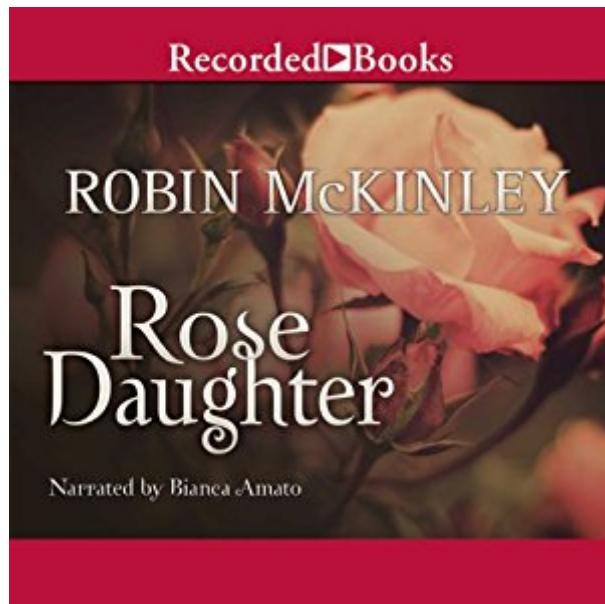


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Rose Daughter



Synopsis

"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 enthralled listeners with the power of Beauty. Now this extraordinarily gifted novelist retells the story of Beauty and the Beast again - but in a totally new way, with fresh perspective, ingenuity, and mature insight. In Rose Daughter she has written her finest and most deeply felt work, a compelling, richly imagined, and haunting exploration of the transformative power of love.

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Customer Reviews

I will preface by saying two things: First that I have not read Beauty, though I'm not sure why I haven't; somehow I simply never did. So I came to this with nothing to compare it to except all the many other retellings of the tale I have read, so perhaps Beauty is better or perhaps it is only different and perhaps also nostalgic. And second I will say, I have been a fan of Robin McKinley since I was a little girl, drinking down the story of the Blue Sword, and then the Hero and the Crown, and I have always loved these stories in a way that is delighted and yet also a bit melancholy. It is a skill of the author, to write a story that makes your whole heart swell right along with her characters', and then when the story is over you are left feeling as if you are saying farewell to a friend who

became very dear in a very brief time. So perhaps this is not the tale for you, and certainly it is not always the tale for me even, for sometimes to feel melancholy is very terrible. But it is a very good story, in its way. A charming and lovely one. I will be honest, for all that I half wish to just yell that everyone should read this, and give a nice little list of pros and cons, as they stood out to me:

Pros: Beauty is quite an excellent version of her character. She is strong in heart and mind, and though her name is Beauty for her physical beauty, it seems to apply more to her inner beauty, for her most prominent character trait is probably that she is kind. But it doesn't feel forced or cheesy or cliche, and she isn't kind in the face of anything ridiculous. She is patient, but she's not a wimp or a wilting damsel. The Beast is interesting. I liked how he became a beast, who he was before, and his casual kindness. This is a book of much kindness, triumphing over evil, which I personally think is splendid. The relationship between Beauty and her sisters is nice. It's well-developed, the sisters are distinct characters, who don't always get along but in a realistic way. Their character development is perhaps abrupt, but it didn't feel that way, or if it does it feels like it is abrupt because it ought to be. It makes sense, and they don't become different people entirely--they are simply different. There are others but I'm terrible at making a bullet point, so I'll summarize the pros as: the characters are generally good, the setting is elaborate without taking so long to decide everything as to make you stop caring, the repeated themes and similar are very nice, and overall it's just an enjoyable read.

Cons: There are only three big cons I can think of. First off, what feels most important to me, is the Beast himself. He has many excellent moments, but he never quite develops into a character. He is always the Beast and, even when theoretically developed, he just falls a bit flat, which draws from my second major con: Underexplaining. The more I think about the story, the more questions I come up with. Some of it is simply the underexplaining of a fairy tale, and didn't bother to much. But even those bother you, once you've (metaphorically or otherwise) put the book down. I won't actually ask the questions, because they're spoilers, but while key things are explained--some key things aren't. Some very important things are--left up to interpretation I guess? It's odd, mostly. And some of them aren't explained but you definitely know the truth of them by the end--but at the same time, you (or at least I) would have liked then expanded upon. Finally, the fairytale cliche: instalove. The romance between Beauty and the Beast is...unconvincing. It's not distracting, or terrible, but it's, well. It's instalove. It has to be said. But I'm giving it five stars. Because despite everything, reading it was a delight.

My favourite fairy-tale of all-time is Cindrella, but The Beauty and the Beast is a very close second and I simply adore what McKinley did with the classic story. She put her own twist to it in a magical

way that simply grabbed my attention and made it very, very difficult for me to put the book down late at night. Rose Daughter both is and isn't your typical Beauty and the Beast story and I simply loved reading it. I admit, it was slow at times, but slow was just the thing I needed at the moment. It was just the right pace for me and I while some readers are not happy with the way McKinley decided to dot the i with this one, I have to say that I'm one of those readers who like that ending. I like that it's different and I liked that I didn't predict it right from the start. I'm not saying that this book is perfect, because it isn't, but it was damn good and I didn't care in the slightest about the fact that Beauty and Beast didn't get to really interact before there was love; I didn't care that some of it made little sense (e.g. flowers blooming in less than 7 days when at the beginning they were dying); I didn't care that some questions I had, were left unanswered, because all that matters, is that I had a real good time reading and I would gladly read more of McKinley's books when I get the chance.

This is a very beautifully written story, as one can expect from Robin McKinley. There are many parts that I enjoyed, especially the sisters themselves. However, I would not personally consider this a retelling of Beauty and the Beast. Although there are certainly many elements from that story, this novel goes off in many different directions and has a very different plot. Therefore, if you are looking for a retelling of the classic Beauty and the Beast story as I was to some degree, you may find this novel a little bit disappointing-- if you keep expecting things to be like the classic tale, as I did, much of the pleasure of reading this book is taken away. However, if you treat this story as an original and unique fairytale in its own right, it is rather enjoyable and very enchantingly written. The only other aspect worth commenting on in this review would be the language: it is much more descriptive and vivid than McKinley's other novels, but in a rather odd way. While there is an overabundance of description for the setting, there is practically none for the characters. You will go through the entire novel never getting an accurate description of what Beauty or the Beast look like. That's fine, if you like to place yourself or use your own imagination to come up with a character's face, but rather frustrating if you want to see a story exactly as the author meant it. In fact, the majority of the novel seems to be vast and over encompassing descriptions of the scenery, while there is basically none for the characters. So, the balance is a bit awkward. All in all though, I would say this was an enjoyable read and much more mature and thought-provoking than some of McKinley's other stories.

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