



Rebecca's Tale

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April 1951. It has been twenty years since the death of Rebecca, the hauntingly beautiful first wife of Maxim de Winter, and twenty years since Manderley, the de Winter family's estate, was destroyed by fire. But Rebecca's tale is just beginning.

Colonel Julyan, an old family friend, receives an anonymous package concerning Rebecca. An inquisitive young scholar named Terence Gray appears and stirs up the quiet seaside hamlet with questions about the past and the close ties he soon forges with the Colonel and his eligible daughter, Ellie. Amid bitter gossip and murky intrigue, the trio begins a search for the real Rebecca and the truth behind her mysterious death.

Rebecca's Tale Details

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From Reader Review *Rebecca's Tale* for online ebook

Bev says

Rebecca's Tale by Sally Beauman is set 20 years after *Rebecca*'s death and the burning of Manderley. It follows the search of Terence Gray for the real *Rebecca* and the answer to what really happened to her. There is also the small matter of packages with reminders of *Rebecca* which have been mailed to the family's friend Colonel Julyan and her cousin Jack Favell. Notebooks and mementos that stir up memories.

I have mixed feelings about this book. Standing on its own merits, it is a terrific investigation of truth and point of view. Beauman uses several points of view to tell her story--Colonel Julyan, Terence Gray, *Rebecca* herself (through the notebooks) and finally Ellie Julyan, the colonel's daughter. With every shift of narrator, she drives home the notion that Gray thinks about early in the book:

"I'm never likely to discover the truth about *Rebecca*--and what is the truth, anyway? Not a fixed thing, in my experience--never a fixed thing. The truth fluctuates, it shifts; look at it from this window and it takes one shape; look at it from another, and it's altered."

This is true as we follow the different narrators. Colonel Julyan gives us one version of his initial meetings with Terence Gray; Gray gives us a slightly different version. Not that either of the men is lying--but each conceals certain facts or views them with their different prejudices and preconceived notions. Even when Gray begins interviewing those who still remain from the days when *Rebecca* lived and died at Manderley, we are shown different versions of the same story. What exactly is the truth? And even Jack Favell begins to doubt what he thought he knew about the past. He says:

"Strange, isn't it? You start talking about the past, and you think you've understood it, and then you suddenly see: Maybe it wasn't the way you thought at the time, maybe there's a different explanation."

I started reading this thinking that all would be explained. I found that wasn't true at all. The reader is still left with doubts. Whose voice should we trust? Can we even trust what *Rebecca* wrote in her notebooks? There is reason to think that we shouldn't. And, now, having finished the book, I think that this is as it should be. I would hate for all the loose ends that were left dangling in such a tantalizing manner in *Rebecca* would suddenly be cleared up.

That brings me to my misgivings about the book. As a sequel to *Rebecca*, I'm not at all sure that I'm satisfied (I rarely am with sequels by other authors or remakes). I don't buy Colonel Julyan for one thing...his characterization doesn't quite ring true with me. The only voice that does ring the least bit true is *Rebecca*'s...and I don't quite trust that she's told the truth. Of course, given what we're told about her in du Maurier's story...that characterization is spot on. We're not supposed to trust *Rebecca*. And, of course, this book does not have the same gothic feel to it. I miss the shadow and eeriness of the du Maurier classic. Three stars out five...mostly for Beauman's skill with point of view and exploring how trustworthy that is.

This review was first posted on my blog My Reader's Block. Please request permission before reposting any portion. Thanks.

Susan Johnson says

Books that our take-offs from other author's works are not my favorite. Still my book club selected this so I read this account of *Rebecca*, of the Daphne DuMaurier book of the same name. The premise is that a man, Terence Grey, shows up in the village around Manderley twenty years after *Rebecca*'s death asking questions about her. The story is told in sections by Colonel Julyan, the magistrate at the time of her death, Terence Grey, a long section from *Rebecca*'s journals and Ellie, Julyan's daughter.

The writing is slow and ponderous. It is trying to recreate DuMaurier's pacing and style but doesn't quite make it. There are long sections when I thought editing could really have improved it. It just became frustrating and it was much too long at over 400 pages.

When I finally stumbled to the end, I thought so what? There was nothing new and interesting. It didn't add anything to the story. It didn't make me see the original book in any new way. It didn't offer anything of value and made me wonder why the story was even written.

Sarah Mac says

More like 2.5, but rounded up; I'm feeling generous today.

I love the premise, & the writing was good -- I'm certainly willing to try Beauman's fiction again. But overall, meh. For one thing, it's way too long -- there's a high ratio of nothing happening compared to the page count. The other problem is that Gray & Ellie's sections (roughly half said page count) are boring as sin. Their narratives simply screamed "overwritten lit-fic" & brought very little to the *Rebecca* story. If the narrative divides had focused on, say, Julyan + *Rebecca*'s diary + a now-senile Mrs Danvers, that would have made for a more tightly woven continuation. But Gray & Ellie don't feel connected to *Rebecca*'s saga, despite Beauman pushing, shoving, & stretching to fit their own (rather paltry, IMO) problems into the scope of the original. It's a textbook example of Trying Too Hard(tm).

...That said, I did enjoy grumpy ol' Julyan's section, & *Rebecca*'s diary was interesting (even if too heavy-handed in the blatant feminist revisionary mode).

I've read worse, but it could've been so much better.

Wayne says

Stupid Me!!!

Fancy believing in a sequel when the author provided none and never intended one. Anyway, why would you want to know more about the De Winters?...they found true love, laid a very nasty ghost and swanned around the continent hereafter. A Very Happy Ending methinks??

Oh no!!! Not for Sally.

Daphne du Maurier was safely dead before Sally started meddling with her masterpiece. Sally won't have it, won't believe a thing Daphne has written.

Rebecca was REALLLLY nice!! (REALLY?????????????????????)

Max was always and forever in love with Sally's Rebecca, and tops himself in this sham sequel to prove it.(NO! NO! NO! Sally dear!!)

The big denouement of the original novel which hits you like a brick is that Max HATED Rebecca. Daphne makes it quite clear that he hated her.(Sally totally ignores this which is simply amazing!!)

And the nameless heroine?(Boy, does Sally hate HER!!!)She matures, as Daphne has shown by a device called 'character development' Sally, and becomes a true and credible heroine, worthy of herself and her man.

Then you realise what Sally's real agenda is.

She is NOT writing a sequel at all.

She is RE-writing du Maurier's classic book, no less!!!

She is letting us in on the Truth.

Sorry Sally.

There is NO Truth.

We are dealing here with a FICTIONAL novel.

You should have just gone off and written your own classic novel. But why do that, when you are assured of far more sales when you can just hijack somebody else's hard work by stealing their readymade, already well-loved characters. And Fans.

Lazy, Greedy, Talentless Sally!!!

Please write out one hundred times:

"I must not steal other people's excellent ideas and rip off both financially and psychologically the original fans not to speak of the time they will have wasted reading my longwinded, pseudo-sequel travesty."

Thankyou Sally.

You may now return to your desk. And pleeee...no more writing?

Try crocheting.

PS For all those Austen "fans" who eat up the pseudo-sequels to Austen's books. Jane would slay the lot of you with her wit.

Michael Thomas Angelo says

As a longtime fan of Hitchcock's Rebecca, I enjoyed the story that inspired it written by Daphne Dumaurier. I was overjoyed to read this book and learn more about the backstory of Rebecca's characters. I have been reading a lot of undue criticism from other readers who are intolerant of the author's tendency to take creative license in her efforts to fluff out the story. I welcomed the different points of view that the story used to tell the tale because we gained valuable perspective from each angle. Beginning with Cnl. Julyan, the magistrate who was present at Max's inquest in the original tale, followed by a visiting journalist who's

obsessive interest in Rebecca's story is revealed as the book progresses. We are made privy to a diary allegedly left by Rebecca as she recounts her childhood and trajectory from her hardscrabble beginnings as the bastard daughter of a fallen lady of society. As she grows up and schemes to win the affections of Max Dewinter, we are asked to overlook that she is purported to be his first cousin by virtue of her questionable parentage. I was fascinated as the story of the journalist unfolded to reveal his origins as Rebecca's bastard half-brother adopted from an orphanage and raised under the cloak of mystery. The book is full of the effects of the old caste system of European society. Rebecca's mother had noble blood but lost privileges when she became pregnant by a philandering businessman who failed to support her financially. The last section of the book is told from the viewpoint of Captain Julyan's dutiful daughter who turns down a marriage proposal from a doctor to explore life on her own. I was disappointed by that outcome thinking that girls in the 1950s were bred to become successfully married. Since she blatanlly passed up a golden chance, I didn't root for her unconventional choices.

B the BookAddict says

Colonel Julyan is one of the few people alive who actually knew the real Rebecca. When he receives an anonymous package concerning Rebecca, the famed Mrs De Winter, he decides once and for all to investigate and set straight the mystery surrounding Rebecca and her death.

I am such a fan of the original story and I've got to say that Sally Beauman tells an excellent story here. She sets the tone of the story in her own style and it is one which compliments Du Maurier's tone. I loved this book and read it practically in two days. I found I couldn't put it down and read late into the night; that's a good sign for me. I've read this book many times since my first read and I would recommend it to all who have read and loved the first book. Having said that, this book doesn't need you to have read Du Maurier's story, it is a stand alone book on it's own.

This was my first Sally Beauman book; I've now read all her novels and found them enjoyable. It's not literary fiction but it's a really good read. 4★

Tiffany says

Terrible.

Someone please remind me to stop reading fan-fiction of classics. :(

It kills me to even have to give it 1 star.

The Just-About-Cocky Ms M says

I'd forgotten to rate this back in the day. I've read it three times, and m still amazed at the originality and plausibility of the different viewpoints.

Somewhere between the second and third read, I returned to the original Rebecca, which made the third read of this book positively sparkle with clarity.

I won't spoil anything because any discussion of the plot would reveal what this little volume is all about, and it is far better to come into it with an open mind. But trust me--there are plot twists and turns and "what-ifs" that are brilliant--and disturbing, easily replicating the elegant, brooding atmosphere of the original tale.

Wendy says

Fake sequels (those written by someone other than the author) are pretty bad in the first place, but this one goes over the top. If you're going to write a fake sequel, you can't claim that what the original author wrote wasn't the truth. (i.e. oh, actually, Rebecca never had an affair with her cousin; that was just ugly gossip.)

Clearly Beaumont knows REBECCA very well, but has always sympathized more with Rebecca than with the narrator, and felt the need to redeem her somehow. The description and characterization of the second Mrs. de Winter is almost offensive.

Marigold says

Sally Beauman, in "Rebecca's Tale", cleverly explores many of the themes in Daphne Du Maurier's "Rebecca", including jealousy, powerful man/powerless woman, as well as identity, obsession, the relationship between past & present, & exploration of mothers and fathers – both good and bad – and how we might see someone as a Good Mother or Bad Father but have that view change if we look at it through a different lens. Beauman introduces gay & lesbian characters (only hinted at by Du Maurier), & digs deeper into other subtleties that Du Maurier touched on – pedophilia, incest & how effects of syphilis can be passed on.

Not only that, but here's something I really loved – this book has not one, not two, but FOUR unreliable narrators! I'm not sure who else has picked up on that. I'm not sure that ANY of the narrators in "Rebecca's Tale" is telling the truth – including Rebecca! Yes, once again we are not entirely sure who she is. I thought this was an interesting addition to the Rebecca canon because on reading Du Maurier's novel, I think one can make a case that none of the characters in that novel are entirely telling the truth either. Every character has secrets. (Oh – there's another theme!)

And yes, I love Du Maurier's "Rebecca" – who doesn't?! If you love "Rebecca" so much that you can't stand the thought of looking at it through a different lens, by all means do not read Beauman's book, because you will not like it. At the risk of pointing out the obvious, can I say that "Rebecca's Tale" is a separate book?! It's not a prequel. It's not a sequel. It's a different book based on the same characters & plot, by a different writer. The existence of "Rebecca's Tale" doesn't affect the original "Rebecca" one way or the other! I love "Rebecca" & it stands on its own merits. I also enjoyed "Rebecca's Tale". And Du Maurier is still a better writer, tho Beauman does a good job here. But if you want to keep your view of the original Rebecca character as an evil woman without any redeeming features, by all means do so, whether you read Beauman's book or not! Again, at the risk of being drummed out of the Du Maurier Club, I can't remember the first time I read "Rebecca" – I think my mom read it to me when I was around 11 or 12 – but the second time I read it, I did wonder...isn't Maxim a little controlling?! Isn't Nameless Wife a little crazy?!

My biggest quibble with "Rebecca's Tale" is the first section, narrated by Colonel Julian. It's the least interesting of the four sections, which is too bad since it's at the beginning. On the other hand, I'm not sure I

understood the bit about the small coffin he kept dreaming about. Is he talking/dreaming about the body that was buried in Rebecca's place? If it wasn't for the small coffin, I could almost dismiss the Julian section as not really belonging with the rest of the book—but as it is I can't quite do that. It did leave me wondering what "secrets" Julian was hiding even by the end of the book – though in other ways he seems like the least interesting of characters. Anyway, if you read this book, do persevere through the Julian section, because it gets better!

Annalisa says

La colpa è anche un po' mia: appena vedo qualcosa che ha minimamente a che fare con Rebecca o con la Du Maurier non posso resistere.

Il romanzo sarebbe anche ben scritto, ma per me nulla può competere.

Nulla si può aggiungere.

Non toccatemi Rebecca!

Portia Costa says

While I don't think that Rebecca's Tale is quite the great classic that its literary source is, I enjoyed it very much on a second reading, possibly more than the first time. It's certainly a page turner in the way Rebecca is, and it's also just as full of unreliable narrators interpreting stories, at second hand, that were unreliable start with!

Having read it I still don't know if Rebecca was a Jezebel or a woman multiply wronged... although it does seem to me that she might have been a combination of both, and more, and had become the former because of the latter. And I certainly come out of this book disliking Maxim de Winter even more than ever, although somehow I feel more pity for the second Mrs de Winter.

Just like the original novel, Rebecca's Tale has that power, for me, of seeming like a *true* story, and that's got to be a measure of its quality.

Rebecca's tale is elusive, frustrating and poignant. Much like the original...

Cynthia says

I was surprised by how hostile most of the reviews were of this book. I thought it was really good, and much better than just a "what happened after the book ended" kind of a book. I've read the novel by Du Maurier but I really love the Hitchcock film and have seen it so many times i've pretty well memorized it. I thought Sally Beauman did a very good job of capturing the nuances of how everyone thought and spoke and looked, and of taking those mannerisms and putting them into new scenes without making me feel like she'd just taken scenes from the original and moved them forward by 20 years. I found the plot interesting and compelling. I had the hardest time reading the section narrated by Rebecca Herself because she's such an unattractive clearly psychotic character (with subtle suggestions that she had a split personality). I was

surprised by how many reviewers said Beauman was trying to make Rebecca a sympathetic character. I didn't see that at all. I was a little disappointed at how much she hated the second Mrs. De Winter, but I kind of got what she disliked about her; she explains it pretty well through the character of Ellie Julyan. And while the ending wasn't fully satisfying, I felt it was very honest. The original Rebecca didn't want or try to have everything make sense; it was a suspense novel and a really good one, and maybe a little less information is what helps make a story like that tick along so well. Beauman is going back and asking a million questions about how come and what if; she answers nearly all of them in a really convincing way and in the end she kind of says, "well, no one can ever really know." She does take a couple liberties with the plot of the original book and movie and changes a couple of key things, but I was Ok with that. This, weirdly, is one of the longest reviews I've posted on Goodreads in a while; so I guess that tells you that I felt very strongly about this book. I did really enjoy it.

Hannah says

I'd really like to give it 1.5 stars, but it gets 2 simply because it started out with a lot of promise. However, by the end it became a politically correct, feminist scree from Beauman that made no sense in the context of the time period which the book took place.

Simply one of those books where the writer should have quit while they were ahead.

Laura says

The daughter of a minor character from Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* joins forces with a journalist (with a hidden motive) to discover The Truth behind the mysterious Rebecca. Now, I'm not averse to "continuations" of novels, but this book commits the literary sacrilege of altering the essential nature of the characters in du Maurier's story. And as if that's not bad enough, we're asked to believe that a woman is going to be delighted when the man she's in love with confesses he's gay? And in the 1950's?! Sure, that reaction rings true. Unfortunately, the preposterous aspects of the book overshadow what could be an okay mystery.
