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In her delightful reimagining of **A Midsummer's Night Dream**, Amanda Craig slyly serves up a witty cross-cultural farce, a modern-day tale of love and lies set against the magical landscape of Tuscany.

When Theo, a workaholic lawyer, his English wife Polly, and their two children rent an idyllic Italian villa, they expect a relaxing summer holiday together. Polly, with her loved ones' romantic interests at heart, has invited an eccentric mix of friends and family along--including three eligible bachelors, a former model, an Indian-British divorcee with a young son, and her own appalling mother-in-law. They soon discover the Casa Luna is a strange, enchanted place where people find their heart's desire—but at a price. Everyone falls in love, though not with the people they expect, and the results are surprising and hilarious.

Love in Idleness Details

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Author : Amanda Craig

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From Reader Review Love in Idleness for online ebook

Cowgirl4christ16 says

I listened to this book on tape, and really did not like it. It had a lot of stuff in it that I do not personally agree with for one thing, along with some unnecessary crudeness. But another reason I did not like it is that it randomly copied "A Midsummer's Dream" towards the end of the book, so it lacked creativity and the ending felt thrown together. The characters were not really likable either, the kids were brats, half of the adults acted like children and the other half lacked personality. Bottom line is, I do not recommend this book, and really wish I would not have wasted my time on it.

Vivienne says

This was a second reading for me and I found I enjoyed it even more than the first time as I was able to further appreciate the relationship with its Shakespearean inspiration as well as the splendid characterisation and sophisticated humour.

I had suggested it for one of my reading groups and was a little surprised that our reading group was very divided though other reader reviews on Goodreads suggest it is a Marmite book that polarizes readers. It did lead us into some interesting discussions about privileged characters and various adaptations of Shakespeare.

Garnette says

Reading Shakespeare's Mid-Summer Night's Dream in an enchanting 21st Century novel, post Harry Potter, is quite satisfying. I finished just at dawn well pleased with the book. The writing is well-crafted, Nan Talese as editor always a plus. Tuscany, hot, rose-scented, slightly fey fairies, believe-able children and Shakespeare's golden threads throughout. (Bron's understanding of Rama poignant - that paragraph worth the whole book). I especially loved the women, how they sorted their lives out. Lyrical, scenic, tracing the Bard's quotes great fun. Recommended: watch Kevin Kline in Michael Hoffman's 1999 movie now DVD before and after reading the book.

Carolyn Mck says

This is a modern take on A Midsummer Night's Dream when an English family and their guests set out to have a holiday in Tuscany. This is a story of mismatched lovers, magic potions and summer fairies. The literary artifice doesn't always come off but the novel is amusing enough to while away some summer hours at the coast.

Vivienne says

A delightful re-telling of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer's Night Dream' with a little homage to 'A Room with a View'.

I think my appreciation of this novel was helped by having read other works by Craig as while her books are 'stand-alone', she does have characters that cross-over from one to the other.

In this book Polly Noble, who was one of the main characters in 'Hearts and Minds', is seen in her earlier married life and Ivo Sponge, who featured in 'A Vicious Circle', is one of the invited friends on the Tuscan holiday.

I've come to appreciate Craig's ability as a writer and am rather surprised that she isn't as well known as other contemporary British writers.

I understand that in her capacity as reviewer of children's literature that she was an early supporter of J.K. Rowling and Philip Pullman and her appreciation of the subtle magic of nature shines through here as it did in her wonderful 'In a Dark Wood'.

This is a novel I expect I shall revisit again.

John says

Really only of interest because of the Dream connection otherwise a somewhat tedious piece of fiction which did nothing for me. The best conceit was changing the fairies into the children Tania, Bron and Robin but even this device wore a little thin. The denouement is the same as in Shakespeare with one twist which I thought was perfectly ludicrous. Disappointing

Lauren says

They say this is a 'reimagining' of Midsummer, but it doesn't take a turn for Shakespeare until 2/3 of the way through and then it's so ridiculously close to the plot that you know what the next word will be. Not good.

Susie Burnett says

I will go with the reviewers summary "In her delightful reimagining of A Midsummer's Night Dream, Amanda Craig slyly serves up a witty cross-cultural farce, a modern-day tale of love and lies set against the magical landscape of Tuscany." I read the book a long time ago, but remember how good it was.

Alex Lee says

Despite its slow start, with seemingly an impossible number of characters, Craig pulls this story together in a surprising way. We know it's based on Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. And even still, she still manages to delight and surprise us. In a strange way, what comes out of this is a middle class critique of the wealthy. The loss of influence of the wealthy matron, and the rise of a single mother seem to be the inevitable pact that Craig makes. We admire the wealth. We want the lifestyle, and yet, this is only made possible due to the presence of the wealth and the exotic location of being somewhere (rich and idle) that this story could even happen. Despite the valorization of the middle class value of working for your own way, this story isn't possible for middle class people.

All the same, Craig manages to make this a compelling read for me, despite the sloven pace. She finds her tempo towards the end, and even though we can tell what the ending will be, it's still steam rolls forward with all the fury of a comedy. Perhaps this is due to the writer's energy more than anything else.

The only complaint I have about the story, other than its pacing, is that her attempts to speak for the daughter seem too much. She doesn't speak through the daughter's voice, but overlays onto the daughter's attitude observations worded concisely as an adult would make. This is a bit detracting, for the "magic" of the People seem only possible through the eyes of a child, and those eyes may, at times, feel a bit contrived.

The burdens of modern motherhood also feel a bit overlaid. The character of Polly and Meenu both add a dimension of reflexivity that doesn't detract from the story, but adds ruffage that make the entire cast seem more real as people. In a strange way, Polly and Meenu thus "switch places" though this seemed more accidental than planned, since Polly didn't reflect on this positional twist whatsoever.

Craig's "twist" with the husband too, didn't seem terribly put on as an afterthought but it did seem a little *deus ex machina*. The little brother's explanation of his big brother also seemed too much like a reflexive self justification. So I thought that Theo's storyline could have been explained better. In a way, the "update" of Shakespeare's work was truly an update, as it told the story through the normalcy of a sitcom cast, meant to appeal to idle upper middle class liberals, who would want a happy ending for everyone.

Sarah says

Finished *Love in Idleness* by Amanda Craig. I hardly know what to say. Perhaps I could start off by saying that even if you have a fascination with Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* you don't have to work it into your novel.

When I first started *Love in Idleness*, so many characters were thrown at me that I was about to walk away from the book--which I hardly ever do. Finally I figured out the relationships (kind of) and the nationalities (sort of) and saw where Craig was taking me (or so I thought). I was getting into the storyline and was putting aside my thoughts on her less-than-perfect dialogue when suddenly there was magic and fairies and love potions and mists that rose up and dissipated at a moment's notice. I knew who was going to end up with who from the very beginning (except for Polly and Theo), but why did she have to incorporate a *Midsummer Night's Dream* moment to accomplish it? I think it was a cheap way out. I don't think I'll be reading another of her books...although maybe I should, just to see if this is a common strain in her writing.

Brenda says

a frothy, frilly beach-read and the complete works of william shakespeare walk into a bar. they both get really drunk and leave together, and nine months later, "love in idleness" is born.

this is one of those books that you take to the park when the weather is warm, or curl up with under a blanket when you *wish* the weather was warm. it's a quick, light modern interpretation of one of shakespeare's quickest, lightest plays. it's like cotton candy for the brain.

mmmmmm. brain candy.

Grace says

set in Tuscany; inspired by A Midsummer's Night Dream

Jayne Charles says

If this book was a motor vehicle, it would be a classic motorbike, perfectly tuned and polished, inexplicably coupled to a sidecar full of cack. I liked the early stages, the characterisation, and the interplay between the characters. There were some very witty and wry observations made, particularly concerning the experiences of an American ex-pat in London, and some interesting discourse on the nature of relationships and contrasting parenting styles. Polly and Theo were particularly fascinating characters, and I also liked Betty the outrageous mother-in-law, and celebrity gardener Guy who was a sort of obnoxious Alan Titchmarsh.

Around three-quarters of the way in the Shakespeare parallel stuff started to kick in, and things went seriously pear-shaped with some sexual slapstick that had one character remarking that he thought he had just walked into an Austin Powers movie. I had to check the front cover of the book to make sure I wasn't reading a Wendy Holden. Considering what had gone before, it was totally unbelievable and, well, just a bit silly.

Ian Mapp says

I really ought to pay attention to why I choose books. This was on some list of future reads but why on earth did I pick a re-imagining of "a midsummer nights dream", that is half summer read, half chick lit. I read muscular mens book, by men about men. And it's the bleak mid winter.

The book is light and fluffy and I like Italy, so I stuck with it. There are too many characters to take in. Just how big was this holiday villa? How do you keep tabs on so many bland characters. And they were all so frightfully middle class that you dont want to really keep tabs on them.

What happens. Not a lot. There is too much falling in love with your friends wives. The kids disappear and

then there is a reveal that you couldn't give two hoots about.

Tepid.

Still, Tuscany sounds nice.

Vero says

Midsummer Night's Dream is shifted to Tuscany and a house party of deeply unattractive characters with whom it is impossible to identify. Indeed, the characters are stereotypes rather than being people we could ever hope to care about. I purchased this book after reading Craig's most recent book, which I loved, but I found Love in Idleness to be sorely disappointing.
