



## Till September Petronella

*Jean Rhys*

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*'I knew he was imagining a really lovely girl - all curves, curls, heart and hidden claws'*

In stories that span the course of a lifetime - from childhood in the Caribbean to adolescent modelling in Paris; and from lonely adulthood to old age and beyond - here are women adrift, at sea, down but not quite out.

Penguin Modern: fifty new books celebrating the pioneering spirit of the iconic Penguin Modern Classics series, with each one offering a concentrated hit of its contemporary, international flavour. Here are authors ranging from Kathy Acker to James Baldwin, Truman Capote to Stanislaw Lem and George Orwell to Shirley Jackson; essays radical and inspiring; poems moving and disturbing; stories surreal and fabulous; taking us from the deep South to modern Japan, New York's underground scene to the farthest reaches of outer space.

## Till September Petronella Details

Date : Published February 22nd 2018 by Penguin Classics

ISBN : 9780241337585

Author : Jean Rhys

Format : Paperback 53 pages

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## From Reader Review Till September Petronella for online ebook

### Aine says

I picked this up because I was waiting around town for an appointment and wanted something to read instead of looking at Twitter. Having read Wide Sargasso Sea and Good Morning, Midnight, I was quite surprised by the writing style of the first two stories - they reminded me much more of F Scott Fitzgerald or some "society" writer than what I remembered of her writing. And then I got to Rapunzel, Rapunzel and was adequately traumatised. That's much more what I was expecting.

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### Noel says

this book has the best ghost story i've ever read.

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### George says

A very short book of stories by the unsung modernist Jean Rhys, this is a perfect introduction to her iconic style for the new reader. Rhys, author of **Wide Sargasso Sea** and **Good Morning, Midnight**, wrote largely about single, down-but-not-out women living in the early twentieth century, and her Petronella, in this book's 'Till September Petronella', is a classic example of this character type. Whilst the book contains only 50 or so pages, it is affordable at £1 and is fantastic for sharing with friends.

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### Aly says

This book was so boring. The characters were annoying. Her writing is bland. I only liked one memorable excerpt from all four short stories.

Can someone tell me why Jean Rhys is so important in the literary world?

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### Karin says

*No, it was like a room out of one of those long, romantic novels, six hundred and fifty pages of small print, translated from French or German or Hungarian or something - because few of the English ones have that exact feeling I mean. And you read one page of it or even one phrase of it, and then you gobble up all the rest and go about in a dream for weeks afterwards, for months afterwards - perhaps all your life, who knows? - surrounded by those six hundred and fifty pages (...) What is not there you put in afterwards, for it is alive, this book, and it grows in your head.*

After reading Jean Rhys for the first time I decided that I would only read one book of hers per year, so that I

could make them last. This short story collection left me wanting more and now I'm tempted to break that rule. Anyway, this book shouldn't really count, right? It's way too short to count. Besides, I didn't read any last year, so maybe I'll cash in that one.

I cherish the seemingly plotlessness, and the careful phrases and the gentle details of what she writes. There's a warmth in the loneliness. And a longing, and a void, and hunger, and something rich and complex and exquisite in her words.

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The Short Stories:

*The Day They Burned the Books*

Only 10 pages long and I absolutely loved it. There are so many little details that stand out, subtle, gentle, rich, full of meaning and implications. It was my favorite of the four.

*Till September Petronella*

This somehow feels like classic Jean Rhys, probably because of the drinking, and the relationships with the other characters, but women and men. Yet it left me wondering about Estelle.

*Rapunzel, Rapunzel*

I could've read an entire novel about this short story. It made me want to read more of hers from when she's old.

It's still quiet, but there's something different in the heartbreak.

*I Used to Live Here Once*

I didn't like this one as much as the others, maybe it's way too short, but there it felt as if something was lacking, the details weren't as delicate, the sentences weren't as neatly woven as in the rest of her writing.

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**Dane Cobain says**

There's nothing inherently wrong here, it was just incredibly dull. It was especially obvious when compared to the other books that made up the box set, like holding a Picasso painting up next to one of mine.

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**Lindsay says**

I love these little mini collections Penguin do. You get to sample a writer you've been meaning to read and see if you like them. And yes reader, I do like Jean Rhys! I must finally get around to reading her properly. Three of the stories in this volume are extremely short, the title story is by far the longest and that's only 35 pages. But each story is a vignette of...sadness? Melancholy? Yearning? I can't think of the right word, but suffice it to say this is a beautiful volume but if you are feeling blue it will not lift your spirits!

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## **Mr Siegal says**

### OKishly Interesting

This book was for the most part OK, neither good nor bad. Some of the negatives aspects include some boring passages. On the other hand, some positive aspects include a glimpse into prejudice and bigotry against women and people of different races which was rampant, and sadly still exists today. Though I was not won over by the writing style, I did enjoy the aforementioned insights.

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## **Peter says**

If there were a choice of reading this or watching paint dry, the paint wins without any doubt in my mind. Tedium reaches new heights in this bland collection of paint drying proportions.

What we have here is a writer who does not deserve the accolades handed to them. What I am trying to say is, well... THEY ARE SHIT. There said it.

RIGHT! let us watch some paint dry, I found some vintage red.

Care to join me?

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## **Charity says**

This is a teeny tiny book of short stories. Short stories that do nothing but entice you to read more. It's like your favourite indulgence, be it chocolate or chips, you're not going to be satisfied with just one. This book is part of a collection from Penguin and they're brilliant for anyone looking to be introduced to the writing styles of a new author. I had already met the words of Rhys but this minuscule morsel was like running into an old friend and wishing I had more time to catch up.

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## **lauren says**

### **\*3.5 stars**

I found some short stories I actually enjoyed reading! I also didn't mind the lack of plot, either! What is happening? I think Jean Rhys has such a lovely writing style - I can't quite place my finger on what it is - but it made me really enjoy these stories. I felt like there was a lot of hope to be found in these stories of hopeless, adrift women. Although they were kind of lost, they were not completely out of hope, which felt lovely to read. As someone who is feeling a little lost myself at the minute, I found some comfort in these.

Obviously, because they're short stories, I just don't feel like I can rate higher than a 3.5 stars. I dunno what's wrong with me, but that's the way it is. SORRY. Also, I didn't really enjoy the story 'Till September Petronella' and that was the longest, sooooo....

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### **Kirsty says**

Unlike many readers, I have not yet been blown away by Jean Rhys' work; thus, I was both looking forward to, and felt a little sceptical about, the thirteenth Penguin Modern book, *Till September Petronella*. This collection includes 'four searing stories of women - lost, adrift, down but not quite out - that span the course of a lifetime, from a Caribbean childhood to ruinous adulthood, to old age and beyond.'

The stories here - 'The Day They Burned the Books', 'Till September Petronella', 'Rapunzel, Rapunzel', and 'I Used to Live Here Once' - were published in 1968 and 1976. I thoroughly enjoyed each of these searching and multilayered tales, and am very much looking forward to immersing myself into the rest of Rhys' short stories in future; these are by far my favourites of her work to date.

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### **Angelica says**

Such a great look into Jean Rhys' world! Well done, Penguin modern!

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### **Helen Childs says**

If you enjoy books about 'high society', *Till September Petronella* is for you. Parts of it really reminded me of F. Scott Fitzgerald (in particular where they drive to the New York hotel) but because it was a short story, there wasn't much depth to the characters.

I loved the first and last stories in this collection, similar in tone to the *Wide Sargasso Sea* (The Day they Burnt the books and I Used to Live Here Once).

The following (tongue in cheek) line was my favourite:

"But a book by Christina Rosetti, though also bound in leather, went into the heap that was to be burned, and by a flicker in Mrs Sawyer's eyes I knew that worse than men who wrote books were women who wrote books - infinitely worse. Men could be mercifully shot; women must be tortured."

Really made me chuckle!

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### **Ashleigh (a frolic through fiction) says**

#### **Originally posted on A Frolic Through Fiction**

With all the other Penguin Moderns I've reviewed so far, I've divided the reviews into small comments on each small story in the book. This one, however, just seems so finely put together, it feels wrong to do that. This book includes four short stories; The Day They Burnt the Books, Till September Petronella, Rapunzel,

Rapunzel and I Lived Here Once. They all feature women who feel lost in the world for whatever reason, and that feeling really resonates with you throughout this book. Different situations, different societies, none of that matters – that sense of being lost is there. Jean Rhys writing style seemed quite scattered and almost disoriented. There was no clear continuation between a couple of paragraphs and the next, and while this would usually bother me, it made me feel off-track and adrift, much like the women of the stories. They all had an ambiguous air to them. There was definitely more to each story than we are told. But somehow it all worked, it said just enough, and leaves you with a series of short stories to remember. I'd love to read more of Jean Rhys' work, and probably will do sometime soon.

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