



What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?

Henry Farrell

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Book jacket: Baby Jane, a child star of early vaudeville, resented having to grow up in the shadow of her prettier sister Blanche Hudson, who became Hollywood's reigning love goddess. Now, some fifty years later, they are together and alone. And reality has toppled crazily into eerie fantasy. Blanche now finds she is growing old in the shadow cast by Baby Jane -- and a very sinister shadow it is.

What Ever Happened to Baby Jane? Details

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From Reader Review What Ever Happened to Baby Jane? for online ebook

Tabbitha Lindsley says

I loved this Psychological Thriller!!!

Whatever happened to Baby Jane is about two sisters with a complicated relationship. The two sisters we're both stars at certain points in their lives and it was this part of their lives that tore them apart but also brought them together in an unforeseen way. Now that they're older they're locked away in a house with Jane taking care of her sister Blanche who is handicapped due to an accident years ago that everyone blamed Jane is on the verge of a psychotic breakdown and it's no wonder that she loses it on her handicapped sister Blanche who she's jealousy clouds her. What will baby Jane do?

El says

What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?

If you've seen the movie, you're not going to gain anything by reading the book. The movie is very faithful to the story, with the added bonus of seeing Bette Davis and Joan Crawford work their magic in every scene.

It's not easy to talk about the story itself without giving something away, and so I won't.

It had been years since I had seen the movie, so I watched it again immediately after finishing the story. Because it was faithful to Farrell's story, and since I had just spent a few days reading it, one thing I realized (that never made an impression before) is that Farrell may have had a problem with women. There are a lot of really nasty women in this story; it's like Farrell had a bone to pick and/or didn't know a decent woman in his entire life. This makes me sad for Farrell, of course, but also makes me worried about what he expressed to his audience: Women are drunk, overbearing, lying, cheating, stealing harlots. (view spoiler)

What Ever Happened to Charlotte?

Ah, another good question! Everyone wanted to know what happened to Baby Jane, and that worked out pretty well, so let's write a story about Charlotte and what happened to her. This story was previously unpublished, but it is the story that became another Bette Davis movie, *Hush... Hush, Sweet Charlotte*.

Like *Baby Jane* it's another story about a young woman whose life was changed significantly by events that are unfolded slowly through the telling of the story. We get a little backstory first off, but then the majority of the story involves Charlotte as an older woman, very similar in behavior to Baby Jane in her older years.

The mystery is not dissimilar, but only in the sense that something happened and we (the readers) want to know what it is. So we read it. And I'll admit I was a little shocked at just how vivid a few pieces of this story were. Especially surprising were how vivid they were in the movie from the 60s.

A good story, but not as good as *Baby Jane*. I'll admit that I have now read both of these stories and re-watched their respective films in a couple of days, and I am a bit exhausted with psycho-biddy stories featuring overwrought characters, as talented as Bette Davis was. It's just a bit much all at once. Note: The movie is also much longer than the story, and I have heard complaints about having to listen to Davis

screaming and yelling for so long. Not saying their wrong, but it *is* Bette Davis. It's hard to turn away. (Unless you're my boyfriend who is clearly scared of her.)

The Debut of Larry Richards

Wait, I don't know how to read this story. It doesn't end with a question mark, for one, and I don't think a movie was made out of this short story. And there's no insane woman! In fact, it appears that the unsettled one in this story is a... gasp... *man*. This is probably why no movie was made out of it. No good role for Bette Davis.

Was this even written by Henry Farrell? I don't believe you.

Here we have an older man, Laurence Richards, who is fairly well known in the theater biz. And, well, he's sort of a diva now. We find out he was ill for a few years and unable to work, and now he's trying to find his place in the studio. Larry finds himself on the first day of shooting with a young man in his dressing room with a gun, and he somehow needs to get himself through the shoot without setting off the young man.

A very short story, short and sweet, not a lot of meat. Not the best story ever, but certainly not the worst. I really just had difficulty understanding how a man could be at the center of a Farrell story because I'm already not used to that.

First, the Egg

What a great title. No question mark, but after *The Debut of Larry Richards*, I understand that Farrell sometimes wrote stories with titles that didn't end with punctuation. It's a whole new world out there.

And also one of the best first lines in story history:

All because no one would take Orvil's egg seriously, the world was in for quite a shock one of these days.

That's a solid first line if I have ever read one.

Another short story, this time about a man named Orvil who once traveled to the north and brought back a mysterious egg. His story gets picked up by the Hollywood studios who, in a very amusing sequence, rewrite the entire story so it's nothing like Orvil's experience at all. The egg, ultimately, does hatch, and that's where things get sort of amusing. Like... I cracked a smile. It was charming, this story.

Only one female character, and she says things like "I've always wanted to be kissed that way" or weeps a lot and asks Orvil to pretend to not be crazy, y'know, "for her".

Otherwise it's a cute story and a fast read.

Oh, and I also don't believe a real movie was made out of this story either. Sadly.

Carol says

[of Edna the housekeeper (hide spoiler)]

Deborah Sheldon says

If you've seen the fabulous 1962 film starring Bette Davis and Joan Crawford, you'll know every plot-point. Nevertheless, 'What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?' is a nail-biter of a suspense novel. Author Henry Farrell must have been a great observer; each description of posture, gait or facial expression is the quintessential picture that tells a thousand words. (This edition included one novelette and two short stories. Oh, how I wish Farrell had expanded the novelette, 'What Ever Happened to Cousin Charlotte?' into a novel! Apparently it inspired a film, which I'll have to track down.)

Cheryl says

Very similar to the movie. You do have more psychological insight into the characters, though.

Whitney (First Impressions Reviews) says

Anyone who knows me, knows that my favorite actress is Bette Davis, who starred in All About Eve, Dark Victory and What Ever Happened To Baby Jane? This was the reason why I picked up Henry Farrell's novel. In the case of Baby Jane I saw the movie before I read the book and thus began with wonder of how much had been adapted. In What Ever Happened To Baby Jane they were right on. It was an early Misery minus James Caan/Paul Sheldon getting his foot cut off, but enough about the movie.

I read the introduction before beginning What Ever Happened To Baby Jane? something I rarely do. I am so glad I did, as it gave fascinating insight into both the author, his reasoning and thought process behind the book and making of the film.

The novel itself was campy but eerily so and held a suspenseful element. This was shown subtly with Baby Jane revising her old act in replicas of her old costumes and the "Chef Specials" she would give to her sister Blanche. Henry Farrel did a superb job setting the run-down stuck in time Hudson Home with just as vivid of characters. Jane, while I hate to do the comparison, but she was Shirley Temple but only if Shirley Temple was a washed up drunk. Her sister the invalid, once great movie star Blanche, while playing the sick card both for real and sometimes for the irk of her sister I felt she knew something beyond the circumstances from her accident.

What Ever Happened To Baby Jane is masterly crafted and should be a read for anyone who enjoys old Hollywood or just a good creepy read.

Rebecca McNutt says

This timeless novel of sibling rivalry has long been a favorite of mine, so has the 1962 film adaptation. The ending especially is always a shocker, and in the age of starlets like Honey Boo Boo, Justin Bieber and Elle Fanning, this book is still as relevant to our culture as ever. It's excellent, especially if you're a fan of psychological thrillers and horror.

James Peter says

[and the maid, who was killed by Jane (hide spoiler)]

LeeAnne says

The Ultimate Tale of Sibling Rivalry

I have never seen the famous movie, but I have seen photos and short clips of Bette Davis and Joan Crawford in it. This is a spooky, creepy story but it is told in a very amusing, campy way.

This book was way ahead of it's time. Being a child star is such a rough path in life. I don't know why, in this day and age, anyone would subject their own child to it. Before Lindsay Lohan, McCauley Culkin and Justin Beiber there was this little girl...

Remember Buffy from the 1960's TV show *Family Affair*? The young actress was Anissa Jones and she died of a heroin overdose at the age of 18. Heartbreaking.

Whatever Happened To Baby Jane is a psychological, horror story about two aging show-biz sisters, Jane and Blanche Hudson, who are locked in the ultimate sibling rivalry war.

When they were very young Jane was a cute, famous vaudeville child star known as "Baby Jane". Think of Shirley Temple but in a traveling variety vaudeville show with tap dancing and singing.

Baby Jane was the breadwinner for the family. She was spoiled rotten, indulged and doted on by her father and grew up with a massive sense of entitlement. Jane's sister, Blanche, grew up in Jane's shadow, ignored and dismissed by her parents and pretty much everyone else too.

In a crazy twist of fate, as adults, Blanche becomes a wildly successful movie actress. Blanche becomes wealthier, more famous and more beautiful than Baby Jane ever was. As Blanche's star power grew brighter, Jane's star power dimmed and faded away into obscurity.

Flash forward: decades later and these two competitive sisters are still living together in a decaying old Hollywood mansion owned by Blanche. Blanche is now handicapped and confined to a wheelchair, the result of a terrible car wreck. Blanche's disability keeps her trapped on the upstairs floor of the house. It is implied that Jane's deep-seated jealousy had something sinister to do with Blanche's mysterious car accident.

Now both women are middle-aged. Jane continues to resent Blanche. Blanche has managed to keep her good looks but Jane is an alcoholic who has not aged well physically or mentally. What's worse is Jane is really starting to lose her grip on reality.

As Jane spirals into mental illness, she becomes more and more controlling, taunting and abusive towards Blanche, who is helpless in her wheelchair. Blanche's only contact with the outside world is through Jane. Blanche is completely dependent on Jane for general care, food, doctor visits, everything.

In one of her earliest psychotic moments, Jane delivers Blanche breakfast on a tray as usual, but instead of a meal Jane decides to serve Blanche her dead, pet bird and then later a dead rat she caught in the basement. Old Jane thinks this is just a hoot.

Who's hungry? Such a jokester, that Jane.

Soon Jane is really becoming unhinged. Fueled by alcohol Jane starts stealing Blanche's money by forging her checks. Jane has a fantasy of using Blanche's money to kickstart a comeback and revive her old Baby Jane vaudeville act. Jane puts on a babydoll dresses, drunkenly smears makeup on her face and in a baby voice starts rehearsing her old song and dance routines.

This is only the beginning. Jane's behavior continues to spiral out of control, growing more bizarre and over-the-top. I'll let you read the book to find out how crazy she truly becomes.

Sarah says

Get a copy of this book if you can and I also recommend watching the film. This is a perfect book and film pairing! Perfectly done. No beating around the bush just all story, all action, all suspense all the time.

Keep an eye out for a review @ www.coffeeandtrainspotting.wordpress.com

J says

I enjoyed this collection, especially "What Ever Happened to Charlotte" and "The Debut of Larry Richards". However, I actually thought the film adaptation of "Baby Jane" was a vast improvement. The book was fun and campy, but I missed the menacing atmosphere of the film. In Bette Davis's hands, Baby Jane was a villain to be reckoned with and remembered, but on the page, she's just a senile old lady. Still, I'm forever

grateful to Farrell for having spawned two of my favorite films, and the man knows when to deliver a good twist.

Natalie Richards says

Chilling and disturbing, this is a great fast read. Now I have to see the film.

Kathy Worrell ? says

Great movie! (Starring Bette Davis and Joan Crawford) and a Great book!

I haven't seen the movie in years, but from what I recall, the movie closely follows the book.

It's just so creepy and suspenseful.

Keith Chawgo says

Henry Farrell is a classic horror writer who came to prominence in the 60's. This will probably be his best remembered work due to the classic film starring Bette Davis and Joan Crawford. The film is pretty faithful to the book except for some minor changes and some excellent character building that you do not find in the film. As you get three quarters into the final story, things take a turn to the dark side. It is darker than the film and it does seem to get under the layers that the film only hints at.

This is a fantastic read and highly recommended. If you buy the e-book version, it comes with loads of extras such as 'Whatever Happened to Charlotte?' which is the basis of Hush Hush Sweet Charlotte, three more short stories and an excellent introduction by the author's agent. This is a true gem and a great discovery to classic literature.

Gazella says

What Ever Happened to Baby Jane? is a gothic suspense novel of sibling rivalry. It is twisted but so good! It is dark and disturbing. It will keep you on the edge of your seat. The ending was chilling. I absolutely loved it.

Rachael says

Baby Jane Hudson was a precocious vaudeville child star until she was overshadowed by her younger sister, Blanche. Blanche became a beautiful Hollywood actress, but in her prime an accident robbed her of her

glittering career, her prospects of romance, and the use of her legs.

Whatever happened to baby Jane is a story of toxic families, jealousy, betrayal, mental illness and family loyalty. It's astoundingly modern and yet ageless. I know it's a cliché but I really couldn't put this down. I know that I really enjoyed a book when I turn the last page and realise it's 3:00am and don't regret only getting 3 and half hours sleep.

A fantastic story, I highly recommend it. Now I must hunt down a copy of the film.

4.5*

Eve says

“Sometimes I wonder about the two of them over there in that big old house all alone. They don't ever seem to do anything—or have anyone in for company. It must be awful....”

I have been watching *Feud: Bette and Joan* for a month now, and I'm enthralled! My grandmother introduced me to so many black and white thrillers like *The Bad Seed*, *Dead Ringer*, *Straightjacket*, and my favorite, *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane*. As a result, I've been a big fan of the duo, so it's been wonderful to see them at the end of their movie careers amid a cutthroat film industry. So much politics!

This book didn't disappoint; the movie sticks pretty closely to the book. What makes books so great is that you're able to delve into characters' minds. Sometimes you learn about motives, other times you don't. The hatred Jane and Blanche have for each other is so raw and vivid! Obviously Jane's sanity is unraveling, and it's wonderful and scary to watch. Even though I knew how it would end, it was still fascinating to read about. This edition also included the short story that *Hush...Hush*, *Sweet Charlotte* was based upon. If you're in need of supplemental reading material inspired by *Feud*, then you can't go wrong with the book that started it all!

Chandré Louw says

I really enjoyed this scary story of sibling rivalry.

Blanche and Jane Hudson have a very odd relationship.

As a child, Blanche was always in the shadow of her oh-so-talented sister.

As an adult, Jane could never bust out the acting talent Blanche could and her child-star days faded away in *her* sister's shadow.

After a tragic accident the sisters are condemned to spend an ample amount of time in each other's presence , which brings out the worst in them.

Very eerie with a shocker of a secret , I really enjoyed this psychological thriller where things are not what they appear...

Ps. The movie , in my opinion , was way more shocking and twisted than the book. The story was fleshed out better and the weirdness of Jane was way more believable.

Alice says

This book was quite chilling - the movie version made with Bette Davis was very faithful to the plot. I enjoyed the fact that the story was written from the perspectives of multiple characters in the book. Definitely a quick read, but a memorable one.

Frau Blücher says

Die Mädels sagen es am besten:

Die Story braucht nicht lange, bis sie lawinenartig eskaliert und den galoppierenden Wahnsinn reinlässt, ich wurde angenehm aufs garstigste überrascht und bin mir nun sicher, dass Norman Bates uns seine Schwestern einfach verheimlicht hat...
