



## **The Au Pair**

*Emma Rous*

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# The Au Pair

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## The Au Pair Emma Rous

**A grand estate, terrible secrets, and a young woman who bears witness to it all. If V. C. Andrews and Kate Morton had a literary love child, Emma Rous' The Au Pair would be it.**

Seraphine Mayes and her twin brother Danny were born in the middle of summer at their family's estate on the Norfolk coast. Within hours of their birth, their mother threw herself from the cliffs, the au pair fled, and the village thrilled with whispers of dark cloaks, changelings, and the aloof couple who drew a young nanny into their inner circle.

Now an adult, Seraphine mourns the recent death of her father. While going through his belongings, she uncovers a family photograph that raises dangerous questions. It was taken on the day the twins were born, and in the photo, their mother, surrounded by her husband and her young son, is beautifully dressed, smiling serenely, and holding just one baby.

Who is the child and what really happened that day?

One person knows the truth, if only Seraphine can find her.

## The Au Pair Details

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Author : Emma Rous

Format : Paperback 384 pages

Genre : Mystery, Thriller, Fiction, Mystery Thriller

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# From Reader Review The Au Pair for online ebook

## Holly B says

*Mystique, atmosphere, and surprising twists!*

This novel was so captivating that I did not want to put it down! There is a compelling aura of mystery that hovers around the birth of the twins- Seraphine and Danny.

The twins were born at home at the family's beautiful, sprawling Norfolk estate. A photograph is taken of the parents, their older son Edwin, and their mother, Ruth. Although, she is only holding **only one** of her newborn twins. Where is the second twin? Which one is in the photograph? The novel will reveal the *unpredictable* answers.

The setting with the estate's beautiful gardens, the near-by beach and the menacing cliffs was atmospheric. The gardener who tells spooky tales. and a young nanny hired by the family, make this story enchanting and seductive with some gothic vibes.

The secrets come out in the second half of the story and you may be able to catch some hints to what is going on along the way. I was flipping pages as fast as I could while more twists continued until they turned into a **full blown tornado!** I thought I was ahead of the game, but **OH NO**, take my word for it, I was stunned.

An elegantly written suspense novel with some gothic vibes. Highly recommend!

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## \*TUDOR^QUEEN\* says

Thank you to the publisher Berkley who provided an advance reader copy via Edelweiss.

Summerbourne is an English country estate set against the beach and cliffs, a beloved refuge of the Summerbourne family. However, over the years it has suffered heartbreaking tragedies involving the death of a twin, and the suicide of a mother. In 1992 Ruth Mayes (Summerbourne heir) threw herself off the cliff in back of the house on the same day she gave birth to twins Seraphine and Danny. Several years earlier she had given birth to twins Edwin and Theo, but Theo died after falling from the cliff shortly after his second birthday. In fact, Summerbourne has a mystic reputation among the villagers for not letting the family keep their twins. In the years since their births, Seraphine and Danny have been nicknamed the "Summerbourne Sprites" by some of the neighbors. There was no midwife at the house when Seraphine and Danny were born. Also, Seraphine was much larger and robust than Danny, and she sported a different skin tone. As they grew their sizes became comparable, but the mystery and horror of what their mother did always left an unsettling feeling and unanswered questions.

Seraphine loves the Summerbourne estate more than her twin brother Danny and hopes that one day her grandmother Vera will leave it to her. She's still reeling from the recent accidental death of their father Dominic, who was found bloodied and fallen from a ladder by the garage. She's exploring the contents of her father's desk and finds a family photo from the day she and Danny were born. However, in the photo her mother Ruth is holding just one baby. This fact ignites the old uncertainties surrounding her birth and that of her twin brother Danny. Her mother looks serene in the photo, with no inkling that she would throw herself

off the cliff just hours later. Also, Seraphine remembers that an eighteen year old au pair named Laura had worked for the Mayes that year, but left the family right after the births. Did Laura take the picture? Maybe she can provide critical insight of that momentous day in 1992, because SHE WAS THERE. To that end, a determined and driven Seraphine sets off to find the former au pair.

This is a story of a privileged family that has known tragedy and is guarding secrets. It is a slowly unraveling mystery that culminates in a riveting, yet sobering conclusion.

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## j e w e l s [Books Bejeweled] says

### FIVE STARS

**The Au Pair** is a delicious, old-fashioned mystery complete with a gothic setting and a clever plot puzzle that just begs to be solved.

While not exactly a psychological suspense type story, I found it to be just as page-turnable as any thriller. I thought I had most of the puzzle figured out, but it is a bit complicated and I could never work out one piece of the puzzle. That piece, indeed, turned out to be the biggest reveal at the end.

If you are an Agatha Christie fan at heart, you will adore this haunting and lovingly told cozy mystery. Also, perfect for fans of **Rebecca** and **The Death of Mrs. Westaway**.

*Many thanks to Netgalley for my early copy! Strictly my own opinions.*

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## Katie B says

4.5 stars

Such a page turner, I ended up finishing it in a day. It's just one of those good old popcorn eating reads in which you can't wait to see how everything unfolds.

Seraphine and her twin brother Danny were only hours old when their mother committed suicide off the cliffs of the Norfolk coast. Now an adult, Seraphine is mourning the death of her father. While going through his possessions at the family estate, she uncovers a family photograph of her parents, older brother Edwin, and a baby on what looks like the day she and Danny were born. But what strikes Seraphine is odd is her mother is smiling in the photo even though in a mere matter of hours she kills herself and there is only one baby in the photograph. What does this mean and will she be able to find the answers she is looking for even though so many years have passed?

In terms of sheer entertainment, this was a 5 star read. I loved the dual timelines of the present with Seraphine and the past with the au pair, Laura. The story does become a little complicated towards the end and there were times I had to pause and get everything squared away in my head before I could continue reading. I think some valid points could be made on whether the story is realistic however this book has that weird, creepy but fun, trainwreck type vibe that whether or not it is believable doesn't really matter much to me. This is the type of book you read when you want to escape from your life and read about the crazy,

messed up lives of other people. A perfect vacation read!

I received a free copy in the mail from the publisher but was under no obligation to post a review. All views expressed are my honest opinion.

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## **Michelle says**

Seraphine Mayes recently lost her father in a tragic accident. When cleaning out his belongings from their home, Summerbourne, she finds a long lost picture she had never seen before. In it is her mother, Ruth, and her father, Domenic, holding a new born baby. It was taken the day she was born but where is her twin brother Danny? Why wouldn't all four of them be in the picture? And why did her mother throw herself off the cliffs into the sea below only hours after their birth?

Seraphine questions her older brother Edwin about the picture. He can't tell her much except that the picture was taken by his au pair, Laura, who never returned after their mothers suicide. Seraphine makes it her mission to track down Laura in hopes that she'll provide her the answers she's looking for.

The chapters alternate between Seraphine in the present and Laura in the past when she moves into Summerbourne as their new au pair.

I could not stand Seraphine. I found her completely annoying. I thought her behavior more often than not was atrocious and I found it very hard to garner any sympathy for her plight. This woman went from 0 to 60 in 1 second after finding that picture. She went from a grieving daughter to - Who am I? Who are my "REAL" parents? From here she accuses pretty much every one around her of lying to her. My urge to smack this woman grew with every turn of the page.

I found Laura's chapters much more interesting which gave me the resolve to finish this book. While it may of been interesting it quickly morphed into the ridiculous towards the end. (view spoiler)

And what's up with that ending? The "who" and the reasoning for it (not to mention you never really do know anything for sure because the "who" never does admit to anything)~ Not impressed!

I won this book in a Goodreads giveaway. Thanks, Goodreads! 2.5 stars!

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## **Mackey says**

**The Au Pair** by Emma Rous is part gothic suspense with a full measure of domestic noir!

if I were asked to choose the perfect suspense novel, it would There is absolutely nothing that I love more than dark, domestic tales of suspense and murder. The Au Pair has it all.

Seraphine and Danny are twins who, along with their older brother, Edwin, have been raised on an old Victorian estate in Norfolk (UK.) Their lives would appear charmed to the outside world, but there is a darkness within the family that pervades their existence. On the day that the twins were born, their mother threw herself off of a cliff. Now the siblings are attempting to cope with their father's tragic, accidental

death. While going through their father's belongings, Seraphine discovers a photograph of their parents with one of the twins taken on the day they were born. Their mother looks blissfully happy. What possibly could have happened to make her kill herself and why is there only one twin? With stories of changelings, faeries and sprites haunting them all of their lives, Seraphine is determined to find answers. But will those answers be the ones she is hoping to find or will it lead to more heartbreak for this cursed family.

Told from two points of view, Seraphine's and that of Laura, the au pair at the time of their birth, Rous weaves together a story of a wealthy family with mental instability, far too many secrets and characters who will stop at nothing to keep those secrets hidden. The complex plot twists and turns in very unexpected ways and takes the reader on a journey from the present to the past and back again. Although I am one who does not like surprises in my noir novels, this ending will absolutely blow your mind! The resolution, however, is perfection!

For those who love domestic drama, suspense and fast paced fiction, this is definitely a book you will want to read! Mark it now, order early, it will be published January 8th

Thanks to @BerkleyPub for my copy of this fantastic book!

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## **Meredith B. (readingwithmere) says**

### **4 Stars!**

*Why did he say I was impossible? Who Am I?*

Seraphine is mourning her Dad's death with her twin brother Danny and their older brother Edwin. They recently buried him when Seraphine starts searching through his things. She comes across a questionable photograph that sends her mind into a million questions. The biggest one is *Am I who I think I am?* Seraphine starts to do some research and finds out who the Au Pair was the day she was born and who else was close to the family. She tries to track these people down and tries to get answers. Each time she finds someone they tell her to stay away and they continue getting threatening letters. That then raises the question of *Who is sending these threats and what are they trying to hide?*

The book switches from Seraphine's story during present day to Laura's story back in 1991-1992, when everything transpired. It was an interesting parallel as we were finding out what happened as Seraphine was discovering it. I personally enjoyed the flow of the book and thought it went back and forth nicely. Each chapter continued to keep me engaged and I really wanted to continue reading through as I really wanted to know what happened and who was sending these threats, although I had my theories and was right a few times!

I read the title of this - *The Au Pair* and went in expecting there would be a family and then there would be an affair with the Au Pair and the father. Typically that is what happens in these kinds of stories. However there was more to it than just affairs. There were a lot of intermixing of characters and their story lines which gave it a lot more depth than just an affair or maybe affairs...you'll just have to read to find out.

This is the author, Emma Rous's first novel and I will definitely pick up her future novels!

Thank you to Berkley Publishing for sending me an advanced copy of this book. This one comes out January 8, 2019 and I highly recommend picking it up!

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## **Melissa says**

### **\*3.5 stars\***

*The Au Pair* is more than a decent read, the difference between good and great coming down to the reader's acceptance of the serpentine ending—a la V.C. Andrews—and the author's reliance on a particularly weak plot device.

Stylistically, Emma Rous blends contemporary fiction with domestic noir, setting her mystery at a country home. A yellow-bricked, seaside, family estate, Summerbourne's history and its inhabitants shrouded in secrets. The most jarring tale making the rounds, twins not faring well. Except for the last set that is, the summer born at Summerbourne—Seraphine and Danny.

Following the accidental death of her father, Seraphine, now twenty-five, comes across a photograph of her mother holding a baby. Having thrown herself from the cliffs behind Summerbourne the day she gave birth to Seraphine and Danny, makes her pleasant expression and the single baby she's holding suspect. The family has never discussed that fateful day, prompting Seraphine to start asking questions.

Seraphine's underlying feeling of not belonging ignited, she's inspired to track down the one woman who might have answers. Laura, her older brother Edwin's au pair, was the one to take the picture, before fleeing into the night, never to be heard from again.

The mystery unfolds with rivaling chapters, Seraphine—present day—and Laura—twenty-five years earlier, as the young au pair—taking turns at the wheel. The result, a journey that takes little effort, the pages almost turning themselves. Although, the experience isn't without a few potholes.

Rous opts to move the plot along, on more than a few occasions, by administering her characters doses of the *\*oh, I remember now\** serum. It's storyline development that feels lazy and uninspired. Memories resurfacing at the most convenient of times, in conjunction with the convoluted climax, knocked my overall enjoyment down a few notches.

The page-turning quality to the story isn't enough to overcome the identity crisis faced by many of the characters or the blurred familial lines the reader is left to make sense of in the end. Best described, in my mind, as confusing and overdone. But have no fear, all of that messiness is still somehow wrapped up with a neat little bow.

*\*Thanks to Berkley Publishing for providing a copy in exchange for my honest thoughts.*

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## **Lindsay - Traveling Sister says**

4 stars! A gripping, atmospheric and jaw-dropping read!

This novel follows the Mayes family, whose history holds many secrets. Seraphine Mayes is grieving the death of her father. While helping to clear out her father's vast estate, she stumbles across a photograph that leads to some unrelenting questions. Seraphine knows that on the day of her and her twin brother's birth, their mother took her own life, leaving the family in complete devastation. She has always harboured countless questions about that time, never receiving explanation from her father or grandmother. Laura, the au pair living with the Mayes family during that time, fled that same day, never to be heard from again.

I thoroughly enjoyed the unfolding of this engrossing mystery. The pace was perfect, the dual perspectives were excellent, the flow was seamless. I absolutely loved the "feel" of this story. It was a thrilling ride that had me itching to click on that 5 star rating, until the last 20% when the story lost some steam. There was too much drama at the end and I felt some storyline twists were over-the-top. I do recommend this novel as the writing, the characters and the atmosphere are all unforgettably exceptional, just be prepared for a lot happening at the conclusion.

Thank you to Edelweiss, Berkley and Emma Rous for providing me with an ARC in exchange for an honest review!

Expected Date of Publication: January 8, 2019.

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## **NZLisaM says**

**An eerie, claustrophobic family saga. Cross *V.C. Andrews* with *Agatha Christie* and you have *The Au Pair*.**

On the day twins, Seraphine and Danny Mayes, were born, their mother jumped from the cliff at their Norfolk estate – Summerbourne. Twenty five years later, mourning the recent death of her father, Seraphine stumbles across a photograph among his belongings that she's never seen before. It's a family snapshot taken the day of her, and Danny's, birth – showing her father, older brother, and mother – happy and smiling only hours before committing suicide. And in her mother's arms is not two babies, but one? Where's the other baby, and what really happened that day? Desperate for answers, Seraphine is determined to track down the Au Pair, Laura, who fled Summerbourne House that same day under mysterious circumstances.

Suspenseful, moody, and atmospheric! Crammed to the brim with all the gothic horror elements I love so much. The isolated, gloomy, yet picturesque setting, befallen by unspoken tragedy, and shouldered in mystery, hidden family secrets, a village riddled with rumours of stolen babies, forbidden romance, and creepy Norfolk folklore had me turning the pages at lightning speed. And then there was the ending – as twisty and shocking as it was emotional and moving.

Chapters alternate between Seraphine and Laura – past and present on a non-stop collision course to reveal the truth. I cared about both characters, and their narratives had me fully immersed from the get go. Supporting characters were just as interesting and intrigued, especially the brothers/sister bond between Seraphine, Danny, and Edwin.

A quick, engrossing novel, that I couldn't put down. One of my top ten reads for the year no question. I will be waiting with bated breath for *Emma Rous*' next book.



UK Edition: 6th December 2018 (Out Now!)

US Edition: 8th January 2019

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## **(Bern) Mom to 2 Posh Lil Divas says**

### **Oh, what a tangled web! 3.25 convoluted, family secrets filled stars for *The Au Pair***

Within hours of her birth Seraphine Mayes' mother Ruth had thrown herself from the cliffs near their family home. 25 years later, as Seraphine mourns the death of her father she comes across a hidden, old family photo. Seraphine never had a photo with her mother but in this photo dated on the day she was born her mother sits, smiling, cradling an infant, surrounded by her older son and husband. This photo would be a welcome discovery if not for the fact that there should be two babies in the photo. Seraphine has a twin brother, Danny. So which of them is in the photo and why is one of them missing?

**Seraphine's mind becomes a swell of emotions, memories and stories.** Growing up there had been many rumors shared about the Summerbourne twins. That they were not really from Summerbourne, they were sprites or worse - children Ruth had stolen at the height of her madness before killing herself. Seraphine can not shake the uneasiness this photo ignites in her. **She becomes obsessed with finding out what happened on the day she and Danny were born.** With both her parents dead and her grandmother Vera unwilling to discuss anything about the past Seraphine is determined to track down the only other person who knows what truly happened that day - her older brother Edwin's Au Pair, Laura.

The mystery unfolds, via alternating chapters of the past detailing Laura's eleven months spent as an Au Pair with the Mayes family and the present chronicling Seraphine's journey towards discovery of the truth. It is a slow unraveling of long hidden family secrets brought to light in much too convenient ways at times. I had definite theories early on about who was responsible for certain acts in Seraphine's present as well as what went on in the past. I was correct in both cases though I did have the twin aspect figured out incorrectly.

The story gets very confusing and convoluted at the end- a bit too much for my liking. I had a hard time accepting some of the reveal but overall the story was entertaining and definitely kept me turning the pages. **If you enjoy stories about family secrets, tragedy, mental instability and deception everywhere then this one is definitely for you.**

*Thank you Emma Rous, Penguin Publishing Group and Edelweiss for an arc of this book.*

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## **Carol (Bookaria) says**

This was a **gripping, mysterious, and captivating read**. Once I started it, I could not stay away from it.

Seraphine is mourning the death of her father and looking through old pictures when she stumbles upon an odd photograph, in it her mother is posing with a baby the same day she and her twin brother were born. She asks herself why is only one baby in the picture when her mother has just given birth to twins? And she won't stop until she finds the answer to this question.

I absolutely loved this novel. It is an **entertaining tale** of dark family secrets, an **engaging page-turner**.

The story is told in alternating timelines and takes place in a small English town. The setting was perfect for this type of mystery with all the gossip and tragic events surrounding the estate.

Overall, I **highly recommend** this novel to readers of mysteries, thrillers, and contemporary fiction.

*Received ARC from the publisher via Edelweiss*

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## Meredith says

*3.5 stars*

*Twisted, compulsively readable psychological thriller that centers on deeply hidden family secrets.*

25-year-old Seraphine buried her father 3 weeks ago and is struggling. While she has her twin brother, Danny, and older brother, Edwin, to offer support, she feels like an outsider in her family--she always has. Her mother committed suicide the day she and Danny were born, and now parentless, she seeks to find answers to the questions she had about her mother's death.

As she tries to uncover what happened the day her mother died, she begins to question her own origins. There is only one person she believes has the answers she seeks: Laura, Edwin's childhood Au Pair, Laura, who was present for her birth. She tracks down Laura, but in doing so finds herself in danger. But one begins to wonder if Seraphine really is in danger or if there is something else at play?

The narrative alternates between the past in 1991 to the present, with the events being recounted by Laura and the present by Seraphine. Seraphine made for an enthralling narrator. Many a time, I was questioning the reliability of her version of events.

I couldn't put this book down--it takes a bit for the story to really take off, but as it became clear that there were many secrets and lies to uncover, I got sucked in! I had a theory early on about some of the mysterious secrets and I was correct...but while I figured out the who, I could never have guessed the how and the why. I love a book that keeps me guessing! **I knocked this down a half a star due to the believability factor. It gets a little overly complicated and convoluted towards the end but at the same time the fascinating narrators and web of lies to expose kept me riveted. Overall I found this to be a captivating read!**

I won a copy of this book from a Goodreads giveaway!

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## Diane S ? says

3.5 Doesn't it just figure that after making the decision to read many less psychological thrillers next year, I would finish this year with a couple I actually liked. This one begins with a death and a picture. A picture that sends a young woman, one of a set of twins, scrambling for answers. One baby, when there should have been two.

A gothic toned storyline, a past that holds many secrets and deceptions, and a determined young woman bent on finding answers. There were so many babies in this, it made my head hurt trying to figure out whose baby belonged to whom. Where do they all belong? A young au pair that finds herself right in the middle of a drama. Folk takes about twins where one doesn't survive, because of a myth, a curse, human hand? Quite interesting trying to figure all this out before the denouement. A big bad wolf in someone else's clothes? That part I didn't figure on, but I actually did quite well with the rest of it.

The end, a little too dramatic for me, almost lost me there, but did enjoy getting there so..... Why don't authors realize that less is sometimes more and that they can leave out the kitchen sink.

ARC from Edelweiss.

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## **Linda says**

A House of Mirrors.....

You know the experience. Where things are completely distorted and take on highly exaggerated shapes of their own. What exactly is real and what is not?

Seraphine Mayes returns to the family estate on the coast of Norfolk. She is joined by her twin brother, Danny, and her older brother, Edwin, for their father's funeral. There was a terrible accident when Dominic fell off a ladder while repairing the garage roof.

But the Mayes family have experienced great tragedy in times past. Their mother leaped to her death from a cliff on the estate. It was the exact day that the twins were born. The three children were raised by a revolving door of nannies through the years. Their father tried his best. Their grandmother, Vera, the ruling matriarch of the family, had a say in all things.

As her brothers return to London, Seraphine finds herself going through boxes and drawers. She comes upon a photo of her father, Edwin, and her mother holding only one of the newborns. It must have been taken only hours before her mother's death. Who had taken the photo and why was there only one baby in the picture? This simple photo will be the impetus that sets this family unraveling at a frantic pitch. As Seraphine digs deeper into the past, she will come upon rumors that the little village keeps on a slow boil for years.

Emma Rous begins her story with quite the appeal. It's a debut novel. As readers, we are intrigued with the premise and find ourselves leaning into it. But as incidents begin to surface, we find that there's a sunami of threads to unpack here. The knots become more and more apparent as they tangle and fray. Because of this, there requires page after page of explanations and ironing out the wrinkles to tidy up before the final curtain. Perhaps in her next offering she won't be as tempted to take on quite so much extraneous baggage.

I received a copy of The Au Pair through Berkley Books. My thanks to them and to Emma Rous for the opportunity.

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