic, but it was a great way to end things. As for the Welsh setting, aside from the usual jokes about the unpronounceable place names, it wasn't very distinguishable from a rural English setting - the landscape isn't wildly different of course, but the culture didn't come across as very different either.

Over the course of the book, I came to feel close and familiar with Buffy and his sprawling family, as well as with those other, single characters that it focuses on. Between them they cover a wide breadth of relationship woes in many guises, between spouses, lovers, siblings and parent-children. The humour tended towards self-deprecating and biting, almost snarky at times, and no one was safe from it. I found that the way characters ended up together often came across as a bit convenient, mostly because the story focused on the drama that led up to it, not the coming-together itself. This is no romance novel! But it was a bit neat-and-tidy at the end of the day, which is satisfying but also oddly disappointing. Sometimes you just want to see a character stay single and be perfectly happy with it, because there are people like that and they don't often get reflected in fiction - instead being single continues to be portrayed as a kind of failure, something that needs to be fixed. Still, overall I really enjoyed this and would definitely like to read more of Moggach's books.

Joanne Moyer says

Retired actor Russell 'Buffy' Buffery is getting tired with his London life, so when he inherits a more shabby than chic B&B in Wales from an old friend, he decides to leave his old life and start a new one. He quickly realizes that while in a lovely setting, his B&B is in need of some work -- and some customers -- or he won't have it very long. He comes up with a theme as a kind of 'lonely hearts' hotel and offers classes for people whose significant others did the thing they could not -- like auto mechanics classes, cooking and gardening, classes, basic home repair, which he is also able to use to improve his 'Heartbreak Hotel'.

I really enjoyed this book with its great cast of characters, most of whom we first meet in brief narrations that explain how they came to be at the Heartbreak Hotel.

Deborah Moggach is also the author of The Great Exotic Marigold Hotel, which I've long wanted to read. There is also a previous book about 'Buffy' called The Ex-Wives Club which I have not read and found it didn't matter in relation to this book -- though I do plan to read it now

Catherine Robertson says

This book has 4 stars worth of charm and good humour, but its structure lolllops about like a boisterous puppy, leaving a trail of chewed up endings. Why spend so much time in Amy's head while her relationship isn't working only to view her from a distance when she finally meets Mr Right? Ditto Andy the postman:

two chapters, possibly more, on his marriage breakdown and then the instant he re-appears, he's matched to some campervan woman whom we've never met before (unless I missed something, which is possible, given that the book has a bigger cast than a Lord of the Rings battle scene). Deborah Moggach actually makes a sly little reference to this via Howard the novelist, who is gathering up everyone's stories as material for his next book, and who says something like, 'So many characters, so little time to do them all justice'. But I wanted EVERY storyline to have a satisfying ending, so even though I enjoyed this book thoroughly, I deducted one star for loose ends.

Karen says

Nice read with a few LOL moments. Having seen the marigold hotel film, and loving it, I must now go read the book!

Melinda says

Wonderful collection of characters ranging in age and background set in vividly depicted Wales. Moggach excels in characterization and setting, both detailed, virtually jumping off of the pages. The reader experiences a delineated treat with Moggach's intense descriptions.

A sweet story of average everyday people dealing with varying circumstances intersecting at Buffy's B&B searching for healing, closure or respite. Life challenges aren't always pretty, however, Moggach captures the narrative with great sentimentality along with plausibility. Humor patinas the intensity of the challenges faced by characters, offsets nicely.

No matter your age, a read all will enjoy and align with in at least some small way.

Sue says

I'm sort of sorry that "These Foolish Things" got retitled as "The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel" because that makes it seem that Deborah Moggach has embarked on a Hotel series. I suppose the hotel/B&B as a device for bringing together a motley crew of characters, each with their own back story, into one space is useful, but this book is not that formulaic. It is hugely entertaining and enjoyable, with a gentle humour, and I really got into the unfolding of the story. Indeed, we regular readers of Moggach's novels will relish the reacquaintance with some old friends (from The Ex-Wives). It would convert well to screenplay for large or small screen, and I think Michael Gambon would make an excellent Buffy. Really nice writing, too.

Sarah83 L says

Ein netter kleiner Roman für zwischendurch. Leider war vieles zu vorhersehbar.

Shonna Froebel says

This amusing novel is in the same style as her previous novel *These Foolish Things* (read before I started blogging), later made into the popular movie *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*. Here we have aging actor Russell "Buffy" Buffery, who is unhappy with the direction his London neighbourhood seems to be going on, taking a chance on the impulse to move to Wales. Why Wales? Well, an old friend of his has died and left him her bed and breakfast house in Knockton, and he decides to try running it himself. He comes up with the idea to add on a variety of courses to appeal to city folk, as package deals.

Buffy is a fascinating old charmer, who has had three wives (one now dead) and 5 children (by four different women, only two of them his wives). He has decent relationships with all his kids and his stepdaughter, and they all make appearances of some sort here.

Along the way we meet a variety of people all either looking for some sort of change in their life, or who have had change thrust upon them. As various courses attract them to Knockton, they find different sorts of change than they had been looking for, but mostly very satisfactory ones. From postmen to writers, makeup artists to bankers, we meet an interesting group of characters.

A humourous, upbeat novel that will have you laughing out loud, touched, and definitely entertained.

Anya Nielsen says

Heartbreak Hotel

by Deborah Moggach

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Why does a reader decide to read a particular book? What is the impetus? The reputation of the author? The genre? An intriguing synopsis? If I knew the answer I'd make a fortune.

The name—*Heartbreak Hotel*, caught my eye it was reminiscent of the 1960s—*Heartbreak Hotel* was the name of one of Elvis Presley's greatest hits. Was the book about Elvis? I turned to the synopsis—a romance, nothing to do with him. The new book I'm writing is a romance set in the 1960s. Reviews indicated the author Deborah Moggach is the author of *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, a bestseller, which was made into a movie; one that I, along with many others, have enjoyed immensely—that was the clincher, I had to read this book.

Deborah Moogach has written 18 novels. Buffy is a boozy character from her novel *Ex-Wives*. He has resurfaced as the central character in *Heartbreak Hotel*. This light story takes place in Wales. Although a huge cast the story is not convoluted nor complicated as the various characters pass through the doors of the hotel to interact with each other and form some unlikely relationships.

The plot is simple but a great idea and it could very likely be a viable business model for some enterprising person who is both raconteur and lover of strangers. In essence a retired person wishing nothing more than a glass of red and a good listener who has time to spare.

Buffy, a creative problem solver, finds a way to have his newly acquired house renovated, the garden remodelled and his car repaired, all free of charge. His great idea is the basis for a huge cast of probable and improbable events that the reader will find enthralling over almost 300 pages of easy reading.

Moggach produces a clever way to get all the characters back together for the surprise ending. Sure to be made into another successful movie. A relaxing read.

Ginni says

One of my favourite authors - I whipped through this and found it laugh-out-loud funny. Some of the observations by the 60 something characters were so true as to be uncomfortable - but hilarious. There was a fair bit of pathos - and I suppose the way everything works out in the end is unrealistic - but I still stormed through this and thoroughly enjoyed it. I'll look for the other book about Buffy - 'The ex-wives.' Moggach has moved away from the more 'serious' themes of her early writing - but on the other hand, when one is older, perhaps a lighter touch and the promise of late-blooming happiness are what you want to hear about, even if it's unlikely to work that way in real life.

Adri says

Engaging

It was a light and easy read. The characters are likable, the setting is agreeable, the story a bit unlikely, but still believable. A nice Sunday read.

Joanne says

A charming, witty, slightly quirky tale of a thrice divorced retired actor and his attempt to run a B&B. There are lots of characters and my head was swimming with them at first, but if you just let that wash over you it all ties itself together in an endearing happily ever after kind of way. This is fun fiction at its best.

Lisa says

This book has very mixed reviews on here but I got it in an audible sale and decided to try it anyway.

I'm so glad I did as I really enjoyed it! It's a cosy family drama, more on the romantic side than the dramatic side so I surprised myself by liking it so much.

Buffy is a retired actor looking for a new challenge so when an old friend bequeathed him her B&B he moves from London to Wales to make a go of things. Not only do we get to know Buffy and follow his story but we also meet his family, friends and hotel guests who have their own little stories... within the story.

It's a bit cheesy but it's also very funny and heart-warming.

It's not my normal kind of read but I really enjoyed it and how it made me feel.

Thinking about our lives and how various people impact them and how you can have a whole new lease of life at any age has given me a lot of food for thought.

Sally says

Hugely disappointing.

I've read almost all Deborah Moggach's novels, including Best Exotic Marigold Hotel back when it was called These Foolish Things, so I approached this with high expectations.

But by the time I got to page fifty or so, I'm afraid I'd realised this one's a dud.

I think the problem is that there are too many characters spread too thinly across the narrative, which is partly because of the way the book is structured.

Couldn't help comparing it to Maeve Binchy's final novel, A Week in Winter. Binchy had a genius for character (right up there with Dickens) and needed just a few lines to produce a person you felt you knew - or wanted to know. Whereas even when I got to the home straight of Heartbreak Hotel, I was still thinking "Who's he, exactly?" Never good.

I think the story this would work much better as a screenplay - and suspect that is the intention.
