



The Mulberry Tree

Jude Deveraux

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She had a perfect life. Then she got a real life.... For nearly twenty years, quiet, unassuming Lillian Manville has devoted herself to her self-made billionaire husband -- and enjoyed a luxurious life of splendid homes, trips, jewels, and clothes. But when James Manville dies in a plane crash, Lillian's grief is compounded by a shocking mystery: all that Jimmie has left to her is an old farmhouse in tiny Calburn, Virginia. Now, Lillian's unexpected circumstances are leading her to a made-over life in Calburn, an exciting business -- and a sweet new love with a handsome local man. But will she have the courage to unveil the truth surrounding a past scandal and the loss of her husband? The answers may be as close as the mulberry tree in her yard -- and Lillian must dig deep within herself to Wght the secrets and lies that threaten to uproot the past she cherished and the future she treasures....This lush bestseller shines with the passion, intrigue, and warmth that is Jude Deveraux at her best.

The Mulberry Tree Details

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From Reader Review The Mulberry Tree for online ebook

Kate says

There are two books in my collection that I read occasionally when I need a light read and something kind of fun, and this is one of them. It is the story of Lillian Manville, the wife of billionaire James Manville, who is killed when his plane crashes in the middle of the night. He dies, leaving Lillian a decrepit old farm house and a mysterious note that reads, "Find out what happened." Lillian undergoes plastic surgery and moves to the farm in rural Virginia, trying to reassemble her life, which has been lived in the lap of luxury for 12 years. Now on her own, she relies on the strapping Matthew Longacre, her new boarder, and some friends to help her rebuild her life, discover the truth of what happened to her husband, and prevent her deceased husband's half-brother and half-sister from destroying the Manville empire with their narcissistic greediness.

I love this book. It is, in places, so beyond belief as to be grossly entertaining, and at the same time there are parts of it that I can't get enough of. Matthew Longacre is the leading man I love to hate--at one point he tells Lillian (who is newly-named Bailey James) that the pressure is off for them to be anything more than friends, and not two pages later, he kisses her in front of his whole entire family! Plus he agrees to rent one room from her and winds up taking over her whole entire house, and he is basically reverting back to his high school years while living at home licking his wounds from his failed marriage.

The half-brother and sister are so evil, and the people who rally around Lillian/Bailey are so overwhelmingly selfless and wealthy themselves, you really have to read this book with an eye to entertainment versus believability. James Manville makes Bill Gates look like a pauper. Seriously.

A fun, quick read, as close to a romance novel as I'll ever truly get and still enjoy it.

Sophie ♥ says

Not sure I can say I disliked this book... but I certainly wouldn't classify it as a romance which is probably why it didn't sit well with me. The plot was a bit more mystery/small town story than it was contemp romance. I found the characters kind of BLAH but I had nothing against the book itself. The plot was relatively interesting but the complete lack of romance put me off.

Joann Muszynski says

I finally finished reading *The Mulberry Tree* by Jude Deveraux.

This book started out with a bang and hooked me in immediately, but then started to slide downward, drifting into a kind of humdrum that nearly had me closing the book for good. The only saving grace came in the form of my Book Pal at work who said, "It gets boring in the middle, but stick it out and keep reading. It gets really good at the end." Normally I do not have the patience to stick it out. If my attention span begins to droop then it's usually a lost cause. But, I fought through the chapters that spoke too much of canning and gourmet meals to get to the exciting climax I was promised.

Now, before I get into the middle section and explain why that part held very little interest to me, I do have one other problem with this book - POV. I love first person narrative. It gets such a bad rap and all through school I had to hear one English teacher after another tell me how 1st person is too complicated to write and it's near impossible to pull off. I've always begged to differ and have read many great books that succeeded with my favorite POV. And in *The Mulberry Tree*, Ms. Deveraux starts the first chapter in 1st person POV. Immediately my mental voice is cheering, screaming, "Yes! Alright! Whoot Whoot!" then I reached chapter two and my heart cracked. Chapter three broke it completely.

The narrative changed. I had to stop reading, back up and start over, thinking, "What happened? Where'd 1st POV go? Hello? Hello? Can someone help me?" Okay, so maybe I'm exaggerating a little. Truthfully, I was in a mild form of stunned disappointment and really did have to back up and try again. Besides that, isn't switching POVs in the middle of a story against the rules? I was bothered, to say the least, but being a good sport, I overlooked this and kept reading on....

The middle.

Scene is placed well enough, making me feel the Virginia breeze and smell the country freshness. I even sneezed a few times at the descriptions of the old, dilapidated farmhouse and its years of dust and cobwebs and cringed when I "saw" the unsightly, hideous paneling.

So what had me closing the book and struggling to go on?

Details. Yes, that's right. Details. I know that every good writer needs to have the details lined up to make their work believable. I agree. To a point. I'm not a fan of time consuming outlines of facts so strewn out that the heart of the story is pushed aside in order to go into the exact method of canning a jar of strawberry preserves. And despite the fact that I'm a poor man's version of the restaurateur and love gourmet food, the several paragraphs spent on writing out ingredients and preparations for a 5 star meal cooked in the backwoods of Virginia in a farmhouse that surprisingly stood up against the test of time, (where in the mountains do they sell swordfish anyway?) was just a bit too much. I wanted the heat of the action. I wanted to know what Jimmie meant when the note he left his new widow said something about finding out what happened.

Something happened? Oooohhhh, I want to know what this little bit of mystery is!

But it took to the very last couple of chapters, rushed so that the story could be wrapped up and sealed off, before I was to finally learn the dark secrets of a small backwoods town in Virginia and how everyone played a part and why Lillian/Bailey had to go from Billionaire Princess to Country Hen so fast she barely had time to pack.

So, after finishing the book, I was only half satisfied. Chapter 18 really picked up the pace and had me reading so fast I feared permanent cross-eyed damage. And I was only half satisfied with how things ended. I wanted more of the nitty gritty. The deception. The cover ups. The love triangles and family secrets. In the end, I can only give this book an honest rating of 3 stars.

For all the bits and pieces that didn't hold much for me, there were still enough chapters written with skill and strength that kept me going, and that's all that matters when it comes to reading a book - finishing it and liking it well enough. And all in all, *The Mulberry Tree* is worth reading.

Jo.

Candice says

I wouldn't read it again. It was ok but too many characters made this tedious and a bit confusing. Still not sure what happened to a few of the golden six. Left with a lot of loose ends but so exhausted from reading this book I don't even care.

The romance didn't catch me, with the main character eluding that she wasn't that taken with the hero, until the end.

Pretty talented author to be so versatile however as this book is very different to the others of hers I have read.

Leslie says

I just finished my 4th reading of this book. After suggesting it as a good read to a friend, I couldn't get it off my mind and had to read it again. It had been a couple of years since my last reading and it had the same impact on me. I love this book. I would like to give it several more stars in my rating. I know there are a lot of negative reviews about it and I don't understand what they don't like. It has romance, mystery, motivation. I did feel the ending was a little rushed, so maybe I can see some people giving it a 4 for that reason. It almost has the feeling that she had met her word limit and had to finish real quick. I am sure to read this book again in a couple of years.

April 2016 Re-read for the 6th time and I love it just as much. It kills me to see all the negative reviews, I am guessing they were either expecting more mystery or more romance from it. I guess what I love most is how Bailey took misfortune and made herself change to deal with it.

Michele says

This was an enjoyable mystery about Lillian, a young widow of a billionaire. She is left alone when her husband dies in a plane crash, bequeaths his wealth to siblings and only leaves Lillian with an old, run-down house and a note telling her to find out what really happened. She doesn't understand the note or what it is she is supposed to discover. The book follows her on this quest. Through it, she meets many people - some want to help her but others don't. She soon realizes that there is a big mystery in this town and it all has to do with "the golden six", six young men and their involvement in some tragedies that occurred years before.

My biggest criticism is that I had some trouble following all of it. That was probably due to the fact that I was listening to the audio version and so it is hard to go back and remind oneself about the characters and names. Also, after I was finished, I found it was an abridged version and this may also have made it a bit more difficult to follow. It did, though, all come together in the end.

I also do not like sex or foul language in books. There was none of the latter but there was one or two sex scenes that were totally unnecessary.

Nouf Maymony says

Spoiler Alert:

I wish that the story was set during The Golden Six time. That storyline was way more fascinating than the Bailey's attempts to restart his life. The end was very interesting. But the writer didn't explain how Luke came to be under the mercy of his "brother and sister"?

Also, if his grandmother knew everything, why did he send his widow to that farm at all? He could have asked her to go see his grandmother.

And how come he didn't give his wife anything during his lifetime? She doesn't need to inherit anything if the ownership of some assets was transferred to her while he is still alive!

Reading this novel gave me the sense of forced drama. It is a bit of a fairy tale- and not in a good way.

Shannon says

This book was alright I liked it at first but it got confusing and then stupid. Lifetime.

Alison says

It's hard to catalogue the all failures of this book. Writing, plot, characters, dialogue, themes...everything falls flat. It's a little bit mystery, a little bit romance, and a little bit Wikipedia entry on canning tomatoes. Blend together artlessly and presto! You've churned out your 87th book.

Sheskis says

I'm at a loss to understand why this was a bestseller. Implausible plot, trudged on interminably, then ended so quickly, with no rationale why any of the characters behaved the way they did, heroes or miscreants.

Diana Hockley says

I won't go into the synopsis which other people have but say how I reacted to this book.

SPOILER ALERT*****SPOILER ALERT*****

There were aspects of the plot which I liked and others didn't seem believable. After changing her name, Lillian becomes Bailey but I could not understand how the inheritors of her husband's fortune could refuse Lillian entry into the house within hours of Jimmy's death? It surely would have been illegal because probate

hadn't been passed and all her personal effects were in there. What if she had had a pet? Would they have grabbed that too?

I thought the start was okay, but it sort of all fell into place too easily over the course of time. I didn't like the character of the husband, I thought he was a cruel, sadistic creep.

Far too many characters overall to follow them all.

Maxieboots says

I feel awful writing this but this was probably one of the worst books I've ever read. I realize it's not a traditional romance but there was zero chemistry between the main characters. There were too many stories to follow, too many name changes, and too much dialogue - yes I said too much dialogue. I'm really disappointed as this is the first book I've read from Jude. Will not recommend.

Katherine Coble says

This is a terrible book. The characters are themselves implausible, the situations surrounding them are ludicrous. The "mystery" (this was an author's early attempt at crossing over from straight romance to romantic suspense) was convoluted and yet dull at the same time. Every challenge the main character faced was immediately swept away a few sentences later. And as if all that wasn't bad enough, we had my LEAST favourite trope--fat character loses weight through a miracle illness and is suddenly super gorgeous. Through the rest of the book I had to read over and over about how she was so ugly when she was fat but now she's gorgeous.

It's just NOT worth anybody's time.

Beverly says

Contemporary romance with a little mystery thrown in. Disgusting but readable story about an insecure woman married to the most rich and powerful man in the world. This author presents an unrealistically glamorous view of wealth and social standing and seems to be promoting wild materialism. So the novel seems to pander to readers' unworthiest fantasies.

Plump little Lillian, who married when she was 17 believes that she wasn't legally married because her mother never gave permission. So when her rich husband dies in a plane crash she can't contest his will leaving his billions to his brother and sister. Complications ensue leading to the revelation that the sister and brother are impostors and that all kinds of people, including the billionaire, were murdered. The heroine loses weight and finds true love with an architect. The billions are distributed for the good of the workers in the billionaire's companies and the heroine founds a business making jam.

Cindy says

Quite a disappointment.....picked it up as a light summer read, but was ready to put it down before I finished it. Took a weird turn about halfway through, and by the end I was so confused by all the different characters and plot gaps that I didn't even care.
