



A Shower Of Summer Days

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The Irish estate home Dene's Court has been empty for years—its icy visage, shuttered windows, and overgrown tennis court are a burden for its caretakers and a curiosity for the nearby townspeople. And so the announcement that Violet Dene Gordon and her husband, Charles, are on their way back from British Burma to settle in the long-dormant estate sends a ripple of excitement through the sleepy village.

For Violet, Dene's Court stands as a monument to her childhood, but lingering doubts remain about whether she and Charles will be happy there. Adding complexity to the arrangement is the arrival of Violet's American niece, a college student named Sally who has been sent by her mother in an effort to put an ocean between the impetuous young woman and the object of her affection, an actor.

Anxiety, tempers, and long-buried emotions flare as the estate's new residents search for a sense of belonging and peace between its hallowed and serene walls.

A Shower Of Summer Days Details

Date : Published 1952 by Rinehart

ISBN : 9780393085990

Author : May Sarton

Format : Hardcover 244 pages

Genre : Fiction, Cultural, Ireland, Literature, 20th Century, Literary Fiction, Novels, Relationships

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From Reader Review A Shower Of Summer Days for online ebook

David Edmonds says

A quiet novel, that at first seems to be about the relationships between the protagonists: Violet Dene Gordon and her husband, Charles, who have recently returned to Violet's family home of Dene's Court in Ireland, and Violet's American niece, Sally, who has made a poor attachment to an actor in the States, when in fact the entire novel is truly about emotion, and what happens when emotions become too volatile within a small group of people in an enclosed space. The enclosed space, in this case, is Dene's Court itself, which could almost be considered a character on its own, as its presence in the novel is just as important as the main characters are. There is no plot, per se, as we seem to be just dropped into these people's lives for one summer, but Sarton handles this smoothly and poetically, not needing a lot of back story, just telling the story in its own present. This could be one of my favorites.

Cassandra says

Some of the prose in this was very beautiful, but it did not work for me, and I am not certain why. The very strong emotions and the concrete descriptions are usually something I like, and I did like it somewhat, but it never came together in a way that made me feel I was reading something true.

Barbara says

An old imposing stone home in the countryside in Ireland is as much a character as any of the Dane family that have owned it (or been owned by it) for generations. A middle aged couple return from Burma--Violet, a fading beauty, narcissistic with attendant guilt for the damage her beauty has caused and Charles her philandering husband, taking on the role of country gentleman. Into this mix steps Sally, the young American niece, a Vassar college student, who has formed "an unsuitable attachment" to an actor--a youthful male version of Violet. That is the plot but really the book is about intense and volatile emotions and is beautifully written. I also learned a new word: "diapason" which means the entire range of an activity or emotion. It also has specific musical meanings in relation to the stops of an organ and "a swelling burst of harmony." (Websters) I love learning new words.

Sarah says

This is the story of a house and three people intricately bound to each other, and to the house itself, by a mesh of memories and remembered passion, stretching far back into the past...

I have to say, this was a perfect summer read! It's absorbing, wistfully lovely, not overly dense or complex. And yet, there's real substance to it. Every glance, every breath, every gust of wind in this novel has meaning.

I said in the comment section that I liked *yet disliked* Sarton's writing...but I couldn't articulate why. Well, I think I've figured it out:

The narrative, though resonant, hovers in a place that's uncomfortable for me...a place between intimacy and solitude. The characters buzz around each other, and Sarton buzzes around her characters. They never settle. Sarton never comes to rest at a central point of view. Dene's Court, itself, is too broad a theme to create a focal point. Rather, it reinforces this constant, buzzing tension, turned in on itself. There's no contentment in this novel, just a "queer, divine dissatisfaction," as Martha Graham would say.

The three main characters are neither representational nor fully complete unto themselves. Again, Sarton hovers between, buzzing back and forth against those formidable stone walls! For me, it was all a bit...suffocating.

In spite of all that, I recommend this book. As I said in the comment section, there's just...something *about* it...

"Then painfully, as she had fumbled among her real belongings, she began to try to find her way back across all the hours of flight to something she was carrying with her, which seemed her one real possession, and this was her feeling for Ian. As long as she could find this and hang onto it, whatever happened, she knew that she would remain herself. For what had been frightening was the sense, ever since she had fallen on the terrace steps, that herself was slowly being dispersed or flowing away. Ian, she murmured half aloud. But the queer thing was that she couldn't focus on him; she couldn't see him. She realized with panic that his image was blurred."

Deborah Schuff says

This is one of four May Sarton novels my mother was pruning from her library. They looked interesting, so I decided to read them before relinquishing them to the AAUW's used book sale. This is a thoughtful, yet delightful story which could easily be made into one of those charming English films. I enjoyed the interplay among the three, then four, main characters.

Elizabeth says

A lovely, wildly introspective novel about a middle-aged couple and their young American niece, who all spend the summer at the family's ancestral home in rural Ireland. This is a book that has little use for plot, as it's focused squarely on the inner lives of the characters, and the impact of our surroundings, past experiences, and worldview on how we interact with those around us. There was something very meditative and comforting about this book, and I'm looking forward to reading more of Sarton's work.

Jgknobler says

A middle-aged Anglo-Irish couple return to the wife's childhood summer home. This has some of the elements of a gothic novel, with the house, the weather, and ancestral portraits all playing far too great a role in the story. A young woman, the wife's American niece, arrives on the scene and emotions become

overwrought for no apparent reason.

Kate says

I couldn't even finish this. The characters just seemed so...odd.

Cassandra Journigan says

A great book about a house and the three people living within it.

Kym says

I went on a May Sarton binge for awhile, and though I really enjoyed a few of them, they began to be repetitive. After I read the biography of her--authorized by herself--I lost most of my respect for her and the picture she painted of herself. This novel did hold my interest, though, and there is no doubt she was a good writer. The Small Room, as far as her novels, was superior to this one, I think.

Kate says

"This is the story of a house and of three people intricately bound to each other, and to the house itself, by a mesh of memories and remembered passion, stretching far back into the past.

"Violet Dene Gordon, returning to Dene's Court with her husband, Charles, after an absence of thirty years, intensely loved her childhood home, but had reason to fear the long shadow of her unhappy sister, Barbara. Now Barbara's child, Sally, was coming for a visit, supposedly to make her forget her infatuation with an American actor.

"Much had to be settled in one brief encounter -- a marriage, a love affair, a career, the meaning of four lives. No single influence was more important than that of Dene's Court itself.

"May Sarton has created a novel of shimmering beauty, a story of human relationships written with a poet's artistry."

I agree, this book was written with a poet's eye. Unfortunately, at least from my perspective, a great deal of it was about Sally's teenage angst and first (unfortunate) love. Lots of mental whitering? and whencing?, which I generally find tedious and nonproductive. I also found the character of the American actor difficult to understand, and certainly not a sympathetic one.

Final opinion: well written but not my cuppa tea.

bookczuk says

Just a note to say that I have picked this one up and started reading it. You know how sorbet cleanses the palate after a heavy meal, or mint refreshes the mouth after a sour taste? This book is refreshing me and helping get rid of the nasty after taste from a particularly crummy book I just read. I'm not sure why I persisted with the other book- I was annoyed by content, writing style and liberal alterations of facts. The story wasn't brilliant, or even clever. I must be a true mad woman to have finished it. Blech.

Anyhow, I picked this up today, and was soothed immensely by the opening descriptions of the house and village. Even if nothing more comes from it, I am happy.

Bree (AnotherLookBook) says

A novel about an aging couple who return to their country estate in Ireland, and the American niece who comes to spend the summer with them. 1952.

Full review at Another look book

Sarton is best known for her journals foremost, then for her poetry. Her fiction is a perfect blend of the two: raw, revealing, and introspective, with prose that flows along beautifully. This book doesn't contain much plot (although what it does contain is enjoyable). The point of the book is what the characters are feeling and how their relationships are constantly shifting, as they come to better understand themselves and each other. I loved getting into their heads so deeply. The house itself is a major player in the story; the house gives them a place to belong, a history, a reason to go on. They have to take care of the house so it can take care of the family--past, present, and future. A deep, rewarding read!

Leslie says

Sarton is one of my favorite authors; I love the raw honesty of her journals and her poetry. Her fiction is often quiet, like this story set in an old family home in Ireland. There isn't a lot of plot but it's a book about self-realization and emotion.

Josee Leclerc says

It is almost at the end of the book that I realized how Sally felt how important were the ancestors' picture, the similitude she had with one of them and how powerful it is to be recognize as part of a clan. May Sarton knew how to use words to describe emotions and sensations for us readers to feel the continuity from one generation to the others having to live in Dene's Court.
