



Christmas Secrets by the Sea

Jane Lovering

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Sometimes you don't get the Christmas presents you imagined...

Tansy Merriweather is down on her luck. She's lost her business and her relationship, and instead of a glamorous London apartment, her home is now a campervan on a Dorset beach. And as if things couldn't get any worse, a scruffy dog called Brian with a taste for sardines has adopted her as his owner.

When Tansy's new-found friends at the cafe in the bay help her find a job as a location scout for a new TV show, things start looking up. However, she soon discovers that the show's glamorous star, Davin O'Riordan, is as grouchy as he is handsome – and just as Brian starts forging a touching romance with Davin's elegant whippet Seelie, Tansy begins to wonder exactly what Davin's fans see in him.

As Christmas approaches, Tansy and Davin discover each other's secrets, and a new bond begins to grow between them. But how will they cope with the storms headed their way – and can they save the cafe from closing?

Christmas Secrets by the Sea Details

Date : Published December 13th 2018 by Farrago

ISBN :

Author : Jane Lovering

Format : Kindle Edition 202 pages

Genre : Romance, Fiction, Contemporary, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit



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From Reader Review Christmas Secrets by the Sea for online ebook

Rhoda Baxter says

I'm a fan of Jane's books, so when I saw an ARC was available, I snapped it up and read it straight away. Tansy is living in a camper van (in winter!) and is currently parked up somewhere near the Dorset coast. Something has happened to her in the past and she's mostly trying not to think about it. She's been adopted by a smelly dog called Brian. I love the idea of Brian, but I don't think I'd like to meet him in real life. Not unless he's been thoroughly washed first.

Davin is an up and coming Irish actor who is in Dorset filming a thing about life guards. He's quite grumpy. Tansy ends up having to 'babysit' Davin - as in get him away from set for a day so that he and his co-star don't end up killing each other. Davin has secrets of his own. He also has a bitch called Seelie ... whom Brian seems to be in love with.

Davin is lovely and unusually emotionally intelligent. Tansy is just the right amount of prickly. There's a lot of weather in this book - wet, mainly. There's also a nice little foray into Christmas Steepleton (as featured in The Boys of Christmas, which I love dearly).

All in all, another great read from Jane Lovering.

Usual disclaimer - I know Jane in real life, but I was a fan of her books well before I met her. I received an ARC of this book from the publisher (thank you!).

Amanda says

This was a fun to read holiday romance. A fast read, but by no means without substance or depth. I found the main characters to be realistic and believable, likeable but with flaws. There are also a couple dogs in the story, which help round out the plot and move it along in spots. I enjoyed getting to know the back stories of some of the main characters, and look forward to reading more in future books in this series. There are some funny moments, some sad moments, some nail-biting moments, and some moments that may make you say, "Awww!" I enjoyed my first Jane Lovering book and can't wait to read my next!

I received an advance copy of this book. This review contains my honest thoughts and opinions.

Alison says

Tansy Merriweather has pretty much hit rock bottom, in the last year she has lost her successful cupcake business, her business partner/ lover, her home and her money. Now she's living in a decrepit caravan on a Dorset beach. When she befriends the single mother who runs an isolated cafe nearby she hears about a TV crew which is filming a series in a nearby cove who might need someone to run odd jobs. When Tansy approaches the crew she finds out that she knows the director from when she lived in London. He suggests she could help the crew enormously by scouting for locations for a new series and taking the obnoxious male star with her, he and his female co-star are impossible when working together.

Davin O'Riordan isn't the man the PR people make him out to be, he isn't the man he pretends to be, he has lots of secrets but for some reason he likes Tansy, she's the only woman who doesn't swoon at his feet and who sees more than just a former model turned actor. But can two people learn to trust each other?

If I say that this book contains a sexy Irish actor, a teenage boy with a bottomless stomach, a single mother, Christmas, a vegan actress, a beautiful whippet and a smelly stray dog, and quaint English villages would you be interested? Yes, me too. This was charming, funny and a saccharine-free holiday romance. Maybe if I was being *really* picky I would have preferred fewer flashbacks to Davin's past (which didn't generally seem to add much) and maybe more to Tansy's past which (to me) still remains somewhat shrouded in mystery.

Overall, if Poldark revs your engine then I think you'll like Davin, he's been described as looking like Chris Hemsworth and Aidan Turner had a baby!

Recommended for fans of Sue Moorcroft.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher via NetGalley in return for an honest review.

Bumped for release.

Nessa says

One of the reasons I chose to read this book is because I thoroughly enjoyed the author's previous book 'Little Teashop of Horrors' and the other reason is I thought it'd be Christmas themed, but to be honest there wasn't much of a Christmas feel to it at all nor much festivities.

However despite that it was still a good read, a very well thought out story that is quite emotional at times and heartfelt in places throughout the story.

I loved getting to know the characters some of whom were a hoot as they came out with some very weird words and phases. The two dogs Brian and Seelie were certainly unique and I loved how they had their own little storylines going on.

Looking forward to reading the second book to the series.

Cecelia says

actual rating: 2.5 stars

I basically only read romance novels lounging on the beach in the middle of summer or curled up on my couch leading up to Christmas. This book was both a Christmas "snowmance" and a beach read!!!

There's just something about reading Christmas books that automatically attracts me, even if I wouldn't pick it up the other 11 months out of the year.

This is a very stereotypical Christmastime story: two strangers, Tansy and Davin, meet (by the beach!!) and

in the whirlwind of real-life struggles camouflaged by the holiday season, they get thrown together. After some tense words and exchanges, they may or may not fall in love!

I really enjoyed Dorset and the small, beach town vibe this story had. I had a very clear image of what the world looked like to them, and I enjoyed how the language and details matched up with the setting.

The writing style was okay; not necessarily my favorite but not bad enough to make me want to stop reading. The dialogue was extremely cheesy and forced at times. The corniest factor didn't bother me as much because it fit in nicely with the story and the setting, but sometimes the characters felt awkward saying their lines.

I didn't enjoy Tansy at all, but I did sympathize with her. I enjoyed seeing her grow as a character throughout the story and rebuild herself, although I wish she could've done on her own without Davin's help. By the end of the story, I didn't feel her character development had changed all that much, but there was still something.

One of my struggles with this story was how repetitive Tansy (and therefore, the writing) was. She would constantly repeat the same catchphrases to other characters, and when she started thinking and getting in her head, unfortunately it was easy for me to gloss over her complaints.

Davin, however, was such a fun character! I loved his storyline and learning more about him as the story progressed. He had some funny one-liners and honestly was not nearly as annoying as I was anticipating or as he was described.

Tansy and Davin's relationship started off great. There was definitely a lot of tension at the beginning and I really enjoyed reading their scenes together. There was definitely a strong build up to their romantic relationship, but when it finally got there I felt it was a bit forced and rushed and not as passionate as I would've liked.

This book took me weeks to read, but then I ended up reading the last 25% in an evening. I'm honestly surprised my eyes didn't roll right out of my head, there was just so much cringing!

Honestly, if you're reading this review in December and specifically looking for a Christmastime read, then definitely try it. I didn't feel like it was a waste of my time by reading it and the enjoyable scenes definitely stick out. There wasn't honestly a specific scene that was terrible, just some of the dialogue was so awkward!

The other 11 months of the year... hard pass thank you, next.

I received an eARC via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Rekha Rao says

The story was charming, heart-warming and at times, heart-wrenching. Davin is a famous model-turned-actor and has a lot of secrets in life. Tansy's also been through a lot and has been carrying her grief, bundled tightly. And though they don't gel well initially, as time passes by, they find comfort and consolation in sharing secrets with each other.

Christmas Secrets by the Sea is the story of love, hope, and life. It makes you laugh. It also makes you cry.

Tansy's grief makes you cry. Davin's childhood memories makes you sad. But past is now a memory. How two individuals, who have had difficult times in the past, meet and find hope is well portrayed in this story.

The twist in the story was when Davin's very curious to know if Tansy's signed the non-disclosure agreement. And when he recruits her as his assistant, Tansy puts two and two together and finds out the truth behind Davin desperately wanting an assistant.

The story is engaging and keeps you hooked on till the end. Lovering's writing style is superb. When you think that the story is going to end on a good note, there's a twist. And of course, all's well that ends well. The story does have a happy ending or two. There's a little bit of humor too but the story is inclined towards human emotions.

The characters are unique, with each of them having a story of their own. The characters and their stories are beautifully amalgamated into one big story. Life gives you second chances, never lose hope and faith in yourself and you are not alone, not even during your tough times - these are the things you get to take away from this book.

Evelina | AvalinahsBooks says

Tansy's not having the best days of her life – she's running from a lost business and a broken heart, and a whole lot of guilt, shame and disappointment, when she is '*found*' by a scruffy dog and a couple of situations that lead one into the other. Tansy ends up working an odd job for a TV show filming crew she runs into, which essentially means babysitting a really cocky actor and a super patronizing co-star of his. Angry at her life, or rather, the lack of logic in the fact that this is now somehow her life, Tansy is not in the best place when the story starts out. Meanwhile, Davin is your traditional brooding hero: handsome, but utterly full of... 'stuff' on the outside. In the end, you'll probably find out he's not actually like that, but he'll do a great job of convincing you he's not worth the air he's breathing at first. It's not long before he opens up to Tansy, and through her – to us, and shows just exactly what he is protecting so much with such a harsh picture on the outside.

If you're expecting open romance, well, that's not how this book is. *I would say, this is more of a slice of life story, where the characters are struggling with disappointment and their respective pasts, trying to make something of their lives, and as a result, something comes from it.* It's a very unobtrusive, silent kind of story. *At first I was going to give it 3 stars because I couldn't connect to the characters and what was going on, but then the real reasons behind their actions came out, and they were deep and troubled – I was mesmerized.* If at first the book seems like just another story, by the end it will have you exploring the deep pains of the human condition, betrayal by the closest people you have and coming to terms with it all. It's done beautifully through dialogue between the two main characters and it had me glued to the pages past the halfway point. I really do recommend this book, but I have to warn about triggers as well. But the trigger is a spoiler, so if you want to risk it, please don't keep reading. Triggers include: (view spoiler)

I thank the publisher for giving me a free copy of the book in exchange for an honest review. This has not affected my opinion.

Anne says

I've often said that my Christmas wouldn't be complete without a book from Jane Lovering – and with this lovely read, it most certainly is. It's one of those books you could happily read at any time of the year, set at Christmas but not overflowing with tinsel and lights, full of lovely characters whose life stories tug at your heartstrings and instantly make them your new best friends as you watch them stumble their way to a hoped for happy ending. Davin did take a while to win my heart – turning on his film star smile for all his adoring fans, being a thoroughly miserable sod when in lovely Tansy's company, until things start to simmer a little.

Goodness, what dreadful lives these characters have had – I liked the way Davin's back story was slowly revealed, punctuating the present day story, and poor Tansy's rather been through the mill too. I so enjoyed the whole story, full of the most wonderfully drawn characters – including some lovely cameos of friends some readers will remember from Christmas Steepleton. The TV show encampment makes a great backdrop and location for developing some of the more minor characters, combining the world of the cafe and its problems with the catering van and its customers.

And if I'm discussing characters, I can't possibly leave out Brian. I'm really not a very doggy person, but he's SO wonderful. Ok, he smells a bit, and you might not want to run your hands through his fur (even if that were possible), but with apologies to the two-legged variety he was my favourite character in the whole book. He doesn't talk – that would be just silly – but he expresses so much emotion with a twist of his eyebrows or a joyful gallop along a windswept beach. I just loved his romance with pedigree Seelie, described as "Dennis the Menace in hot pursuit of... Claudia Schiffer" – not the only romance in the book by any means, but the one that perhaps most filled me with joy.

And I'm not usually particularly keen on teenagers either, but I really liked Rory. I'm no expert, but he was tremendously "real" to me – I loved his excitement and enthusiasm about little things, the caring and warm heart under the gruff exterior, the archetypal difficult teenager sometimes letting out the little boy within.

The other thing that'll really stick in your mind from this book is the atrocious weather – not the crisp snow you might have expected, but the sort of biblical rain and ferocious wind I always thought was more of a Yorkshire speciality. The descriptions are wonderful – but I might just avoid Dorset in future at this time of the year, particularly if I'm in a camper van.

The writing, as always, is superb – Jane Lovering has that ability to choose exactly the right words and images to make you laugh, with a wonderful touch of the ridiculous, then moving seamlessly to a scene of such poignancy that it catches your breath. If you've never read one of her books before, do give this one a try – I really think it might be my new favourite. But if you have already discovered her writing, I expect you'll already be looking forward to reading this one over Christmas – and I promise you'll enjoy every moment.

Berit??? says

A heartwarming and heartwrenching read full of emotion and hope!

This is not a light fluffy Christmas story, this is a book full of emotion and struggle that will take you on a

wonderful journey... as you all know I adore a fun festive story, but this book took hold of my heart and did not let go until the bitter end... an emotional ride that will make you smile, make you laugh, make you angry, make you cry, but at the end of the day it will leave you with a warm toasty feeling in your heart.... I truly loved this story from first page to last, I was completely captivated by these characters!

Tansy has lost everything her company, her boyfriend, her beautiful flat... The only thing she has left from her old life is a camper van, so she sets off in her van to temporarily live on the beach... Tansy finds herself in a small village where she befriends the owner of a café and her son, and takes a job as a TV location scout... turns out part of the job is taking care of the grumpy, grouchy, brooding, star Devin... i'm sure you can figure out where this is going? But let me tell you it was so much more than your typical romance, these two characters had some major depth and some major baggage... not to mention two adorable dogs who had a love story of their very own!

This was a very slow burning realistic romance full of angst and misunderstanding... both Tansy and Davin were likable sympathetic characters... both of their backstories were quite heartbreakingly sad, but I loved reading about what made them the people they are today.... The secondary characters added so much charm to the story even the obnoxious vegan actress... this is the first book in the series, and I am really hoping that we will revisit these characters in future books...

Strongly encourage you to pick this up if you are a fan of a well done romance with some depth and emotion? don't let the title fool you, this book can be read any time of the year!

*** many thanks to the author and the publisher for my copy of this book ***

Rachel Simson says

I didn't get far with this book. The sentences are really long and over-descriptive, and because of this I struggled to concentrate on the story and get involved in it.

Kim says

Not much Christmas in this book. Maybe this should just be called Secrets By the Sea and not be pushed into the snowmance category.

I'm not entirely sure how I felt about this book. Tansy was a very annoying character and Davin wasn't much better. The book may have been a better read if it focused on Karen and Neil or Kee or Larch. Basically anyone who isn't Tansy or Davin.

Overall it wasn't a bad read but it wasn't a good read either. I'm not sure why throughout the whole book no one thought to give poor Brian the dog a good bath. Instead they all just complained about how smelly and dirty he was.

Karen Whittard says

Not come across this author before. But I highly enjoyed this book. it's heartwarming, engaging, entertaining. And full of all the Christmas sparkle and spirit without being fluffy or over the top. All characters were great, both two legged and four legged

I look forward to reading other books by this writer.

Highly recommended!

Jennifer says

I really liked this book. I've read a couple of Jane Lovering's other books and they are always a bit of a different type of romance. In general, I find British romance to be "slower" than American romance. This isn't a bad thing. What I'm trying to say is that the British romance authors that I've read seem to develop their MCs and the connection between them much more than the typical American romance. There's rarely a case of insta-lust and there is usually a firm friendship developing before the hero and heroine become intimate. I love the pacing of such romances, but compared to American romances, where I swear it's almost required that the MCs become intimate by (if not before) the 50% mark, British romances often seem slower paced. Such is the case for Christmas Secrets by the Sea. There is so much going on with both Tansy and Davin and the author takes the time to develop their personalities and form a strong connection between them. They both have hard outer shells, and what is initially visible on the surface is not at all what is going on beneath those shells but those inner layers are revealed slowly and only after they've built up some trust.

I also find it interesting that the book is being marketed as a Christmas story. Although it's set at that time of year, and there is talk and scenes of the holidays, it doesn't have much of a typically "christmasy", celebratory, or holiday feel, it's much more serious than that. However, the underlying theme of the book is forgiveness and redemption, so the title is appropriate in that sense. Jane Lovering also did a fantastic job in evoking the feeling of winter, paralleling how barren Tansy feels inside after losing everything that was important to her. I felt cold most of the time as I was reading the descriptions of the Dorset coast and the wild winter winds and storms. Overall, a great job in evoking the time and place and drawing the reader into the story. I also have to mention Brian and Seelie, the two dogs owned by Tansy and Davin. They were both smart and adorable and I loved the little romance that developed between them also. If you are a pet lover, there are plenty of scenes with both of them, they aren't just window dressing.

I received this book from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Barb (Boxermommyreads) says

"Christmas Secrets by the Sea" is just the kind of book I like to read during the holiday season. Christmas is present but it isn't thrown in your face and there is a lot going on besides just cute romance. In the beginning of the book, the reader is introduced to Tansy and a scraggly stray she eventually names Brian. We know that Tansy is down on her luck, just recently losing her business, her home and her boyfriend. She has chosen to park her caravan on Dorset Beach and wait out the holidays. What she doesn't plan on is meeting new people and learning that sometimes you really can choose your own family.

There's lots to love about this book. There is a wonderful small town feel and as Tansy discovers a new job

scouting filming locations for a local production company, she meets many new, wonderful and nerve-racking individuals. There is also a great puppy love story between Brian and a whippet named Seelie - talk about odd couples. There is some romance thrown into this book so if that turns you off, then you won't want to give it a go. But it's not over-the-top and it's actually a love-to-hate trope which I am finding I enjoy quite a bit. And there are some pretty dark secrets which are exposed by the end and it only made me love Tansy and Davin even more.

I probably wouldn't pick a book like this up to read most of the year but it was a perfect fit for the holiday season. And come on, with Brian and Seelie, you pretty much know it's going to be something I enjoy. I'm curious about the rest of the series when it releases because if it focuses on some of the characters we've already met, I'm anxious to see where it's headed.

Maria says

"Received an Advance Reader Copy in exchange for a fair review"

What an entertaining, wonderful story. I was immediately absorbed by these two broken people – Davin and Tansy – and their initial mutual hostility was really well written.

Our aloof hero, Davin, is a great addition to the gallery of wounded heroes, hiding beneath layers of broodiness, rudeness and the “sulk factor” a great deal of vulnerability and a really caring and nice person. I loved how the author, Jane Lovering, slowly revealed the solitary man and the “lost boy with his dog” of the past. I also liked the fact that he and his family managed to succeed despite all the problems. However, I would have liked his secret to be more elaborated.

Tansy is a great heroine, too, her humor and sarcasm always tempered with intelligence and an innate kindness.

I loved the vivid descriptions of the Dorset coast, the secondary characters; and, finally, the dogs, Brian and Seelie: they are characters in its own right, with their animal personalities and quirks. They are endearing and so fun to read.

I'm grateful to the publisher, Farrago, and NetGalley for providing a free copy
