



## Summer Rental: A Novel

*Mary Kay Andrews*

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Sometimes, when you need a change in your life, the tide just happens to pull you in the right direction...

Ellis, Julia, and Dorie. Best friends since Catholic grade school, they now find themselves, in their mid-thirties, at the crossroads of life and love. Ellis, recently fired from a job she gave everything to, is rudderless and now beginning to question the choices she's made over the past decade of her life. Julia--whose caustic wit covers up her wounds--has a man who loves her and is offering her the world, but she can't hide from how deeply insecure she feels about her looks, her brains, her life. And Dorie has just been shockingly betrayed by the man she loved and trusted the most in the world...though this is just the tip of the iceberg of her problems and secrets. A month in North Carolina's Outer Banks is just what they each of them needs.

Ty Bazemore is their landlord, though he's hanging on to the rambling old beach house by a thin thread. After an inauspicious first meeting with Ellis, the two find themselves disturbingly attracted to one another, even as Ty is about to lose everything he's ever cared about.

Maryn Shackelford is a stranger, and a woman on the run. Maryn needs just a few things in life: no questions, a good hiding place, and a new identity. Ellis, Julia, and Dorie can provide what Maryn wants; can they also provide what she needs?

Mary Kay Andrews' novel is the story of five people questioning everything they ever thought they knew about life. Five people on a journey that will uncover their secrets and point them on the path to forgiveness. Five people who each need a sea change, and one month in a summer rental that might just give it to them.

*Summer Rental* is one of *Library Journal*'s Best Women's Fiction Books of 2011

## Summer Rental: A Novel Details

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# From Reader Review Summer Rental: A Novel for online ebook

## Jeanne says

I won an advanced copy of this book from a First Reads giveaway here on Goodreads.

I'd never read anything by Mary Kay Andrews before but I had heard good things about some of her other novels. I hate that this was my first of her books because I really struggled with it. It was my understanding that Mary Kay Andrews writes fun and quick "beach reads" so I already had somewhat lowered expectations for this and I was still disappointed.

The whole thing felt too contrived for me to become attached to any of the characters. None of the situations that these characters found themselves in felt at all organic and none of the story lines meshed very well together. I also felt that the novel was about 100 pages too long.

I was hoping for a fun chick-lit read but what I actually got was a jumbled mess of overreaching story lines that felt more like several story outlines super-glued together to make one novel.

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## Carrie says

Cute and predictable!

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## Chris Mara says

I wasn't sure if I was in the mood for an easy light hearted chick-lit read, but I did end up enjoying it very much! It's a great beach/poolside read, summer vacation book. It's not heavy in plot, but it's cozy and easy flowing, about three women who have been fast friends from their early days. Each one has a different personality and background. Each one comes to the beach cottage (Ebbtide), which they rented for the month with some kind of issue in their lives - job loss, impending divorce, betrayal, commitment issues, etc. The ladies are: Ellis, Julia and Dorie. Add Ty, the hunky landlord aka "Mr. Culpepper" who hides behind his landlord status and resides next door in the garage. Add Maryn, a well to do stranger on the run, who needs a place to stay and ends up taking a vacant bedroom at Ebbtide with the others, with some hesitation and suspicion.

The story flows easy - longtime girlfriends getting together at a summer beach house in North Carolina. There are a lot of other issues/distractions that come into the story and the group pulls together to sort it all out. And there are happy endings for everyone at the end. Corny, some may say, but really, so what? I like happiness. I like when things work out when so often in life, they don't normally do.

I've read some reviews that rated this book poorly and said it was lame with poor character development, plot. Honestly, I don't know what was expected. If you are familiar with the author, you already know her style. And...The title of the book is "Summer Rental," the story is about three good friends renting a cottage on the beach for a month. How simple is that? This book is not trying to be something it's not. It's a casual,

noncomplicated read, sprinkled with some unexpected situations for added zest. Yes, the reader may think some situations are stupid or you may get a flashback to the 80's with some character's inane statement or description of their hairstyle or dress. Mind you, these ladies are now in their mid- thirties; it wasn't that long ago for them to completely shuck their young past. Some things just stay with you. Who doesn't carry some sort of character identity from their younger days? I certainly do!

I would have liked to be a girlfriend with this group on their beach vacation. Not for a month, but maybe a week? ?

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## **Mary Ronan Drew says**

Whenever I state categorically that I don't read some genre (Sci Fi, romance, self-help, memoirs of abuse in childhood, violent suspense) somebody strongly recommends a book in one of those categories and I find myself enjoying it despite it's genre. I don't read chick lit, or romance, or beach books. But when Wilhelm's sister was visiting recently she gave me Summer Rental saying Mary Kay Andrews is one of her favorite authors, and as I know Betty Boop doesn't read trash I gave it a try. And to my surprise I rather liked it.

We have three 30-something women who grew up as best friends in Savannah. They are now spending a month in a ratty old beach house on North Carolina's Outer Banks, renewing their close friendships, and sharing the career and romantic difficulties they face, some of which are pretty daunting.

Ellis is a banker - or rather she was a banker before she lost her job after 11 years of hard work and neglect of her private life in favor of her career. What's next for her? Julia is a model, working these days for catalogs like J C Penny. She hates her job but she can't seem to make a commitment to her boyfriend, who wants to marry her. Dorie is a schoolteacher with more problems than she can count. Her husband has announced he is gay and is divorcing her, she is in a nasty bickering triangle with her mother and sister, and she realizes after she has split up with her husband that she is pregnant. Where will she live? Will she be able to keep her job ( the school has a policy about ex-husbands and wives both teaching there)? How can she tell her mother about this? Will her sister help or hinder?

Add a fourth woman, Madison, a run-away wife who keeps to herself but pays the rent, which the others need badly. The reader knows that her husband has been stealing millions from the companies he works with and has threatened to kill her, but the three friends just think Madison needs to get away for a while. Until they discover \$100,000 and a gun in her room.

The house they are renting is old and beautiful and has been in the landlord's family for generations. But Ty Bazemore, the owner, is about to lose his beloved house to foreclosure. So he rents the house during the summer and lives above the garage. Not wanting to be bothered by renters' complaints, he does the rental by text messages and calls himself Mr Culpepper. The super-organized Ellis repeatedly sends Mr Culpepper texts complaining of too few dishes in the kitchen, a drippy faucet, fleas, and much else, not realizing that the man she is complaining to is the hunk living next door.

I dare say for some this is a boringly familiar sort of plot, but as "I don't read chick lit" it's not an old story for me. The author writes smoothly and the characters are slowly revealed as the month goes on and they confess their problems to one another and work together on solutions. The mysterious fourth renter becomes less mysterious and Ellis and Ty get to know one another much better. Nothing is jarringly unrealistic.

Food and clothes in a novel always interest me and there are plenty of both in this story. The author never takes herself too seriously, often using a bit of sly humor. The women and Ty are likeable. There is a scene of threatened violence but even that is played with an undercurrent of semi-slapstick. And the Outer Banks and the Atlantic are lovingly portrayed.

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## **Dianne says**

Summer Rental by Mary Kay Andrews

Considering that this is a book about women in their mid thirties, who are educated and worldly I had to say I was rather amazed at how Ms Andrews portrayed them.

We get to spend the month of August with best friends since elementary school—meet Julie, Ellis and Dorie who are spending the month in a beach house on the outer banks of North Carolina. A very diverse group of women that in “real life” may never bond as well as this group does. Add into the mix the sexy landlord Ty and a stray woman (Maryn, a ‘run-away’ from New Jersey) that Dorie picks up in a diner and we have the makings for either the perfect beach book or a slasher movie! Of course, what would a good beach read be without at least one of them hiding a secret...well how would you feel about at least 4 of them hiding something and one of them hiding something that could be deadly?

The idea behind this story, while is good one, it has been pretty much done to death and I hate to say it, done so much better. Don’t get me wrong, I adore the books of Mary Kay Andrews and have all of them on my shelf. Therefore, I was very excited to be allowed to read this as a pre-release. And this books starts out very strong, with Ms Andrews typical well written and drawn characters, each with a clear and distinctive voice. However, something happens about one third of the way through and the voices of each woman became one, and actually even Ty started sounding like one of the ‘girls’. In addition, when I say that I mean GIRL as in this group of mid thirty-something successful women start sounding like badly educated adolescents. Words like “dude” and “totally” were used on nearly every page and in every conceivable variation.

I understand that this is a brain candy beach read, so I tried to read this with that in mind, but after a while, the dialogue just got too painful, the action to childish and the outcome too obvious.

Definitely a book to grab from the library.

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## **Nicole says**

I didn't realize this was the same author as a book to which I gave one star until after I purchased it. It was an ok read. Some of the turns of phrase in this book (and in her other one), struck me as...racist. I'm sure the author meant everything in a benign way (or, at most, in a damn-you-PC-people-I'm-not-racist way). I'm sure I'm just a bleeding heart, overly PC type. But, it bothered me, and took away from the otherwise summertime escapism of this beach read.

The good thing is that I will now remember NOT to read anything by Mary Kay Andrews again. :)

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## **Stina says**

These women were idiots. All of them.

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## **Kelby (Toes In the Sand) says**

Let me first start by saying that I absolutely love Mary Kay Andrews! I have read most of her books and enjoyed all of them. Her settings are usually on the beach or in the south somewhere. Her writing has a way of drawing you in and keeps you interested in the story. I wish I could say that was true for this book. While I enjoyed it overall, it was definitely lacking in areas too. The month that the women spend at the beach together was so boring. It was your typical beach read. They go to the beach, go out to eat, fall in love, the end. They didn't even get mad at each other or fight while they were there. Tell me where you can get a group of women together in the same house, for a month, and NOBODY fights or argues?? I want to live in that world!

Another of my issues was the lack of character development. Ellis stays the same throughout the entire book and then all of a sudden at the end, decides that she is going to change her plans and live by the seat of her pants. Where the hell did that come from? Usually Andrews writes about strong, independent women but I felt that was not the case here.

I wish that there was more of an element of surprise tucked in there somewhere as well. It was lacking drama/excitement and was predictable, which is part of the reason for the 3 pineapple rating. However, if you are looking for a quick, light summer read then I would still recommend this book.

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## **Candie says**

This book was a good, light and easy early-summer read which shouldn't be too surprising given its title, "Summer Rental." I thought it started off pretty strong. Andrews clearly developed the four main characters in the first half of the book. From the beginning, it seemed that Ellis was somewhat of the main character and the other ones were often in the peripheral -- that remained consistent throughout the book, even when the story shifted its attention to the other characters temporarily. I didn't mind that much since Ellis seemed to have the most "relatable" story line.

The main reason I chose to give this book 3-stars and not 4 or 5 was that somewhere toward the middle, I started to find the story becoming incredibly predictable. While still entertaining, as the "end of the summer" approached for these four women, there wasn't much surprise where they would all end up -- even more so when it became clear that they were trying to wrap up the story.

One of the strongest positives about this book was that it was refreshing to read a story about four women in their early/mid-thirties with pretty realistic issues -- especially since most of the current popular literature tends to focus on a much younger age demo. In fact, while I was reading "Summer Rental," I actually wondered if Andrews was trying to set up a series that would continue down the road. It did seem that while predictable, the story ended somewhat abruptly once the few loose ties were neatly squared away and perhaps there was a potential opening for the story of these women to continue either next summer or once

they returned to their respective homes.

Overall, I would recommend this book to someone who wants a quick and easy summer read that doesn't mind a story that doesn't take tons of twists and turns.

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### **Kathy Hiester says**

In my childhood taking a house-rental at the beach included fun in the sun and time spent with family. On the downside there was no TV, no AC, no telephone and no videogames.

Such are the long-gone surroundings in which three best friends from school days find themselves on a month long reunion on the beach at Nags Head, North Carolina.

Ellis, the hyper-organized planner, has been downsized from a large-bank in Philadelphia. Married briefly and unsuccessfully, fresh out of college, Elly threw herself into her job and has substituted spreadsheets for fun on the sheets.

Julia, the worldly, and outspoken friend has realized that her modeling career is over, having been consigned to catalog shots for J.C. Penney's. However, she does have a long-term boyfriend, recently relocated from London to D.C., but she's terribly undecided about long term commitment that her boyfriend is seeking.

Dorrie is sweet, vivacious, and an incurable flirt of the three and she has been dealt two marital surprises and she must call upon the means to ride out the repercussions.

Ebbtide, the house they've rented at Nags Head is a dump. Then, the fourth member of the rental party decides at the last minute not to come, leaving Dorrie to find a renter in order to ease the financial burden. Then, the ladies are unsettled about the guy who lives in the garage apartment.

Mary Kay Andrews, who has set many a novel in the south has become one of my favorite authors with her southern style and easy reads.

5 Stars

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### **Antoinette says**

I should start by saying I felt dirty for even finishing this book, it was so awful. I'm pretty sure I lost IQ points somewhere in the middle of it. Don't get me wrong--I'm all for trashy, brainless novels, but this one was god-awful. Every person in it is a caricature, and the author, who apparently can and has written much better novels (though I've never read any and am not likely to start after this one), relies on tired literary devices rather than actually giving her characters and her plot any thought or dimension. In my time as an editor, I have noticed that average to poor writers like to describe what characters are wearing and always, always, ALWAYS portray the women eating in no fewer than two scenes--usually "dragging a french fry through a puddle of ketchup" or "crunching on a tortilla chip" or "taking a sip of her frosty margarita." Ack. And really, has anyone on this planet ever actually said the word "slathered" when not reading aloud an article about sunscreen or moisturizer? I didn't think so. The women sound like what a middle-age writer imagines today's 30-something women to be--which is exactly what they are, and a long way from reality. I

half expected them to mention "doing a Google" on the "Internets" and "checking electronic mails." And please, for the love of God, let me never again see someone actually say in dialogue, "Denial ain't just a river in Egypt."

I also must have missed what exactly drew the main character to the main male character--as far as I could tell, it was because they were both relatively attractive. Good luck with that. Honestly, the main male character seemed lazy (think Steve Zahn in, well, just about anything) and clearly wasn't over his divorce, but hey, jump right into a relationship with him, why don't you? He's hot, so why not? It seemed to me that the moral of this story was that all these women needed was to realize they had good men right under their noses and their lives would be in order. The main character, Ellis, actually "sighs happily" when she sees her boyfriend's slovenly bachelor pad and begins to pick up his dirty clothes and crusty cereal bowls. (What year is this again?) Yeah, I'm a sucker for a romance novel, but this one was too far gone even for me. These women are supposedly independent but yet they aren't complete until they find a man. How very progressive. This is the kind of writing I expect from a first-time author at a smaller imprint than St. Martin's. The best thing I can say about this book is that it was from the library and I didn't waste any money on it. I need to return it so I don't even spend a dime on late fees.

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## **Patty says**

Summer Rental is a very nice summer read which takes place in Nags Head. Four women who grew up in Savannah Georgia have agreed to go to the beach for an entire month, all in their mid 30's to be able to reconnect again. One of the friends bails out of the trip making the trip more expensive for the other three.

All three women are at a time in their lives where major changes are taking place. Ellis the main character has just lost her job in the banking industry and doesn't know where her next job will be. She is a bit over organized and has a need to control everything. Julia is a model who has gotten too old to do work that does much for her anymore and is now modeling for catalogs. Her long time boyfriend, a photographer wants to get married, but Julia is confused about what she wants out of life for herself. Dorie is a school teacher at a private school and she enjoys her work, but her sister is the one who bailed out of the trip leaving her extremely budget conscious, her husband has been unfaithful and is leaving her for his lover, and OMG she is pregnant. There is a fourth woman, Maryn who joins the group to help them financially and she has run away from her husband and needs some time to think.

Ellis arranged the summer rental and she is first to arrive at the cottage and finds it a bit run down, so she quickly tries to redecorate as much as possible to make it look a little better.

Ty Bazemore is their landlord, but Ellis only knows him as Mr. Culpepper. Ty Bazemore is the owner and lives above the garage but doesn't want any renters to know that he is M. Culpepper because then they constantly complain to him about all the things that need fixed.

The cottage that Ty owns is in a state of disrepair and desperately needs some help, but Ty has himself in a financial bind and is about to lose the house through foreclosure. It is a wonderful little beach cottage that has been in his family for years and has many memories for him. He is trying to raise funds to save the house by working as a day trader and a bartender at night. The saving of the cottage has an interesting twist to it. I want to go sit on this porch and take a shower in the outside shower and ride the bike up and down the roadway. There is a nice mixing of characters, personalities and problems and Mary Kay Andrews does a good job of pulling them all together.



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## Jayne Ormerod says

Having just returned from a vacation just a stone's throw north of the outer banks of NC, I couldn't WAIT to dive into this beach tale. Happy to say Mary Kay Andrews did not disappoint, and I was immediately transported back to that blissful state of feeling sand in my shorts. On a craft level, gotta give the author props. Descriptions were well (but not overly) done, dialogue rang true to the characters, and timing was impeccable with secrets being revealed at perfect point that "goosed the gas pedal" to propell the story forward. The main characters were all likeable and didn't wallow in self-pity, as many women's fiction protagonists are wont to do, spiraling downward into a black hole when life throws them a few curve balls (and the reader feels like curling up into a ball in a dark room herself!) Ellis, Julia, Dorie and Maryn just keep rolling along, accepting/solving problems, and enjoying a few cocktails along the way. It was a perfect "day at the beach" (even though I was in my Laz-y-boy) read!

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## Denise Moncrief says

I usually can't wait for a new Mary Kay Andrews to hit the shelves, but it took me a while to get around to reading Summer Rental. I looked forward to this read with anticipation. The book is basic chick lit. Three friends, Ellis, Julia, and Dorie, go to the beach to get away from their lives and find out what they really want from life... sort of.

Andrews usually writes with charm and wit and just a bit of attitude. Her stories are generally full of southernisms and over the top characterizations and just to the edge of belief situations, which is what makes an Andrews read so much fun. But I found this book flat. The characters were predictable, their lives were predictable, the ending was predictable, even the hot romance with the hot guy was predictable. And where were the slices of Southern Americana I was waiting for?

The introduction of a fourth character added the suspense element to the plot, but I found the telling of Maryn's story redundant. First Andrews tells the reader about Maryn and her woes though an information dump, and then she retells her story through lengthy dialogue chunks several chapters later. It would have been far better if Andrews had never added Maryn's POV, but rather told her story through the other characters's interaction with her. Or even better if Maryn's story had been one of the three main character's story, and her character omitted.

The most distracting element of the read was Andrews head-hopping. I'd just get settled into one character's point of view when she'd cut to another character's point of view mid-scene, and then switch back before the scene was over, sometimes bouncing between three points of view in one scene.

I found myself wanting to skip ahead to the end to see what happens because the narrative seemed to drag on and on. This is the first time I've had to talk myself into finishing an Andrews. Would I recommend this book? Well.. If you've never read an Andrews, I'd suggest reading Hissy Fit or Little Bitty Lies first.

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## Rachel says

Alrighty, so I won this on Goodreads, automatically making me quite happy. However, I was in a reading slump and didn't really want to read, but forced myself to anyway. Oh my gosh, I am so glad I did. Summer Rental was so fun to read and I really couldn't wait to write this review. I spent the past few days reading this, rather than studying for my exams.

So, Summer Rental is about three best friends who are all thirty-five and kind of at a turning point in their lives. They had planned to rent a cottage together for a month along with one of the girl's sister. However, at the last moment, the sister dropped out, leaving the three besties. I really loved reading about these three because they reminded me of me and my two best friends almost exactly. Ellis, who just lost her job at a bank that was downsizing, is super obsessive, driven, and plan oriented; Julia is a super model who's coming to the end of her career, but doesn't really want to give up her childhood, even though she's almost thirty-six; Dorie is an adorable little Southern girl, who is probably more beauty than brains. Together, the three are hysterical, working through their life issues at the beach. All I can say is I hope I'm as cool as them when I'm thirty :) They stay at a ratty little beach house named Ebbside, which is owned by Mr. Culpepper, who ends up being the random-slash-extremely attractive man that lives in the garage - Ty. To top it all off, Dorie invites a stranger to rent the extra room in the cottage because everyone is tight on money. Thus enters Maryn/Madison, who's running from her crazy husband. It's crazy. Read it. Summer Rental is humorous and full of all the great things about friendships that last a lifetime.

5-stars. I loved it :)

PS. Besties, we are so renting a ratty little cottage with an attractive landlord in a few summers. Got it? Good :)

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