

AMANDA JAMES

*The*  
Garden  
*by the*  
Sea

Will she sow the seeds  
of happiness?



# THE GARDEN BY THE SEA

AMANDA JAMES

One More Chapter  
a division of HarperCollinsPublishers Ltd  
1 London Bridge Street  
London SE1 9GF  
[www.harpercollins.co.uk](http://www.harpercollins.co.uk)

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First published in Great Britain by HarperCollinsPublishers 2022

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A catalogue record of this book is available from the British Library

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Source ISBN: 9780008505011  
Ebook Edition © January 2022 ISBN: 9780008505004  
Version: 2021-11-29

# Contents

[Prologue](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[Thank you for reading...](#)

[About the Author](#)

[Also by Amanda James](#)

[One More Chapter...](#)

[About the Publisher](#)

*For my family, with love.*

## 1980

Tamsin Rowe had been up in the loft, sitting on the packing crate for far too long. What had started as a mission to find her mother's sewing kit had turned into a two-hour stroll down memory lane. Big bundles of her past were up here, and quite a few were undone and scattered around her feet, like presents on Christmas morning. Right now, she was back in her wedding day, twenty years ago. With the wedding album across her knees, she ran a finger along the edge of the bride's veil and wondered where that slip of a girl had gone. In the elegant high-necked gown, confetti in her hair, with her new husband smiling down at her, love shining from his eyes, she'd thought she was the luckiest woman alive. And she had been. But Tamsin would be forty-four next birthday, and although she couldn't wish for a better man to share her life with, there was something missing for both of them. No, not something. Someone.

Still, no use yearning for things that weren't meant to be. Tamsin placed the wedding album back in its white box and tied the pink ribbon around it. She was just about to take the sewing kit and go, when she noticed the corner of an old carved wooden box sticking out from under some old curtains she'd been meaning to throw away. Pulling it free, she smiled. This was the old 'magical' Tintagel seed-box that had been passed down from her great-grandmother and her mother before that, and on down the line. Tamsin's own mother had told her some nonsense about it being magical, and having soil inside from the garden of the legendary King Arthur. Tamsin should have chucked it years ago, but her mum believed the old tales. It had a lovely carving of a tree on it too.

Ten minutes later, she was still there with the box on her lap thinking about her parents, the hopes and dreams of her youth, and wondering what the future had in store. *No use getting maudlin, Tamsin. You have to make the most of what you have, and what you have is so much more than many people.* To cheer herself up, she decided that she'd make a lovely dinner for Derek when he got home and wear that dress he loved so much. The yellow one with the big red poppies. It wasn't new, but he said it made her look like a summer's day. Tamsin had much to be happy about and the thought of being in Derek's arms lifted her spirits.

About to shove the box back where she'd found it, she hesitated and remembered her mum's words. Tamsin held it to her chest and said to the

wooden rafters above, 'Dear Magic Box, please grant me my heart's desire. Bless me and Derek with the child we've always wanted.' In the loft space, her voice sounded small, feeble and more than a bit desperate. Feeling slightly daft, she sighed and put the box back. Wishes were for kids on starry nights, not silly middle-aged women who should know better. Still, she thought, as she extinguished the light and climbed down the loft ladder. Sometimes miracles do happen.

# Chapter One