



## Rose Daughter

*Robin McKinley*

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It is the heart of this place, and it is dying, says the Beast. And it is true; the center of the Beast's palace, the glittering glasshouse that brings Beauty both comfort and delight in her strange new environment, is filled with leafless brown rosebushes. But deep within this enchanted world, new life, at once subtle and strong, is about to awaken.

Twenty years ago, Robin McKinley dazzled readers with the power of her novel *Beauty*. Now this extraordinarily gifted novelist returns to the story of Beauty and the Beast with a fresh perspective, ingenuity, and mature insight. With *Rose Daughter*, she presents her finest and most deeply felt work--a compelling, richly imagined, and haunting exploration of the transformative power of love.

## Rose Daughter Details

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Author : Robin McKinley

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## From Reader Review Rose Daughter for online ebook

### Giselle Bradley says

#### \*4.5 STARS

I adored this book so much! First off, the writing. I LOVED IT!! I literally found myself laughing out loud at point. Multiple times which doesn't happen often for me. And the character were also a delight. I loved them all! They were all very distinct and felt like different people. It's also refreshing to find a retelling that not only has "Beauty" have sisters ( I love Disney's Beauty and the Beast but I blame them for this key plot often being left out of retellings nowadays) but that they were good people!! So often they are these 2D rude, spoiled brats but they weren't in this one! They were wonderful distinct people! Sisters who aren't exactly alike but who care about each other and look out for each other and step up to do their part when things go wrong. I also enjoyed that at least the first third of the book happens before the beast and the castle. That we get to see their lives and that that wasn't the whole point of the story. I loved Beauty! She was such a wonderful, sweet character who really tried to love and understand people. She has a big struggle through the book about her self worth which was beautiful and completely relatable! It even made me cry. All in all I just found this book and it's messages beautiful and it's one of the best retellings that I've ever read.

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### Andi says

This book was painful. I really thought I was gonna get a book with character development, depth, and different than the previous book.

Oh boy. Did I get something different. At times it was confusing but that ending, that ending was the most confusing of all. I sort of mad-rushed/skimmed through the other half of the book because the character development became boring, plodding, empty words just to fill pages.

But that ending. I don't think my eyes can unsee what went on there.

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### Nikki says

Definitely not my favourite of McKinley's works -- I thought I'd like it more than *Beauty*, and in one sense I do, in that something that bothers me about the ending of *Beauty* is addressed here and a different sort of ending written. I like the world, the sisters, the domestic stuff that (as usual) McKinley shines with. I liked the castle and Beauty's work there, and the way other little bits of fairytale lore come in (like her experiential seven days spent in the Beast's castle versus seven months for her sisters). It's also notable that the way Beauty and the Beast relate to each other is very similar to in *Beauty*; the differences are more in a more complicated setup with slightly different inputs producing a slightly different trajectory.

My main complaint the first time I read this was that the greenwitch at the end has far too much explaining to do, in quite a short span of pages, and that remains problematic to me. Some things needed a bit more opening out, foreshadowing, *something*, to prevent a long stretch of infodump via dialogue.

Still enjoyable, though, and the writing is gorgeous, of course.

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## Marija says

Hmm... I'm not quite sure how to rate this book. Indeed, some parts were rather good— inventive—but as I finished, I couldn't help feeling a little unsatisfied.

Though, I first must give McKinley credit for being able to rewrite the story and make it seem fresh and original. It doesn't read like it's just another retelling of an old fairytale. I like how she infused magic into this world she created. The magic of gardening... the fragility of it all—the preparations and cultivation, how the blending of nature and nurture with a little attention and care can yield such wondrous beauty was a pleasure to read. Also enjoyed the idea of having sorcerers and witches living in towns, providing charms and spells to help the common folk deal with their everyday troubles, and yet also having them getting into their own scrapes in the process. And did happen to like the idea that the Beast's castle runs on its own time, different from the outside world.

But, this is also where I believe McKinley made her error. Time runs slower at the castle: A day spent there is equivalent to a month outside its grounds. This only gives Beauty seven days for her to cultivate her feelings and love for the Beast. I can't help but feel that that's just not enough time for someone to develop such strong feelings, especially when for Beauty, it did only feel like that short span of time. It would've been better if the time factor were switched: one month at the castle equivalent to one day on the outside. This would've given more time for Beauty and the Beast to interact. As it stands, her recognition of her sentiments is rather sudden, since her initial feelings towards him were mostly pity and sorrow for his plight.

McKinley hardly includes any interaction between Beauty and the Beast. Beauty meets him for dinner, where they only exchange a few common pleasantries... that's all. Later, when she discovers the artwork on the roof, he meekly admits he's the artist, then backs away, never discussing his work, only watches and listens to her observations. This scene could have been beautiful, but it left me ultimately frustrated! McKinley, I felt, took the easy way out, describing their love for each other as more of an internal connection, than one forged by presence and communication, evidenced by the shared dreams, and parallel pain and scars (the pattern of his blood on the floor and her blood on her pillow, and the scars on each other's hands left by the thorns of the rose). While I did find the idea of this connection interesting... that they're two halves of the same whole: soulmates, I just wish their characters were more developed and fleshed out—that it was this along with the internal connection that finally brought them together.

Also, I couldn't really figure out the presence of the squire's eldest son, Jack. Initially, I thought that he might be a reincarnation of the evil, handsome sorcerer or at least was a host for some fragment of the sorcerer's spirit, as their characters are similarly described. But at the end, nothing really comes of that connection, and I was left wondering what happened to him after that discussion in Jeweltongue's salon? To what purpose did Jack really serve in the story? I'm not sure how to answer that.

Yet, I did like how the book ended. It sort of makes sense, and reminded me of the final scenes from Jean Cocteau's *La belle et la bête*. There, when the Beast makes his transformation from the familiar form to a beautiful and handsome stranger, Beauty seems to have a sorrowful almost uncomfortable look about her... a look portraying the loss of what was familiar to her, the person with whom she fell in love. McKinley seems to take that idea and twists it, giving Beauty the chance to decide how she wants her story to end.

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## Angie says

I talk about my love for Robin McKinley's books a lot. I know everyone's read *Beauty*. It was her first book. It's essentially a classic of fairy tale retellings now. And I love it and will always love it for giving me a *Beauty* who was not beautiful and avoided mirrors at all cost and a *Beast* with a library of books from all the ages, including ones that hadn't even been written yet. Makes my little heart sing just thinking of it and the way I absorbed it when I was twelve. But fewer people are as familiar with Ms. McKinley's second retelling of the story of *Beauty and the Beast*. If you have a free moment, it's really worth hopping over to her site to read the wonderful essay, "*The Story Behind Rose Daughter*." It's lovely. When I discovered she was returning to her favorite fairy tale twenty years later and giving it a fresh new take in an entirely new novel, my skin tingled with anticipation. And not a little curiosity at just how she would give the story she'd done so well by a fresh take and whether or not it would capture my imagination the way the original did. People seem to be very divided on their loyalties to these two books. Some would fight to the death for *Beauty* and don't give *ROSE DAUGHTER* a second glance. Others feel quite the opposite and gravitate toward the slightly more lush second version. I've listened to these conversations. As for me, my heart is big enough to love them both. And I am so glad she wrote both books. Because someone who understands and loves that particular fairy tale the way it seems she does should never stop telling it, in my opinion. I would read a third and a fourth version and I will re-read these two for the rest of my life.

*Her earliest memory was of waking from the dream. It was also her only clear memory of her mother.*

Beauty and her two older sisters Jeweltongue and Lionheart live with their father in the city. Their lives have been rather gentle ones, filled with plenty to eat, soft beds, and the best society has to offer. Though they lost their mother early on, they have managed to make a good life with their father, each pursuing the hobbies and talents they love, as represented by their names. Lionheart is brave and strong and loves riding and sport more than anything else. Jeweltongue knows exactly what to say in every situation, sets people at ease, and sews and embroiders the most beautiful dresses. Beauty loves nature. She loves flowers and gardens and especially roses, in all their varieties and iterations, because they remind her of her mother. Then tragedy strikes. Their father loses all his wealth and they are forced to move to tiny Rose Cottage far away in the countryside. The sisters' talents are put to good use earning what meager money they can and their lives are changed in starkly unimaginable ways. But none more than Beauty's. All her life she's had the same dream. More of a nightmare, really. In which she is walking down a long hallway, uncertain of the mystery she will find behind that final door, but dreading it all the same and filled with the terror that she will both eventually get there and not get there in time. The usual events follow and Beauty takes her father's place and finds herself living in the Beast's home, where his lovely rose garden is dying. But, of course, everything is more than meets the eye, and Beauty will, in the end, have to make the hardest decision of all.

Roses are for love. Not silly sweet-hearts' love but the love that makes you and keeps you whole, love that gets you through the worst your life'll give you and that pours out of you when you're given the best instead.

Sigh. I love this book so much. It is, without a doubt, a more adult retelling of the fairy tale. And I don't mean that there is any potentially objectionable in it at all. I merely mean that you can feel the depth of experience and emotion in the work, which I think represents what the author brings to the tale twenty years

after she first retold it. The sisters feel a bit older, a bit more mature, though I always love that McKinley represents them as loving and kind to one another and as in the whole thing together. The Beast himself feels more ancient to me, closer to the end of his long existence, and we get even more background information on how he came to be the way he was and what his interminable penance has really been like. And the love of beauty and gardens and all living things permeates the page in such a way that I, who am the most unskilled and amateur of gardeners, go looking for a spade and seeds the minute I put the book down. The language in ROSE DAUGHTER swallows me up as well. I find myself eternally charmed by the archetypal names and the various village denizens the girls encounter: Miss Trueword, Mrs. Words-Without-End, Mrs. Bestcloth. Each personality is distinct and you can tell that they each have their own vital stories playing out, even as the focus remains on Beauty and her path. Each time I read it, I relish getting lost with her in the ever-changing castle that is the Beast's home, as the words and the corridors wrap their twisty novelty around me and the heady magic that suffuses the place and the world has its way with me. The romance is wonderful and just as it should be. The magic is dense and carefully woven. And the descriptions so visual I can call them to mind on any given day, so vibrant are the impressions they made on me. And the ending, you say? Well, you shall have to find out for yourself. To me, it is perfect. I'm interested what it is to you.

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### **Andrea says**

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Love as a curse-breaker is the first core of this story, and for that you really have to sell the reasons

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### **Jen says**

I held my breath as I clicked the mouse, selecting this book for the library to "hold" for me. Did I really want to read another obvious fairy tale reworked? Granted, I had read "Beauty" numerous times, recommended it to everyone, purchased it for myself, and was certain it was what Disney based their animated feature around. And just last year I had braved the retelling of Sleeping Beauty as "Spindle's End" and was equally entranced.

I had read a lot of her other, young adult works of fiction throughout my childhood. I adored "The Blue Sword", "The Hero & the Crown", etc...

But still... fairy tales don't sit well with me and it is rare that I am motivated to seek them out, more so rare that I can be in the right frame of mind to read and enjoy them.

After I'd reserved "Rose Daughter" for my reading, I did a quick search to see what the tale was about.

No!

Could it be?!

The author herself had actually RE-WRITTEN my beloved "Beauty"?!?

Yes.

Nearly 20 years after the fact.

I was equally eager and abhorrent to read this reworking.

Everything I read on the subject assured that it WAS, in fact, a "reworking" and not a complete retelling, not a drastic change, etc...

All I can say is

"Oh, wow!"

"Oh, man...!"

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### **Tadiana ☆Night Owl? says**

This is Robin McKinley's second take on the Beauty and the Beast fairy tale. I'm a lifelong fan of McKinley, but this book was my first indication that her writing style might be headed in a direction that is, shall we say, less accessible to the average reader. I've read *Rose Daughter* twice, several years apart, but still have extremely mixed emotions about it.

It's slow-paced, it introduces interesting ideas and then simply drops them, the magical part is and always has been confusing to me (for some reason that happens with a fair amount of frequency in Robin McKinley's later books), and reading THAT ENDING was seriously one of the most "The hell??" moments for me ever. (view spoiler).

And yet. I enjoyed the characters and relationships between the three sisters (McKinley likes to have the sisters be worthwhile humans; none of that sister-hate here). There are some scenes with animals popping up in Beauty's rooms that are absolutely delightful. McKinley has always written fantastic animal scenes. And fairly frequently I read parts that struck me with their loveliness and reminded me of why I always read McKinley's books, even when I find major parts of them rather frustrating.

McKinley's first take on this fable, *Beauty*, is a much simpler, straightforward retelling of the tale, and it lacks the elements that make me grit my teeth, always a plus. That one is still my favorite Beauty and the Beast retelling, and probably always will be. But if you don't mind a slower-paced, rather ambiguous fairy tale, you may very well enjoy *Rose Daughter*.

I guess it says something about my mixed feelings for this book that I've given it a middling rating but I haven't been able to bring myself to get rid of my copy of this book, even though I'm not at all sure I'll ever read it again. On the other hand, it's a nice hardback book that I paid full retail price for, so maybe it's just me being stubborn here.

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### **Nikki says**

I'm not sure which of McKinley's *Beauty and the Beast* tellings I like better. I liked the simplicity of *Beauty*, but *Rose Daughter* is a little more grown up, and there's a little more world building, and I went a little deeper into it than with *Beauty* because it had more depth to go into. I enjoyed a lot of the descriptions and the bits of magic, and the foreshadowing for what actually happened at the end -- although I thought it could have done with more foreshadowing, so that the greenwitch had to do a little less explaining. This lost some of the simplicity of *Beauty and the Beast* in general, but it kept enough to keep it firmly in the region of fairy tale, for me.

I liked the very end, (view spoiler)

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### **Anne says**

2.5 stars

*The first half wasn't that bad....*

Actually, mid-way through this book I thought it was pretty good, and I was sure that this one was going to end up wrangling 4 or 5 stars out of me.

Oh well, I've been wrong before.

Several things happened that lowered my enjoyment level down to nothing, and they all happened toward the end.

First, it's not like the pace in *Rose Daughter* was very fast to begin with, but I was dealing with it (admirably, I thought). You know how sometimes the beginning of a book drags and you can't get into it? Or in the middle of a story it sloooooows down to a crawl, and you just want to scream *Get on with it already!*? Well, in *Rose Daughter* it was the *ending* that...um, wouldn't end.

I can't recall another book I've read where the pacing was like that. The ending was booooring. For example, there's the part when she goes back to find Beast and tell him she loves him, but she gets lost in the magical house (or whatever it is).

It took *forever* to get her from point A to point B.

And we hear about all of it. Every. Convoluted. Minute.

What she tastes, what she smells, what she hears, what she feels, what she thinks, how many times she weeps, and (last but not least) what the people in the paintings are *wearing*.

Pages and pages of it.

*Are there actual readers out there who care about that stuff??!*

There must be, otherwise McKinley wouldn't have sold such a boatload of books. On the upside, if you like to skim when you read, then this is the book for you! Never fear, Dear Reader, you won't miss out on some important detail, because none of it matters!

Ok, even with such a slow pace, I probably wouldn't have rated it so low, but the *ending* creeped me out!

Ugh! Awful!

(view spoiler)

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I feel dirty...and *not* in a good way.

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### **M.A. Nichols says**

I read this immediately after reading "Beauty" by Robin McKinley, which was her first novel retelling the Beauty and the Beast faerie tale. While the first was a straight-forward telling of the faerie tale, with little deviation, this one certainly takes it to more of a retelling. The basic story is the same, but she adds lots of details, background, and magic to the story to give it more life. However, I just couldn't get into the mythology of the world she built.

I liked the beginning. McKinley brought in a lot of magic to the story with greenwitches and sorcerers. I also liked that the story started fairly quickly. Where "Beauty" took a long time getting Beauty to the Beast's castle, "Rose Daughter" had her entering the castle around the quarter mark into the book. I thought that boded well for showing their relationship and watching it develop. But it didn't. The heroine spent more time talking about the roses in the garden and the animals on the grounds than she did the Beast. There is little to no conversation between them and what little there is comes from her with barely a word spoken by him. There are maybe two or three sweet moments between them, but they are short, few, and far-between. Yes, he's kind to her, but there is never any basis for them to be in love. Especially, when you factor in that from Beauty's perspective the whole time in the castle only takes seven days.

One of the things I like most about the Beauty and the Beast faerie tale is the redemption of the Beast. He goes from a horrible, mean person to being humble and kind. I like the fact that he was brought low and he took the opportunity to change himself. And this retelling takes that off the table. It's about vengeance and spite with the Beast as the victim in the story. It takes one of the greatest aspects of the faerie tale out.

The story really has quite a lot of magic elements, but they're not explained well or thoroughly enough to add depth to the story. It simply throws in these random things that don't really enhance the story and feel like they're just tacked on. For example, Beauty receives a magic gift from a salamander in the beginning, which was an interesting idea, but apparently all it does is calm her down, like a magic Valium. It seemed strange and unnecessary. When it first cropped up in the story, I thought it could have some cool applications, but in the end it just didn't feel like it had any purpose in the story.

One major issue I did have with the magic was the inconsistency with time in the book. While Beauty is with the Beast, seven days pass for her, but it's seven months for her family. That was a little strange (maybe it's in one of the original faerie tale versions somewhere), but then when she leaves the Beast at the end, he tells her if she doesn't return soon, he'll die. He gives her a rose to remind her of that and tells her when it dies, so will he. She's home for all of a few minutes and the rose dies. So, if that's the case, the Beast would have had to die the instant she left him, if time passes more slowly with him than it does at home.

The writing was very long-winded. I'm fine with meandering prose if it's at least lyrical or well done, but the longer the book went the longer the words took to tell you what was happening. Which is funny, when I realize that when it came to explaining what was important (like the Beast's background), it was too sparse. The author took more time explaining Beauty running through the castle looking for the Beast than it did to explain how he became a Beast.

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### **Sluggish Neko says**

The biggest problem I had with *Rose Daughter* is that it dragged in a very tedious way. The main offender was the heroine, Beauty. The reader is stuck with her as she spends a great deal of time alone tending her roses, having nightmares, and exploring an enchanted castle. Unfortunately, she lacks the spunk, vivacity, and humor of her two older sisters and makes everything-- even unicorns-- very dull. The Beast isn't that interesting either. He's humdrum, lacking any kind of personality. When they're together, there's no chemistry, no banter, no conflict. It's just plain boring.

Beauty and the Beast is a very well-known story. If writers want to retell it, I expect them to add some kind of creative spin to it. Stuffing it to the brim with roses as McKinley does here, doesn't count. There is a bit of mystery of how the Beast came to be a Beast, but Beauty never guesses at it or cares to investigate it.

Instead, she's too preoccupied with gardening and re-homing stray animals. She learns the story only when other people tell it to her and they tell it to her many, many times-- each time as uninteresting as the next.

This book is only acceptable for people who are unfamiliar with the fairytale. Those who are should just re-watch the Disney version.

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### **Kelly says**

This book had such wonderful promise. I fell in love with the writing and style immediately, thrilled to have found a retelling of "Beauty & the Beast" that still held on to so much from the original French fairy tale. I was flying through, unable to put it down (or stop listening as I tackled CLEAN ALL THE THINGS!).

Then little disturbances started to creep into the tale. Where was Beauty's charm beyond being able to tend roses? And this Beast, he is already kind and considerate. Where was the beastly element of his self beyond an outward appearance.

And as the crux of the story - a love story where this reader detected no connection or emotion between these two ill-fated lovers -- was upon us, and it fell flat. The story took a short nose-dive from the fairy tale, and in so doing, lost the tension, the love, the morality of the tale and left me empty, and sad. And annoyed. No, I was pissed. This proves that without the morality lesson of the fairy-tale, sometimes the story does not work.

I suppose I can see what the author was trying to go for (view spoiler)

Give me back the fairy-tale lesson, and all the questionable feminist problems it create. Be original in how you untangle those snarls and dodge those thorns. Give me a plain Beauty who does not fit in to her family or town, and a beast who has been flawed beyond his outer appearance.

Now I'm going to go continue sulking and trying to get the bad taste out of my mouth (and imagination) that this book has left me with.

(I'm really pissed!)

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### **Heidi says**

what a mess. a slow, painful, overly descriptive mess. it took me F.O.R.E.V.E.R to get into it and then once i did, i found the story only remotely interesting. AND even that was like pulling teeth to get through.

-why does she fall in love with him? because of 6 or 7 encounters and conversations?

-what's with all the animals? and the cat that gave birth on her bed while she was sleeping? gross. burn those

sheets.

-i know there had to be some allusions and whatever with all her descriptions of the house and the unicorn and whatever but i just didn't care to plod through them. NOTHING was clear. not even a few gimmes for those of us that need some obvious direction.

-the story dump in the last 50 pages. all the details that the old lady reveals to beauty's mind would have been REALLY helpful dispersed throughout the story.

-the dream/vision/whatever when beauty is climbing on the roof? what in the world was going on?

-why does she LEAVE the beast when she needs answers? and go to her sisters who don't know anything? why didn't she just ask him when he said that he would tell her. and the curse that wasn't a curse. BLAH! this is making me angry.

-and the magic. apparently it you just call it all magic, that takes care of everything.

don't read it. just enjoy her other telling of beauty and the beast, beauty: a retelling of the story of beauty and the beast.

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### **Jen (The Starry-Eyed Revue) says**

If you can believe it, this was my first Robin McKinley novel. *I know*. But the good thing is, I found it absolutely lovely, and I know that when I get to *Beauty*, I'll love it, too, especially knowing how the rest of you adore it. I've been told before that this author's work is right up my alley, and it really is: lyrical and haunting, full of magic and folklore. I'll definitely be making time to check out the author's backlist, including her other BatB retelling.

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### **?Stephanie? says**

Title: Rose Daughter

Author: Robin McKinley

Publisher: Greenwillow Books, 1997

Genre: YA Fantasy, YA Retellings

This review can be found on my Blog, TeacherofYA's Tumblr, or my Goodreads page

### **My Review**

So I didn't get the one with this pretty cover at the library. My copy had a plain blue cover with a tiny graphic, which means I had the original 1997 release. But I'm sorry, I couldn't bear to put that ugly thing on this page. Like Drew @ TheTattooedBookGeek, I should do a cover challenge (Friday Face-off) and show you all the different covers this book went through so that we can all decide which one is the best. (I love those posts). This book, since it's been around for 20 years, has been through its share of covers.

But enough about that. I finished this book awhile ago...but it has taken me forever to want to write this review. I can't even do this one in my traditional format...so I decided to combine it with another book that was a bit shorter and try something new.

So we will see how this goes!

Are any of you familiar with McKinley's book, *Beauty*? It's more of a middle grade book...it was one of my faves as a kid. Apparently this book was a retelling of McKinley's book. She didn't like the way she left off...so she wanted to retell it from another angle, McKinley is known for her retellings, and I had only read *Beauty*. But I loved *Beauty* (pictured next). So I gave this one a try, thinking it would be a grown-up version of the original.

Ugh. I was right I guess...it was a "grown-up" version...if you consider a stiff, flowery-prosed, confusing plot a "grown-up" version. This book was trying to be more than it was. It was a YA book trying to play dress up in mama's heels. It was....just ugh.

The story is this: traditional *Beauty and the Beast* meets magic (duh), a huge obsession with roses, and a beast that has no personality whatsoever. Same set-up: Rose is the daughter but she has two sisters named (I'm not kidding you) Jeweltongue and Lionheart. WTF? Seriously? And her name is Rose? Why not Rosehips McGee at this point? Makes more sense with the other two bizarre names. And Rose loves...you guessed it! Growing roses! Wow! Father goes broke, they move, yada yada yada he ends up in the Beast's palace...etc etc he's forced to send Roe in his place. We know the story by now.

What was irritating was that it was IDENTICAL to *B&TB* in every way except for long descriptive passages that made me fall asleep and magic that is never explained. No animals but there's food. The house provides everything you need. Rose misses her sisters so much but dreams about them every night, though it never occurs to her that she's actually seeing real events. It's just inconceivable hogwash. I hate to say it, but this is the worst retelling of them all.

I want to tell you the most frustrating thing of the book...but it's a spoiler. Now, this book is 20 years old, and though I hate to give away spoilers, (if you really want yo read this, just skip the rest of this paragraph bc I can't keep this to myself: it's just too weird), I have to confess the ending that makes no sense whatsoever. (view spoiler)

Ok, you can look now.

Example of the writing that drove me absolutely insane:

"She looked up at once, pierced to the heart by the sorrow in his voice and knowing, from the question and the sorrow together, that he had no notion of what had just happened to her, nor why. From that she pitied him so greatly that she cupped her hands again to hold a little of the salamander's heat, not for serenity but for the warmth of friendship. But as she felt the heat again running through her, she knew at once it bore a different quality. It had been a welcome invader the first time, only moments before; but already it had become a constituent of her blood, intrinsic to the marrow of her bones, and she heard again the salamander's last words to her: Trust me. At that moment she knew that this Beast would not have sent such misery as her father's illness to harry or to punish, knew too that the Beast would keep his promise to her, and to herself she made another promise to him, but of that promise she did not yet herself know. Trust me sang in her blood, and she could look in the Beast's face and see only that he looked at her hopefully."

I tried. I really did. So no more here for me...I'm just going to cut to the chase. I give *Rose Daughter* ★★???. And I really didn't want to rate anything that low, but I just...I just can't.

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## Marquise says

Sigh . . . After *Beauty*, McKinley should've left the Beauty and the Beast fairytale alone and not revisit it just to shoot herself in **both** feet with this second attempt at a retelling. Readers who observed the flaws and plotholes in *Beauty* will notice that Robin McKinley not only repeats the same mistakes but actually exacerbates them; they're much worse in this story.

And the sad part is, this time the author can't be given the benefit of the doubt. With *Beauty* she was a fledgling author and so you could always be indulgent about her beginner mistakes. Some readers don't even take them into account and rate that book 5 stars. But with *Rose Daughter*? McKinley is a veteran author now, and should know better. Should've known better not just to NOT repeat the mistakes but also when to call it quits and reflect that if second parts are rarely good, second attempts never are. Not when your first one was good enough to not need a rehash.

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## Katie says

(Re-read)

I liked this better than *Beauty*. At least, most of it. By the end, I was bored and ready for it to be over.

I came closer to believing in the love story here, but not close enough.

And I guess McKinley's writing doesn't match my tastes so well anymore. Too much description!

(Makes me want to read a really awesome *Beauty & the Beast* retelling, though. The trick, of course, being it has to be awesome *for me*.)

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## Stephanie says

I read this book as a teenager but retained no memory of it. After reading it again, I know why.

McKinley says in the afterward that she chose to revisit the *Beauty and the Beast* story because she had more to say, especially about roses. Well, that's about all she has to say in this book. Lots about gardening, description of stuff, and cutesy-wootsy little animals. Other than that, nothing goes on in this book whatsoever.

The problem with this book is there's just no conflict. All the possible conflicts are glossed over or resolved before they even have time to get serious.

--The impoverished family has a ridiculously easy time in the most idyllic provincial town in existence.  
--The two older sisters are paper thin archetypes of the clever one and the tomboy, and they find suitable husbands who have no personality and pretty much never show up.

--There's some kind of a curse on the family. But I still have no idea what it is. But don't worry. It wasn't a curse anyway! Duhhh

--Beauty is never really mad at the Beast for threatening and kidnapping her. She just figures he wouldn't have hurt her dad anyway and, hey, cool garden!

--The Beast himself was a perfectly nice dude as a human, and got magicked into a beast as an accident. No character flaws here.

--There's some kind of villain figure with the oldest son of an important family, but no one listens to him anyway and Beauty's dad punches him with no repercussions. Problem dealt with. Guess it wasn't so urgent for Beauty to come home anyway.

--In lieu of any conflict at home, Beauty loses her memories, which is the only reason she forgets the Beast's flower until it's almost too late. Whoops.

--Beauty decides to keep the beast at the end and go back to a provincial life instead of marrying a human and having influence. I guess it's not bestiality--except it literally is--but just shows again that life is just so damn perfect.

That brings up Beauty herself as a character and Good God is she annoying. I know she doesn't have anyone to talk to for a lot of the book, but her incessant ramblings to every cat, bat, toad, and spider she comes across get really old. "And I do hope you'll be a good little spider now and not have the bad manners to leave cobwebs in my perfect garden..." It's that self-conscious British flippancy that always sounds really pretentious. Pages of it.

Beauty reminds me of the Butch's ditzy girlfriend Fabienne in Pulp Fiction. Except, if possible, more so. The girl who rambles on about what she's going to eat for breakfast and how cute she'd look with a potbelly but totally forgets to pack her boyfriend's super important family watch.

Beast: "So this rose is very important..."

Beauty: "And I'm going to plant whole forests of roses if only I can get them to be well-behaved enough little darlings, and I'll let the sweet little hedgehogs get all those troublesome slugs..."

Beast: "...Because I'll die when the last petal falls."

Beauty: "Aren't you a cute little kitty! Oh, did you go and have kittens, you clever thing?"

Beast: "Are you even listening?"

Beauty: "Something about a rose. Roses can only be grown by those with magic, and I usually don't care a thing for magic..."

The additions McKinley does make to the story, such as the background about the witch who owned the cottage and some kind of war between sorcerers (not too clear on what actually happened) don't seem to add much to the story. Whenever McKinley gets too much into magic, it always gets messy and a ton of seemingly symbolic things happen but it all seems kind of random.

This is always the problem with McKinley. She starts out with an interesting premise and evocative language, but gets bogged down in description and unnecessary animal sidekicks, only to end with a convoluted "It's magic, bitch" because she can't stand not to hand her characters everything on a silver platter.

Stick to the first book. Sweet and simple. Unfortunately, *Rose Daughter* is McKinley at her most infuriating.

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### **Brownbetty says**

Robin McKinley's *Rose Daughter* tells the story of Beauty and the Beast, which she has already told before, and in my opinion, better, in [Book:Beauty]. She claims she felt she had to retell the story when she learned more about roses, after cultivating them. Never have I read a book before where I felt so much like the

author was simply marking time until she got to the bit with the compost. Manure provides an important climactic moment. She certainly manages to convey what roses mean to her, but sadly, I'm afraid they don't have quite that importance to me.

Not to say this is a bad book. I'd loan it to a friend without qualms, but I wouldn't let anyone buy it new. The plot is a bit of a mess; it feels like she wasn't quite sure what was happening herself, so she threw in a lot of details in the hope that some of them would fall in a story-shape. There's no attempt at a real explanation for any of what happens, which to me is sort of the point of retelling fairy tales.

It is, however, remarkable for being a book that addresses one of the most common complaints about Disney's Beauty and the Beast. But telling you that complaint might constitute a minor spoiler, so stop reading now if that is a concern for you: in the end, the interesting beast is not substituted for the boring prince.

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