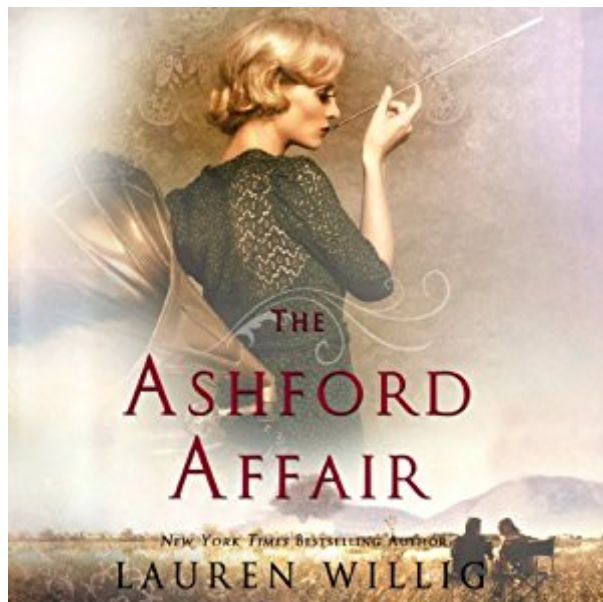


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The Ashford Affair



Synopsis

From New York Times best-selling author Lauren Willig comes *The Ashford Affair*, a story about two women in different eras, and on different continents, who are connected by one deeply buried secret. As a lawyer in a large Manhattan firm, just shy of making partner, Clementine Evans has finally achieved almost everything she's been working towards - but now she's not sure it's enough. Her long hours have led to a broken engagement and, suddenly single at 34, she feels her messy life crumbling around her. But when the family gathers for her grandmother Addie's 99th birthday, a relative lets slip hints about a long-buried family secret, leading Clemmie on a journey into the past that could change everything. Growing up at Ashford Park in the early 20th century, Addie has never quite belonged. When her parents passed away, she was taken into the grand English house by her aristocratic aunt and uncle, and raised side-by-side with her beautiful and outgoing cousin, Bea. Though they are as different as night and day, Addie and Bea are closer than sisters, through relationships and challenges, and a war that changes the face of Europe irrevocably. But what happens when something finally comes along that can't be shared? When the love of sisterhood is tested by a bond that's even stronger? From the inner circles of British society to the skyscrapers of Manhattan and the red-dirt hills of Kenya, the never-told secrets of a woman and a family unfurl.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

For me, "The Ashford Affair" by Lauren Willig is a bit of a disappointment. It features the usual past versus present parallel story lines with alternate first/third person accounts. There is a mystery in the

present time that begs for a little delving into ancestral history; both story lines are headed by strong females with uncertain albeit burgeoning relationships. While there is nothing amiss about Willig's two narratives, those readers already familiar with the formula might find each character's revelations dull when compared to other authors who have mastered this technique. In fact, Willig's own novel, "That Summer" set in the world of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood does a far better job of pulling the reader in than this one does. Even though "The Ashford Affair" boasts of a colonial African backdrop--shades of "Out of Africa"--the ambiance isn't there--the story could take place anywhere with a crop change of soy or alfalfa instead of the requisite coffee. Willig does manage to report the sense of ennui that occurred after WW1 and plagued an entire generation tired of war and its aftermath. Nonetheless, the story seems stale and predictable when viewed within the context of this genre. Bottom line? Lauren Willig's novel of English aristocracy and the desire to find meaning and love after WW1 works on a perfunctory level; the modern story line of lawyer Clemmie and her failure to succeed in relationships seems formulaic rather than fresh. Recommended for those who are looking for a rehash of Kate Morton's "The House at Riverton" without the details and character building, indulge and enjoy. Diana Faillace Von Behren "Buzzard's Eye View"

London, Kenya, New York. It has all the makings of a great novel. And, it delivers. I would not have found "The Ashford Affair" were it not for websites that recommend books based on your other likes. I am a HUGE fan of Kate Morton and Beatriz Williams, so when multiple people compared Lauren Willig to them, I had to look further. Her other offerings are part of a series with floral names. Being a fan neither of flowers or series, I lost hope until I came upon what is admittedly a departure for her. I hope that she will continue in this genre more. Alternating between the 1920s and 1999, Clementine Evans struggles with guilt over her grandmother's failing health, a broken relationship, and the stress of trying to make partner at her law firm. Enter a long-lost love who is on the same quest she is "to piece together a history that hints that her family is not everything she has always been told it is. Decades earlier, debutant Bea and her orphaned cousin Addie compete for the affections of Frederick, leading to a face-off on his coffee plantation in Kenya. The disappearance of one and the subsequent murder investigation have repercussions that will affect the generations of their families well in to the turn of the millennium. Willig seamlessly weaves the time periods together, making parallels in their events that keep the momentum alive throughout the book. She also includes copious literary references, and I have to give her major props for mentioning Jane Eyre's Mr. Rochester instead of the over-used Mr. Darcy with whom so many other people seem besotted. My only critique is that there

were several places where the coincidences that occurred were unrealistic and the story line could have flowed without them. They distracted my reading with a “Yeah, right”, and in a lesser book, they would have weakened the credibility of the whole thing. But, in the hands of a master storyteller like Willig, they are mere blips. Ms. Willig’s next work of historical fiction is pre-Raphaelite, so I will look forward to reading that one as soon as my ever-growing stack of books-to-read has just grown again thanks to Christmas morning and relatives who know how to feed my addiction to words on pages.

(3.5 stars) I’m not a big fan of Lauren Willig’s Pink Carnation Regency series but I downloaded this unrelated book for two reasons: 1) Part of it takes place in 1920s Kenya and Colonial Africa has always fascinated me, and 2) It was a bargain book for Kindle. I’m glad I read it although I was expecting a bit more from the read. More epic in scope, more exciting as an adventure/mystery, more in-depth about Africa, with a more appealing modern-day character. (She was a bit blah and reactive, rather than proactive.) Taking place over three generations from the early 1900s up to 2000, the story focuses on present-day New York lawyer Clemmie and her British-born grandmother Addie, who was orphaned in 1906 and went to live as a poor relation at Ashford Park with her aunt, uncle and young cousins, one of whom, Bea, becomes as close to her as a sister would be. Of the main characters, Bea and Addie stand out as the more interesting with the more exciting lives. As the story moves from England to Kenya to the United States, the story of these characters’ lives unfolds, as Clemmie little by little finds out more about her grandmother Addie and cousin Bea. There’s a love triangle, unhappy marriages and infidelity, and a mystery. Whatever happened to Bea in Africa? The story moves back and forth in time. Now Addie and Bea are young girls, now Addie is an aging grandmother, now the focus is on Clemmie and her little life, now we’re in England, now in Africa, now in the U.S. That said, it’s an easy tale to follow but the story held only mild surprises for this reader. Still it held my interest enough to round my 3.5 star rating to 4.

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