



Plum & Jaggers

Susan Richards Shreve

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Sam and his three younger orphaned siblings create the dark, quirky Plum Jaggers series of comedic sketches about a family of children whose parents are never home. The family troupe's fame gathers momentum and threatens them with unforeseen dangers. Susan Richards Shreve has crafted a powerful story about family tragedy and one person's refusal to accept fate.

Plum & Jaggers Details

Date : Published December 30th 2013 by Lake Union Publishing (first published 2000)

ISBN :

Author : Susan Richards Shreve

Format : Kindle Edition 251 pages

Genre : Fiction, Literature



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From Reader Review Plum & Jaggers for online ebook

Laurel L. Perez says

This is another book that I have hmmed and haad over as to a rating. At the beginning of the book I was quite intrigued, thinking it would be like "A Series of Unfortunate Events" and as the book continued to make some weird turns in the middle I found myself less attached as I was to Snicket's writing and plots. This is an odd little book on the whole about four siblings who survive a train bombing in Italy that kills their parents. At first the book seems to be about all four siblings, but as the book progresses, this really seems to be Sam's (the eldest brother)story. Though we are privy to much of all four children's inner thoughts. I was not expecting the book to cover so much time in the expanse of such a short book (it begins when Sam is 7, and ends when he is 31), but by using an acting career Sam create for the foursome, time moves quite quickly. Though, the "Plum & Jaggers" act is at times difficult to understand (as is the creator Sam), it all somehow makes sense by the end. This book is not a difficult one in terms of reading or in the actual language, but it does offer some interesting insights into this little troupe's lives after living a very different childhood, followed by a great loss. This book does not fit into any molds I have previously read, and for that and the above mentioned moves I give it four stars, and for the way I felt by the end, pretty satisfied. Initially, and about 2/3 of the way in, I was sure I would give it three stars, but here we are. So if you want an easy book, that is a little different, try it.

jennifer says

The premise of this novel is at least twice as dark as the actual execution. This is pretty unfortunate. When the author compares her characters' avant-garde black comedy to David Lynch, my brain auto-corrected: Judd Apatow. Still, the plot is a cool template for approaching a familial coming-of-age story with novelty. It's just that some of the necessary messiness got cleaned up along the way in writing, editing, selling, whatever.

Stephanie says

Another of Nancy Pearl's Book Lust recommendations that I've read this year, and like the others thoroughly enjoyed. Difficult to define which is probably why it didn't make much of an impact when it was published. Four children are orphaned by a terrorist bomb. The eldest assumes responsibility for the others and devises a comedy routine to keep them together. Sounds odd doesn't it? It's beautifully written, made me cry in parts, I couldn't see how it was going to end - well or not so put off finishing it, that's why it took two days. Worth reading.

Irene Fischer says

I enjoyed the writing. I felt less sorry for Sam than felt extremely irritated with him. I realize the his unwillingness to deal with the life changing family tragedy was the whole point but Sam, none the less, irritated me. Maybe I was supposed to feel that way. In reflecting back, it is very sorrowful that some pass

through life in a fog and never really choose to live.

Robin says

Very sparse and unsentimental, but still manages to be funny and at times almost overwhelmingly moving. A family of four children, an act of terrorism, and a dark avant-garde comedy team. How do these fit together to make a wonderful novel? Hard to believe, but they do.

Lillian says

June 11 1974, seven year old Sam McWilliams and his three siblings are orphaned when the first two cars of the Espresso from Milan to Rome is bombed killing everyone aboard except for the conductor and a four year old French boy.

How can you measure the damage resulting from such a tumultuous event? Sam, the only one who truly remembers the catastrophe becomes obsessed with protecting the remaining members of his family. The manner in which he does this is self-defensive and a truly imaginative.

Susan Richards Shreve has written a powerful story of a family that refuses to become unmoored by tragedy. Funny, sad, heartrending and most of all inspiring.

Clintoned says

I simply love this book and really need to read it again. Of course, part of that love may be my life-long desire to have more siblings closer in age.

Sue says

I loved The Family Fang, but now I feel like Susan Shreve may have mined this idea of the whacky performing family in 2000, eleven years before Wilson wrote TFF. Except in this family the drama comes from the orphaned kids instead of being directed by the punishing parents. There is room in my heart for both of these books. More important, I like a few well-placed explosions in my fiction.

Becky Roper says

Four siblings survive a terrorist bombing of a train that kills their parents. The oldest brother makes himself their protector, and they become performers. It is a rather dark tale and the ending was a little abrupt, but it was interesting and well written.

Cherl says

When an act of terrorism orphans four siblings, Sam, the oldest, works himself into a paranoid state, controlling the lives of his younger brother and sisters, even into adulthood, where they remain bonded together through their close-to-reality show, *Plum & Jaggers*.

Kirsty says

Like many readers, I am sure, I have perused many of Nancy Pearl's books of recommended reading, many of which had fallen outside of my radar. The first conscious purchase of her 'Rediscoveries' which I have made is Susan Richards Shreve's *Plum and Jaggers*. The novel started off so well, but I felt as though it leapt too far forwards when it reached its second chapter, and it took me a little while to regain my bearings. I often felt as though the novel was rather disjointed, as time seems to plod in some chapters, and then rush forward by six or seven years in the next.

Only the child characters in *Plum and Jaggers* are well fleshed out; the adults feel shadowy - whether intentionally or not, I could not tell. The novel trailed off rather after a while, but certainly picked up, and the ending was satisfying. My interest in the story was only really sustained when the protagonists were children; their adult selves felt quite unrealistic at times, and the plot became a little silly. Shreve's writing is fine, and works well with the story she has crafted, but there was little that was memorable or poetic about it on its own. I would have preferred the novel to follow each child in turn, rather than focus almost entirely upon troubled Sam, and on occasion his interactions with his siblings.

christie says

it's possible that i just didn't get this book. it's a strange novel that centers around a group of four children who lose their parents tragically in a terrorist train bombing. the oldest son deals with this loss by creating a comedy troupe of his siblings whose sketch comedy deal with them always waiting for their absent parents. i didn't think it worked.

Beth says

Really liked it until the end... I'd give it 4 1/2 stars if I could but the end just didn't hold together well for me. It seemed almost slapped on. I loved the rest of it, and couldn't put it down. Kind of JD Salinger's *Glass* family meets Anne Tyler's *Tull* siblings in *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Odd and unexpected, and well worth it even with the ending I didn't care for.

Natalie says

What a wonderfully unique story! These characters will stay with me for quite some time! The dysfunction of *Arrested Development* mixed with the sadness of children orphaned by terrorism. Quite a combination

that just works. So thankful for Nancy Pearl and her wonderful list of Book Lust Rediscoveries! I haven't read one yet that I didn't love. I feel Nancy and I are kindred spirits.

Petula Darling says

It astounds me that a story with such an interesting premise managed to be so boring. I never felt like I really knew any of the characters, which made it so I never really cared what happened to them.
