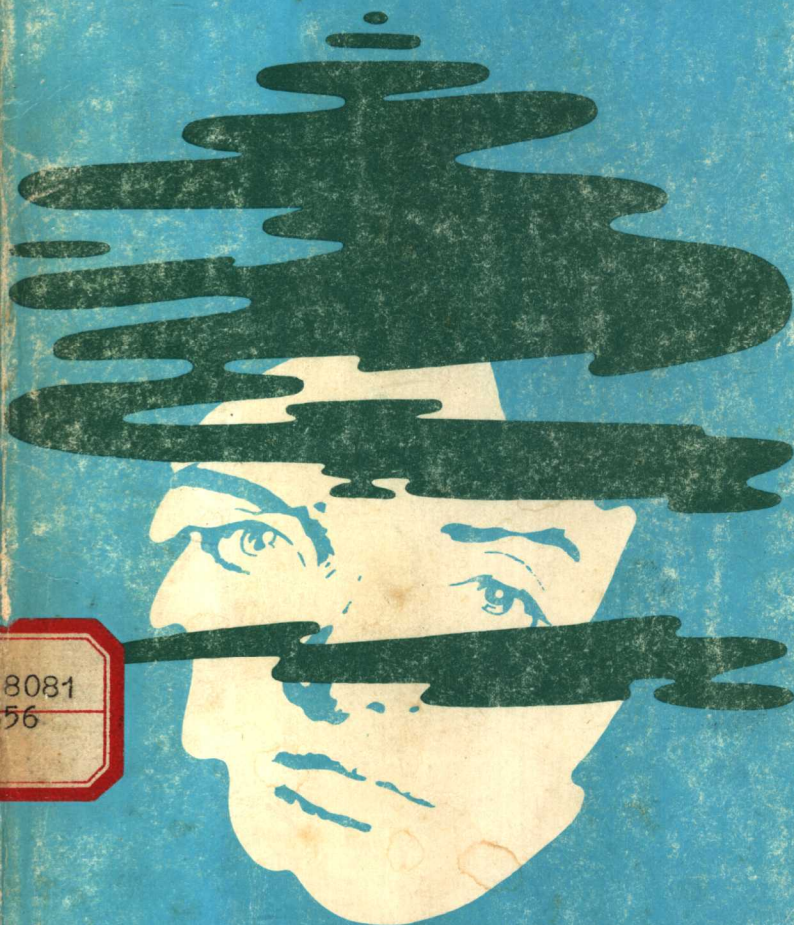


# Rebecca

Daphne du Maurier



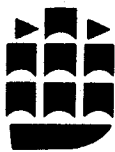
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# REBECCA

BY  
DAPHNE DU MAURIER

SIMPLIFIED AND ABRIDGED BY  
A. S. M. RONALDSON

ILLUSTRATED BY  
JOHN BRINKWORTH



LONGMAN .

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<sup>1</sup> The 2,000 root words of the *General Service List of English Words* of the *Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection*.

## NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

DAPHNE DU MAURIER is the second daughter of the late Sir Gerald du Maurier, who was a famous English actor. Her early book about him, called *Gerald, a Portrait*, was a great success.

Since then, perhaps her best-known books have been *Jamaica Inn* (1936), *Frenchman's Creek* (1941), *Hungry Hill* (1943) and *My Cousin Rachel* (1951). *Rebecca* was written in 1938, and was later made into an excellent film, directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Daphne du Maurier has also written two successful plays.

She lives by the sea in the West of England, where she enjoys sailing boats and walking in the country. She is married to a distinguished soldier, General Sir Frederick Browning, and has one son and two daughters.

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This story is told by the second wife of Maxim de Winter. Their home is at Manderley, in the West of England. *Rebecca* was the name of Maxim de Winter's first wife.

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**L**AST night I dreamt that I went to Manderley again. It seemed to me that I was going in by the iron entrance gates. The private road was just a narrow ribbon now, its stony surface covered with grass and weeds. Sometimes, when I thought it lost, it would appear again, beneath a fallen tree or beyond a muddy ditch made by the winter rains. The trees had thrown out new low branches which stretched across my way. I came upon the house suddenly, and stood there with my heart beating fast and tears coming to my eyes.

There was Manderley, our Manderley, secret and silent as it had always been, the grey stone shining in the moonlight of my dream. Time could not spoil the beauty of those walls, nor of the place itself, lying like a jewel in the hollow of a hand. The grass sloped down towards the sea, which was a sheet of silver lying calm under the moon, like a lake undisturbed by wind or storm. I turned again to the house, and I saw that the garden had run wild, even as the woods had done. Weeds were everywhere. But moonlight can play strange tricks with the fancy, even with a dreamer's fancy. As I stood there, quiet and still, I could swear that the house was not an empty shell but lived and breathed as it had lived before. Light came from the windows, the curtains blew softly in the night air, and there, in the library, the door would stand half open as we had left it, with my handkerchief on the table beside the bowl of autumn flowers.

Then a cloud came over the moon, like a dark hand before a face. The strange feeling went. I looked again upon

an empty shell, with no whisper of the past about it. Our fear and suffering were dead. When I thought about Manderley in my waking hours I would not be bitter. I would think of it as it might have been, if I could have lived there without fear. I would remember the flower gardens in the summer, and the birds that sang there. Tea under the trees, and the sound of the sea coming up to us from the shore below. I would think of the blown flowers from the bushes, in the Happy Valley. These things could never fade. They were memories that could not hurt. All this I knew in my dream (for like most sleepers I knew that I dreamed). In reality, I lay far away, in a foreign land, and would wake before long in the bare little hotel bedroom. I would lie a moment, stretch myself and turn, puzzled by that burning sun, that hard, clean sky, so different from the soft moonlight of my dream. The day would lie before us both, long, but full of a certain peace, a precious calm we had not known before. We would not talk of Manderley; I would not tell my dream. For Manderley was ours no longer. Manderley was no more.

We can never go back again; that is certain. The past is still too close to us. But we have no secrets now from each other. All things are shared. Our little hotel may be dull, and the food not very good; day after day, things may be very much the same. But dullness is better than fear. We live now very much by habit. And I—I have become very good at reading aloud! I have lost my old self-consciousness. I am very different from that person who drove to Manderley for the first time, hopeful and eager, filled with the desire to please. It was my lack of confidence, of course, that struck people like Mrs. Danvers. What must I have seemed like, after Rebecca?

I can see myself now, with short straight hair and young, unpowdered face, dressed in a badly-fitting coat and skirt.



following Mrs. Van Hopper into the hotel for lunch. She would go to her usual table in the corner, near the window, and, looking to left and right with her little eyes like a pig's, would say, "Not a single well-known face! I shall tell the manager he must make a reduction in my bill. What does he think I come here for? To look at the waiters?"

We ate in silence, for Mrs. Van Hopper liked to think about nothing but her food. Then I saw that the table next to ours, which had been empty for three days, was to be used once more. The head waiter was bringing someone now. Mrs. Van Hopper put down her fork, and stared. Then she leant over the table to me, her small eyes bright with excitement, her voice a little too loud.

"It's Max de Winter," she said, "The man who owns Manderley. You've heard of it, of course. He looks ill, doesn't he? They say he can't get over his wife's death."

Her curiosity was like a disease. I can see her as though it were yesterday, on that unforgettable afternoon, wondering how to make her attack. Suddenly, she turned to me. "Go upstairs quickly and find that letter from my nephew, the one with the photograph. Bring it down to me at once."

I saw then that she had made her plan. I wished I had the courage to warn the stranger. But when I returned I saw that she had not waited; he was even now sitting beside her. I gave her the letter, without a word. He rose to his feet at once.

"Mr. de Winter is having coffee with us; go and ask the waiter for another cup," she said, just carelessly enough to warn him what I was. It showed that I was young and unimportant, and that there was no need to include me in the conversation. So it was a surprise to find that he remained standing, and that it was he who made a sign to the waiter.

"I am afraid I must disagree," he said to her, "you are

both having coffee with me," and before I knew what had happened he was sitting on my usual chair and I was beside Mrs. Van Hopper.

For a moment she looked annoyed. Then she leant forward, holding the letter.

"You know, I recognized you as soon as you walked in," she said, "and thought, 'Why, there's Mr. de Winter, Billy's friend; I simply *must* show him the photographs of Billy and his wife'. And here they are, bathing at Palm Beach. Billy is mad about her. He had not met her of course when he gave that party where I saw you first. But I dare say you don't remember an old woman like me?"

"Yes, I remember you very well," he said. "I don't think I should care for Palm Beach. That sort of thing has never amused me."

Mrs. Van Hopper gave her fat laugh. "If Billy had a home like Manderley he wouldn't want to play around in Palm Beach," she said. She paused, expecting him to smile, but he went on smoking, looking just a little disturbed.

"I've seen pictures of it, of course," she said, "and it looks perfectly beautiful. I remember Billy telling me it had all those big places beat for beauty. I wonder you can ever bear to leave it."

His silence was painful, as anyone else would have noticed, but she ran on clumsily.

"Of course, you Englishmen are all the same about your homes," she said, her voice becoming louder and louder, "you don't want to seem proud of them. Isn't there a great hall at Manderley, with some very valuable pictures?"

I think he realized my discomfort, for he leant forward in his chair and spoke to me, his voice gentle, asking if I would have some more coffee, and when I shook my head I felt that his eyes were still upon me, puzzled.

"What brings you here?" Mrs Van Hopper went on.



*It was a surprise to find he remained standing. . . .*

"You're not one of the regular visitors. What are you going to do with yourself?"

"I have not made up my mind," he said, "I came away in rather a hurry."

His own words must have started a memory, for he looked disturbed again. She talked on, not noticing. "Of course you will miss Manderley. The west country must be delightful in the spring."

"Yes," he said shortly. "Manderley was looking its best."

In the end it was a waiter who gave him his opportunity, with a message for Mrs. Van Hopper. He got up at once, pushing back his chair. "Don't let me keep you," he said.

"It's so delightful to have met you like this, Mr. de Winter; I hope I shall see something of you. You must come and have a drink some time. I have one or two people coming in to-morrow evening. Why not join us?" I turned away so that I should not watch him search for an excuse.

"I'm so sorry," he said, "to-morrow I am probably driving to Sospel; I'm not sure when I shall get back."

Unwillingly she left it, and he went.

The next morning Mrs. Van Hopper awoke with a sore throat and a rather high temperature. Her doctor told her to stay in bed. I left her quite happy, after the arrival of a nurse, and went down early for lunch—a good half-hour before our usual time. I expected the room to be empty, and it was—except for the table next to ours. I was not prepared for this. I thought he had gone to Sospel. I was half-way across the room, and could not go back. This was a situation for which I was not trained. I wished I was older, different. I went to our table, looking straight before me. But as soon as I sat down, I knocked over the bowl of flowers. The water ran over the cloth, and ran down on to my legs.

The waiter was at the other end of the room, and did not see. In a second, though, my neighbour was at my side.

"You can't sit with a wet tablecloth," he said shortly, "you won't enjoy your food. Get out of the way." He began to dry up the water, and then the waiter came hurrying to the rescue.

"Lay my table for two," he said. "Mademoiselle will have lunch with me."

"Oh, no," I said, "I couldn't possibly."

"Why not?"

I tried to think of an excuse. I knew he did not want to lunch with me. He was only being polite.

"Come and sit down. We needn't talk to each other unless we want to."

He sat down, and went on eating his lunch as though nothing had happened. I knew we might go on like this, without speaking, all through the meal without any sense of awkwardness.

"Your friend," he began at last, "she is very much older than you. Have you known her long?"

"She's not really a friend," I told him, "she is an employer. She's training me to be a thing called a companion, and she pays me."

"I did not know one could buy companionship," he said; "it sounds a strange idea. You haven't much in common with her. What do you do it for? Haven't you any family?"

"No—they're dead."

"You know," he said, "we are the same in that, you and I. We are both alone in the world. Oh, I've got a sister, though we don't see much of each other, and an ancient grandmother whom I visit two or three times a year, but neither of them provides much companionship. You know, I think you've made a big mistake in coming here, in joining forces with Mrs. Van Höpper. You are not made for that sort of

work. You're too young, for one thing . . . Now go upstairs and put your hat on, and I'll have the car brought round."

I was happy that afternoon; I remember it well. I can see the blue sky and sea. I can feel again the wind on my face, and hear my laugh, and his that answered it. It was not the Monte Carlo that I had known before. The harbour was a dancing thing, gay with boats, and the sailors were cheerful, smiling fellows, careless as the wind. I can remember as though I still wore it my comfortable, badly-fitting suit, my broad hat, my shoes fastened with a single strap, my gloves in a hand that was none too clean. I had never looked more youthful; I had never felt so old.

I am glad it cannot happen twice, the fever of first love. For it is a fever, and a misery too, whatever the poets may say. One is so easily hurt.

I have forgotten much of Monte Carlo, of those morning drives, of where we went, even of our conversation; but I have not forgotten how my fingers trembled, pulling on my hat, and how I would run along the passage and down the stairs and so outside. He would be there, in the driver's seat, reading a paper while he waited, and when he saw me he would smile, and throw it behind him into the back seat, and open the door, saying, "Well, how is the companion this morning, and where does she want to go?" If he had driven round in circles it would not have mattered to me.

WE came to Manderley in early May, arriving, so Maxim said, with the birds and the flowers before the start of summer. I can see myself now, badly dressed as usual, although I had been married for seven weeks. I wondered if he guessed that I feared my arrival at Manderley now as much as I had looked forward to it before. Gone was my glad excitement, my happy pride. I was like a child brought to her first school. Any confidence I had gained during my seven weeks of marriage had gone now.

"You mustn't mind if there's a certain amount of curiosity," he said, "everyone will want to know what you are like. They have probably talked of nothing else for weeks. You've only got to be yourself and they will all love you. And you won't have to worry about the house; Mrs. Danvers does everything. Just leave it all to her. She'll be stiff with you at first, I daresay. She's an extraordinary character, but you mustn't let her worry you."

We drove through two high iron gates and up the long private road. We stopped at the wide stone steps before the open door, and two servants came down to meet us.

"Well, here we are, Frith," said Maxim to the elder one, taking off his gloves. We went together up the steps, Frith and the other servant following with the rug and my coat.

"This is Mrs. Danvers," said Maxim.

Someone came forward from the sea of faces, someone tall and thin, dressed in black, with great dark eyes in a white face. When she took my hand, hers was cold and heavy, and

lay in mine like a lifeless thing. Her eyes never left mine. I cannot remember her words now, but I know she welcomed me to Manderley, in a stiff little speech spoken in a voice as cold and lifeless as her hand had been. When she had finished, she waited, as though for a reply, and I tried to say something, dropping my gloves in my confusion. She bent to pick them up, and as she handed them to me I saw a little smile of scorn on her lips.

After tea Frith came in. "Mrs. Danvers wondered, madam, whether you would like to see your room."

Maxim looked up. "How did they get on with the east wing?" he said.

"Very well indeed, sir. Mrs. Danvers was rather afraid it would not be finished by your return. But the men left last Monday. I think you will be very comfortable there, sir; it's a lot lighter of course on that side of the house."

"What have they been doing?" I asked.

"Oh, nothing much. Only repainting and furnishing the rooms in the east wing, which I thought we would use for ours. As Frith says, it's much more cheerful on that side of the house, and it has a lovely view of the flower garden. It was the visitors' wing when my mother was alive. I'll just finish reading these letters and then I'll come up and join you. Run along and make friends with Mrs. Danvers. It's a good opportunity."

A black figure stood waiting for me at the top of the stairs, the dark eyes watching me from the white face. We went along broad passages, then came to a door which she opened, standing back to let me pass. There was a large double bedroom with wide windows, and a bathroom beyond. I went at once to the windows. The flower garden lay below, and, beyond it, smooth grass rising to the woods.

"You can't see the sea from here, then?" I said, turning to Mrs. Danvers.



"No, not from this wing," she answered, "you can't even hear it. You would not know the sea was anywhere near, from this wing."

She spoke in a peculiar way, as though something lay behind her words—as though there was something wrong with this wing.

"I'm sorry about that; I like the sea."

She did not answer; she just went on looking at me, her hands folded before her.

"However, it's a very charming room, and I'm sure we shall be very comfortable. I understand that it has been changed for our return."

"Yes."

"What was it like before?"

"It had blue paper, and different curtains. Mr. Winter did not think it very cheerful. It was never used much, except for occasional visitors. But Mr. de Winter gave special orders in his letter that you were to have this room."

"Then this was not his bedroom originally?"

"No, madam; he's never used the rooms in this wing before."

"Oh. He didn't tell me that."

There was silence between us. I wished she would go away. I wondered why she must go on standing there, watching me, hands folded on her black dress.

"I suppose you have been at Manderley for many years," I said, making another effort, "longer than anyone else?"

"Not so long as Frith," she said, and I thought how lifeless her voice was, and cold, like her hand when it had lain in mine: "Frith was here when the old gentleman was living, when Mr. de Winter was a boy."

"I see; so you did not come till after that."

"No. Not till after that. I came here when the first Mrs. de Winter was a bride," she said, and her voice, which had