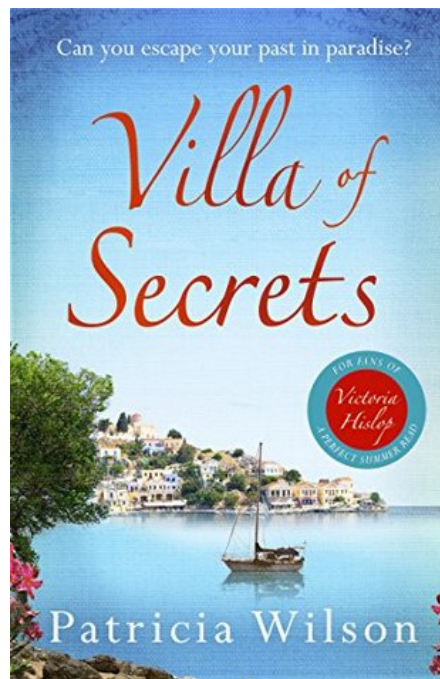




Villa of Secrets: Escape to paradise with this perfect holiday read!

Patricia Wilson

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If you love The Island and Cartes Postales from Greece by Victoria Hislop , you will love this perfect summer read from the author of Island of Secrets .

Rebecca Neumann's marriage is on the brink of collapse, as her desire to be a mother becomes an obsession. Then she receives news from her estranged family in Rhodes.

Called back to the beautiful Greek island of her birth, she realises how little she knows of the grandmother she has eluded for over a decade. Bubba has never spoken of the Nazi occupation during her youth, but there have always been whispers. What desperate measures did she take that terrible day in 1944 when her family was ripped apart? Can the rumour she had blood on her own hands really be true? But Bubba intends to take her secrets to the grave.

However, as Rebecca arrives on Rhodes, bringing the promise of new life, this broken family must come together. The time has come to tell the truth about the darkest of days . . .

What readers said about *Island of Secrets*:

'*Island of Secrets* is a book full of raw emotions, family vendettas, hidden secrets and three very strong women. It's a book I enjoyed very much and one which fans of Victoria Hislop and Debbie Rix are sure to enjoy' (NetGalley Reviewer)

'So well written and utterly heartbreaking . . . a story that needs to be told' (NetGalley Reviewer)

'Page-turning, enthralling and heartbreaking by turns'

'Made me laugh and cry, just couldn't put this book down'

Villa of Secrets: Escape to paradise with this perfect holiday read! Details

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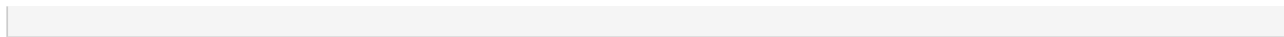
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Patricia Wilson

From Reader Review Villa of Secrets: Escape to paradise with this perfect holiday read! for online ebook

Emma Crowley says

Given that Island of Secrets, the incredible début novel from Patricia Wilson, was one of my favourite books of 2017, to say I was eager for the publication of Villa of Secrets would be a massive understatement. Writing in the historical fiction genre, Patricia, seamlessly blends the past with the present helping her characters to bring long held secrets to the fore and in doing so creates a story that is increasingly difficult to put down. Admittedly I did read this book in two halves, I was enjoying the story but then life and other commitments got in the way and I am afraid this book was left to one side for several weeks. Up until the point at which I stopped I did think this was a good story but I was still waiting for that moment that I experienced while reading book one, that pivotal point that sets this book apart from anything I have recently read, that makes me want to shout about it from the rooftops.

I was slightly worried that I hadn't got that vibe yet so I did return to finish Villa of Secrets with some slight trepidation. I needn't have had any as once again the author really ramped up the pace in what I am calling part two even though the book was not divided into sections. Once I picked the book up for the second time it wasn't left out of my hands until I had finished it. I think the time I took away from the book only enhanced my enjoyment once I got stuck back into Dora and her granddaughter's lives. There were plenty of twists and turns, surprises and heartache and one major twist I didn't see coming. In fact said twist left me frustrated as it left me with one big question on my lips which I would love to know the author's viewpoint on and why she left things the way she did?

The setting this time for Villa of Secrets is the island of Rhodes, in the present day, and during World War Two under Italian and then German occupation. Throughout the story there is fantastic, glorious imagery of the island and also much detail regarding the history and how actions of people in the past play an important role on those living in the present. It felt like I was almost there on the island especially during the war years as Dora takes on a vital, dangerous and courageous role. The island became her workplace of sorts and hiding in an old shepherd's hut on the mountain was the centre from which so much happened in her life. In the present day Naomi is caring for her grandmother Bubba, it soon becomes apparent as Naomi reads through her grandmother's diaries that Bubba was Dora.

Bubba although recovering slowly from a stroke is still as sharp as ever. Yet the memories and pain of the past still deeply affect her today. Her experiences during the war and what she witnessed and endured have always had a forbearing on the way she reacts to people, particularly to Fritz, the husband of her granddaughter Rebecca now living in London. Rebecca has not seen or spoken to her family in many years. Harsh words were said which were aimed to hurt and are very difficult to retract. But times are changing and as a court case is about to be heard in relation to property stolen from people during the war, maybe now is the time for the family to reunite. A time to put the past to rest and to bed for once and for all but to do this we must go back and read Bubba's story through her diaries, to allow both Rebecca and Naomi to make sense of everything.

As we are taken back to July 1944, we are told Bubba's story in her own words. At all times she had a diary and would write in it, to keep memories fresh be they good or bad. Dora is like any other girl living in Paradissi village, well she should be except for the war that has changed all of her family and friends lives forever. When she couldn't think that things would get any worse her family are brutally torn apart, all because of their religion and heritage. Suffice to say Dora and her sister Evangelisa are the only ones left on the island. One through fate and Dora through sheer courage and bravery putting herself in the utmost of danger.

From this point on the innocence of youth is forever gone for Dora and she grew up very very quickly. I couldn't imagine the youth of today taking on such a challenge. For a quest is what it was, a challenge to be reunited with her family and relatives, Dora would not rest until they were together again. She wanted to play her part in winning the war, no matter how big or small that role was to be. In doing so she encounters many things which were shocking but definitely needed to be included in the story to show just how courageous this girl was in the face of so much danger and adversity.

Dora was taken on a journey, one which she would not have planned for herself but, in trying to stop the Germans exerting further control and in a bid to save the people she loves so dearly, Dora will make many sacrifices. To say much more regarding Dora's experiences during the war would take away from the story. Patricia Wilson did such an amazing job of bringing that time to life and I felt every bit of the fear, pain, anger, nervousness and at times passion that Dora goes through. She is helped by people who can see the strong traits she possesses. Of course there has to be an element of romance and to say the least it was very bittersweet and heartbreaking, it felt so real, so passionate and the ultimate surprise that tied everything together made me go ah that was lovely but god I wanted things to work out differently.

In the present day Bubba is very much moulded by the secrets of the past she holds within herself but still that feisty, strong nature is still evident. She has been through an awful lot in her life, yes during the war but also in the years that followed it. At all times she was selfless and put others needs very much before her own. Taking in and raising her granddaughters after tragedy struck was just one example of such an act. I think the strand of the story set during the war years slightly edged out the present day timeline for me but I did enjoy how one was necessary to bring the other full circle in an attempt to bring about resolution and a deeper understanding on all sides.

Naomi was so tender and caring towards Bubba whilst at the same time balancing many things in her life. I felt she struggled with her husband working away and at times felt under pressure. Her sister Rebecca is conspicuous in her absence but has Bubba something up her sleeve that will make Rebecca return to the island? I understood Naomi was there as a support and anchor for Bubba but I did think she didn't have as vital a role to play as other characters. I did like her but she wasn't always at the forefront of my thinking when it came to slotting pieces of the puzzle together or understanding subtle hints dropped throughout the story. Many of which I missed considering I never saw the biggest surprise of all coming from a mile away.

Rebecca in London is tormented by the fact her struggles to have a child are only ever increasing. She loves Fritz and that love is reciprocated but it is under immense strain and pressure. When strange parcels start arriving in the post, is this just another thing to put more worry on Rebecca or will she give in to the calling card in the packages? Rebecca needed time away from her situation and to reconnect with her family, to push the water under the bridge and accept forgiveness. To understand how the actions of one warrior in the past led the family to the point they are at today. Can resolution be found for all involved? Will everyone change their opinions once the truth finally emerges? Will the property lost to the family be returned to them?

So many questions, so many twists and turns and things you would never have thought possible. All these combine to make for another excellent read from Patricia Wilson, she has proven what writing talent she has. She is no one hit wonder as the 'difficult' second book didn't come across as being challenging more so as if it was an exciting, thrilling writing journey, yes tinged with bitterness and sadness for what happened to the people of Rhodes and the neighbouring islands during the war but still the author has turned the spotlight on a time in history that many need to read and understand about. Villa of Secrets had the perfect blend of fiction with historical fact and the story was told with tact and sensitivity. Definitely a highly recommended read, now when is Patricia's next book out?

Shiva Patel says

Villa of secrets is a lovely summer read from Patricia Wilson.

Naomi and Rebecca have lost their parents to a tragic boat accident at sea. They are raised by their grandmother, Bubba(Dora) in Rhodes.

When Rebecca brings her fiancé home to meet her family, Bubba is horrified. Fritz is the image of the man who ordered the killing of hundreds of Jewish people during the German occupation. Rebecca and Bubba have words and Rebecca leaves for England.

Over the years, Bubba writes letters to Rebecca but she does not respond.

Bubba has a stroke and Naomi cares for her with her own family too. Bubba has never spoken of the past but now thinks it's time to tell the girls. Her diaries tell her story and the girls are fascinated. Dora was a freedom fighter in the war and fought to save her family.

Bubba tries one last time and sends parcels to Rebecca. She is curious and finally comes back to Rhodes.

Rebecca and Naomi find out the truth about their family history.

A wonderful story which you won't put down full of courage, love, hope and secrets.

Angela says

Loved this book even more than the first one. When I started I wasn't sure I would enjoy it as thought it was too similar to first one but once I got into it I realised it was even better. I would have given 10 ?? if I could!

Marjorie says

I never take the Publisher's blurb too seriously and just use it to get an idea of the subject matter of the book. In this case I clearly mis-read it because this book is nothing like I thought it would be. The opening chapters tell of two orphaned sisters - Rebecca and Naomi - who have been raised by their Bubba and are now grown women forging their own way in the world. Estranged from each other by Rebecca's choice of husband we learn of their parallel lives. This is what I thought the book would be about - how they came to be estranged and how they came back together.

Instead this is a powerful book about a tough woman, Pandora Cohen, feisty and fearless she avoided the Nazi cleansing of her people from the Island of Rhodes and strove to protect the island from the invaders; despite it's populace not wanting "her kind", the Jewish "kind". It did open up an area of history that I had never thought of before - I always associated the Nazi atrocities with Holland, France, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia but never even stopped to think about other European countries. I didn't even know that Rhodes used to be Italian territory, thinking of it always as the Greek holiday destination of now.

Told through the pages of Bubba's diaries we learn of the Andartes and their push to free the Dodecanese from German occupation. The telling is full of life and is so fresh and human it feels, ultimately, real. There is everything between those flimsy exercise book pages about Bubba's resistance life, her loves, her fears and her desire to "be brave". You immediately connect with this fictional person and suffer and laugh and love with her, wishing for just an ounce of her spirit.

The juxtaposition with the modern tales of Naomi and Rebecca works well. Particularly Rebecca's trials in her quest for children which is told with compassion and a straightforwardness that leaves you breathless.

The only character I could not really connect with is Naomi. Maybe because she is the peacekeeper, the one with the family, the one who just does what is expected without complaint. She is not a Cohen woman.

Set time aside to read this book because you will become sucked into this dangerous world and before you know it bedtime has come and gone, the lights are burning the small hours of the morning away and you just have to read one more diary entry.

I RECEIVED A FREE COPY OF THIS BOOK FROM READERS FIRST IN EXCHANGE FOR AN HONEST REVIEW.

Joanne says

Villa of Secrets is the second novel by Patricia Wilson and was a book which had a lot to live up to as her first novel Island of Secrets was one of my favourite novels of last year. Not to worry though I think Villa of Secrets is even better.

Sisters Naomi and Rebecca have been estranged for ten years after Rebecca chose her husband over her family. Both sisters are feeling lonely in their own ways, Rebecca is starting her forth round of IVF and is feeling further and further away from husband Fritz as the longing for a baby overtakes her. Naomi is suffering empty nest syndrome with both her grown boys away at university and husband Costa working on a cruise ship, the strain of Bubba's stroke is also taking its toll on her. Now the sisters must come together once more as their grandmother has decided its time to share her. Can this family put the horrors of the past behind them and finally come together for the future?

The narrative of this story is split between the present day reuniting of Naomi and Rebecca and through Bubba's diaries of the past. For me its through these diaries that the story really comes alive and where Patricia Wilson's writing is at its best. The diaries are from when Bubba or Pandora as she was named, and her family were made to leave the island of Rhodes during WWII being that they were a Jewish family. The tell of how Pandora being small managed to escape being taken away by the Nazi's on the evacuation ship to the concentration camps. They gradually unravel how Pandora showed great courage at just sixteen and joined the resistance and helped to try and sabotage the war for the Germans.

I found these diaries incredibly powerful in their storytelling, every emotion and every detail has been written about so precisely it's as if you are there reliving the whole events. It's through these diaries that we learn just how courageous Pandora was, risking her life to try and bring freedom to the island and they kind of left me in awe of how inspiring and determined she was. I'm ashamed to say that when I've thought about WWII, the Greek isles and Rhodes particularly have never really crossed my mind. Rhodes has always just been that happy relaxed holiday destination that we all think of. Villa of Secrets has altered that view dramatically and shown that the effects of the War affected all of Europe and not just the bigger countries like Poland, Germany and France.

The present-day side of the story shows us both Rebecca and Naomi have also inherited the Cohen determination and ability to fight for what they believe in. This comes across more with Rebecca as she left her family to be with the man she loves and has been determined to be a mother despite having many setbacks getting pregnant. I also think Naomi shows courage and determination, in a smaller dose granted but she's single-handedly nursed Bubba back to health after her stroke and has had to help to raise Rebecca also after losing her parents at ten years old.

I think Villa of Secrets is a great novel which has been thoroughly researched and very well written. Patricia Wilson has written about this sensitive time in history with great empathy and has developed a strong and courageous heroine in Pandora Cohen. This novel is about family loyalty, love, religion and fighting for what you believe in. It's a novel full of emotions which will make your heartache in places but its also a novel which shows there's nothing stronger than love.

Thank you so much Bonnier Zaffre for sending me a copy to review which I have done honestly and for inviting me to be part of the blog tour.

Sue Coomber says

Excellent

Found the book very interesting, having visited Rhodes many times, I knew a lot of the place mentioned in the book.

Fredahoward says

A very Moving story.

Once I started reading I went from tears for the terrible things that actually happened on the island to enjoyment of the beautiful story telling of Patricia Wilson, Very talented author..

Joy says

I was hooked at Greece, double hooked at the Andartes Resistance (based on a true story). The diary of Pandora enhances the present day story. Would have given 6* if I could. Plus a twist in the tale!

Joan hollingworth says

BRILLIANT

As a lover of Victoria Hislop who writes similar style books based in Crete. I bought this. It is equally as good, if not better. How these true story lines are researched, I have no idea. But thank you and well done Patricia.

Sarah Burton says

Excellent

Excellent book. Couldn't put it down. The characters feel real. A lot of tragedy, but hope as well! Definitely recommend

Michelle says

Thank you to Netgalley and the publishers for an advanced copy of this fantastic book.

After saying that Island of Secrets was my favourite book of 2017 I was excited and a little apprehensive about reading Villa of Secrets, just in case it didn't live up to the previous book. There was absolutely no reason to worry as I was gripped from the first chapter.

It's a powerful captivating love story about a young Jewish girl's bravery during WW2. A story of unbelievable atrocities, courage and the struggle to survive and of friendship and devotion, love, loss, and tragedy. Literally breath-taking in parts, it's a book you'll get lost in and certainly one you won't forget.

I think I am going to struggle to find another book that beats this to being my favourite book of 2018.

Paula Sealey says

'Villa of Secrets' is a nicely paced historical fiction story that delves back into the terrible events on Rhodes Island in Greece during WW11.

Rebecca and Naomi's grandmother has been hiding a secret from them for many years. After suffering a stroke, she decides it is time to reveal all through a series of diaries she started during her teenage years. Rebecca and Naomi are shocked to discover that 'Bubba' had a dark but heroic past as a freedom fighter. As they progress through her writings, they learn more about the tragedies that occurred during wartime and the fate of Bubba's friends and relatives.

While the chapters concerning Bubba and the plight of the Jewish during the war were moving, I found the focus of some of the present day chapters a little distracting. I couldn't quite work out why Rebecca's lack of children and IVF treatment became such a large focus; it didn't seem to add anything to the overall story and went into quite a bit of unnecessary detail at times.

There was a sad but clever twist in the historical story, and I could see that lots of research had gone into these areas to bring Bubba's story as a young girl to life. The major reveal at the finish whilst sweet, was a little implausible; although it did bring all the loose ends together. The historical chapters are definitely this book's strong point and I would have given a higher rating had the modern chapters been as developed and had a little less distracting drama in them.

*I received a copy of the book from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Jane Watson says

3.5 stars really. It was a good story - fast moving and kept you wanting to find out what happened and I liked the characters. But ... when I first started reading it all I was thinking was that this is the same as her first book! Same grandmother being ill and having a back story about the war and her part in it, same sister/granddaughter being estranged and coming back, same island setting, so that was a bit off-putting to begin with. The story improved and was different from her first book, The Island of Secrets (even the title is

half the same!) and I did enjoy it, but really hope her third book is completely different! Also the editing wasn't great - I am being pedantic here, but it does annoy me - not sure if it was just the Kindle edition - things like "she could have it as a momentum"! And another sentence that you could see was about another character not the one she mentioned. So not as good as it could have been alas.

Linda says

Really good read.

I could not read this book fast enough, I so wanted to know the end, it was a very moving story and as it was based on a real life experience it made it very special to read. Most enthralling.

Laura Galek says

Villa of Secrets is a series of diary entries following Dora, a 16 year old Rhodian Jew who managed to escape from the Nazis through the latter stages of the second war world. These diary entries are being read by Dora's grandchild Naomi and Rebecca years later, after Dora suffers a stroke.

The concept of the story wasn't what I was expecting from the synopsis of the 'first impressions' and I think I missed the section that mentioned it was a wartime book. That being said I did enjoy reading it, until later on in the book when the horrible stories of Auschwitz was retold by Dora's surviving brother Jacob, as I found these very upsetting, sad and brought me to tears at time. I also felt the ending was very predictable and a little boring and that I felt let the book down.
