



## **Julius**

*Daphne du Maurier*

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# Julius

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## Julius Daphne du Maurier

A chilling story of ambition, Daphne du Maurier's third novel has lost none of its ability to unsettle and disturb. Julius Lévy has grown up in a peasant family in a village on the banks of the Seine. A quick-witted urchin caught up in the Franco-Prussian War, he is soon forced by tragedy to escape France for Algeria. Once there, he learns the ease of swindling, the rewards of love affairs, and the value of secrecy. Cruel and insensitive, Julius claws his way to the top, caring nothing for others--until his daughter, Gabriel, is born. Julius' attachment to her will become his strongest bond--and his greatest weakness.

## Julius Details

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Author : Daphne du Maurier

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Genre : Fiction, Classics, Historical, Historical Fiction, Mystery

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## **From Reader Review Julius for online ebook**

### **Fatima Al Shamasi says**

"Nor yet did he understand, for a queer puzzled look crept into his eyes, and he would frown his ancient baby frown of an old man; while from the innermost part of his being came the long-drawn pitiful wail that can never be explained, the plaintive cry of a child born into the world who knows not what he wants, the eternal question of the earth to the skies - Who am I? Where from? Where to? The first cry and the last. The sigh of the baby, the sigh of the old man."

And it was with these words that I was able to so swiftly and lightly carry myself into the novel, to live the unsettling life of Julius and wonder where and what exactly in his life triggered his unbecoming.

At first I thought I'd note down what I thought for fear that it would turn out like most novels, enchanting at first, dreary in the middle and uncertain towards the end, but even despite not doing so I feel like my interest and curiosity was drawn to the last lines of the novel.

I feel like I will carry the questions I have for a long, long time. Is there something inherently flawed within Julius or is he so ordinary and we so off? Who is he? Where is he from? Where was he going to?

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### **Misfit says**

"Something for nothing - something for nothing" ...is the mantra that governs the life of Julius Lévy. The story begins in 1860 in France as a young half-Jewish Julius learns the ways of selling in the local market place - always getting more than you give away - "something for nothing." As the Prussians invade France the Lévy's head for the relative safety of Paris, although unforeseen events send Julius and his father heading for the relative safety of Algiers. Now orphaned Julius learns to steal, manipulate and swindle his way until he saves enough to strike out for England and the empire he feels destined to build - no matter what the cost to others around him - including his morbid obsession with his daughter.

That's about all I'm going to tell, anymore and I'd be spoiling the story. Suffice it to say that Julius is a wholly despicable, unlikable character void of any knowledge of right or wrong . If he can't have it then no one else can – whether it be the pet cat he drowned as a child rather than let someone else care for it.

While this third book of Du Maurier's is still far from the excellence of her later books, it is a fascinating and disturbing read and quite amazing when you realize that she wrote this when she was all of twenty-six years old. Just be warned, Julius has no redeeming qualities whatsoever, so if you're a reader who wants it all tied up with a pink ribbon and an HEA at the end, this probably isn't the book for you. However, if you want a look at something besides the "romantic suspense" of Du Maurier's later works I'd look this one up. 4/5 stars and highly recommended.

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### **Ann says**

A very sad story of progress. It seemed very authentic. The characters were very rich. This book was so

different from Jamaica Inn. I can't wait to read another by her to see if they're all unique. Apparently there is incest in this book. I completely missed that. Now everything is much sadder and creepier.

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### **Kim says**

Absolutely loved this book - it traces the life of Julius Levy, born into poverty on the outskirts of Paris in 1860 to a Catholic mother and a Jewish father, from childhood to old age. Julius is part of a family of market stallholders - he, his mother, father and maternal grandfather - barely making a living, their lives made even worse by the invasion of the Prussian Army during the Franco-Prussian War. After tragedies strike the family, Julius and his father make their way to Algiers (where his father was born) and here Julius learns to live by his wits - his maxim 'something for nothing' is repeated throughout the book. However, it is never 'nothing' as Julius always applies himself to making money and sustaining a living for him and his father. The only problem Julius has is his total lack of empathy with others and he merely uses people and takes advantage of them. After the death of his father, Julius leaves for England where he starts in a poor job but shows great alacrity in making money and a success of his life. However, it is all at a cost - Julius only forms relationships with difficulty and, even then, those he loves he has to control. Julius is not a nice person by any stretch of the imagination and does some awful things but I was strangely drawn to this story of his life, one of never-ending success from a material point of view but never making true friends or maintaining 'proper' relationships, particularly with his wife and teenage daughter Gabriel. This was an astounding piece of work with some really deep and meaningful observations, particularly bearing in mind that the author was only 26 when she wrote it. 10/10 for me for this one.

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### **Michele says**

The word "sweeping" is not inappropriate here, since the novel covers Julius' entire life from birth to death, somewhere around age 80. Julius is not a sympathetic character -- in fact he's very nearly sociopathic -- but du Maurier's skill in painting his ambition, his intelligence, his almost uncanny business skill, and his obsession with ownership are remarkable.

Julius is also half Jewish, and his attitudes toward his father are complicated by the fact that he both loves and hates his father's different-ness -- his mother and grandfather are flat-out brutal to his father, which makes Julius view him with contempt, but Julius loves his father's musical ability and his other-ness. I don't know whether the author meant to convey any particular message by this; certainly the novel also plays into the stereotype of Jews being good at business, but I don't think it was meant in a negative way.

As in Rebecca, du Maurier also shows herself a master of atmosphere, the sounds and smells and tastes that make up a time and place. From the little French market of Julius' childhood to the whorehouse in Algiers to the chain of restaurants of his middle age to the mausoleum-like mansion where he dies, it's all as vivid as the blood-red rhododendrons and the smell of the sea at Manderley.

The culmination of the arc that begins with one brief act as little Julius flees his village is by no means unpredictable, but the journey there is a suspenseful and fascinating one, watching his relentless rise in the world, how he uses people and discards them, the broken lives he carelessly leaves in his wake, never knowing exactly where or when that particular piece of his character will show itself and blow it all to bits.

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## Candace says

I have been reading Du Maurier's novels in more-or-less chronological order. Julius is the third of her novels, and it shows a marked change -- in tone, plotting, writing, and characterization -- from her first two. I think that it is with this novel that Du Maurier really hints at the measure of her talent.

\*\*\* SPOILER ALERT -- PLEASE DON'T READ ANY MORE OF THIS REVEIW BEFORE YOU READ THE BOOK! -- THANK YOU! \*\*\*

The book tells the life story of Julius Lévy, a Parisian whose father is Jewish. Some have suggested that there are hints of anti-semitism in Du Maurier's work (apparently, there was far less subtle anti-semitism in her Grandfather Du Maurier's book, "Trilby"). Julius's father is represented as a loving father, and a not terribly resourceful provider. While he murders his wife (Julius's mother) in a fit of rage (that Julius does much to help along), he seems otherwise a gentle and blameless flute-player.

In contrast, Julius is a sociopathic monster who has no compunction about using, abusing, and casting aside anyone. Early in the book, as a child, he drowns a cat that he cannot take with him, lest anyone else every enjoy the feline's affection, and this utterly possessive, exploitative love follows him through all of the relationships in his live.

When, finally, inevitably, he murders his beloved daughter whose spirit he cannot break, he is so out of touch with his own feelings that he seems unable to realize what a tragic end to his own life that he has engineered for himself.

This is a book, a character, who will long stay with me, and for that alone, I have to give it high marks.

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## Natalie Richards says

Loved this. A dark and disturbing read with a very unlikeable and narcissistic character Julius.

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## Mike says

**3.5 stars.** A dark, twisted tale of the meteoric rise-and-fall of a peasant boy who becomes an enormously wealthy miser through obsessive work and greed, with a sociopathic drive to use everyone around him as an object in pursuit of his personal mantra: "something for nothing." One might call him a sadist, but his actions -- which include the killing of innocents -- doesn't seem to bring him pleasure any more than his obsessions to work and gain wealth. There is a touch of Zola here with Du Maurier setting the early events in France and suggesting that Julius is inevitably sent down this road from the moment of his birth by his upbringing and his genes.

And my reference to Zola is also a bit ironic, considering the biggest problem with this book -- and one that makes it very uncomfortable to read throughout -- is the casual anti-Semitism as a primary plot device. Julius' Jewish background is constantly alluded to in the most repellent terms and becomes the driving force

of his young life. The question is this: is Du Maurier suggesting that his Jewishness is the cause of his vile actions, or is she suggesting that the inherent prejudices in the late-19th century unfairly trap young people into debilitating ethnic categories, conditioning them to act out the vicious stereotypes that are forced onto their shoulders? I fear the answer is a little of both.

As with every Du Maurier novel I've read, this one is also about 40 pages too long, which is unfortunate because the ending is quite obviously telegraphed, and the last chapter is both anti-climactic and predictable. There is much strong writing here, pointing to the beginning of a great career, but also quite a few faults which prevent this from being a top-tier Du Maurier novel.

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## Bettie? says

Bettie's Books

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## La Petite Américaine says

I've read all of du Maurier's books and I adore her twisted, sick, and unpredictable plot-twists and lack of sympathy and trust for any of her characters. That said, this book scared the living hell out of me, much more than *The Birds*, *Rebecca*, etc.

This story offers a glimpse into the mind and soul of a true sociopath on his journey from poverty in Paris to becoming one of the richest men in London. Uhhhh, child hookers in Algeria? One swindle after the other? Choosing a wife because she'd be a nice backdrop to his life? Incest? Suicide? Murder? Yet all of it written with a unique touch of class?

FUCK ME, IT DOESN'T GET BETTER THAN THAT!

I love you, Daphne du Maurier. :-D

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## Sali\_333 says

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### **Susan says**

Daphne Du Maurier certainly enjoyed writing about the dark side of human nature. Julius, the main character in this novel is a quintessential narcissist and a bit of a sociopath. Du Maurier traces the beginnings of his cold, self absorbed nature from his childhood(the mostly dispassionate disposal of his cat) to the deliberate murder of his only child.

In the final analysis, I agree with Myerson's assessment that Du Maurier was not specifically anti-Semitic, but quite frankly-- the prevalent stereotypes that exist RE: Jews are certainly played up in this novel, there is no denying that.

This is well-written and has lovely descriptions of place, and feeling.

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### **Erica says**

"The Progress of Julius" is unsettling, engrossing and epic. Classic Du Maurier. Julius rises from a shivering war refugee, selling rats on the grey streets of late nineteenth century Paris, to one of the world's wealthiest men; only the readers get to see what it took for him to get there. His "progress" if you will. It's not pretty. There's murder. Scandal. Quiet desperation. Embarrassment. Ultimately, a life. I loved it.

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### **Quirkyreader says**

I was torn over giving the book a 3 or 4 star rating.

I loved The way how Du Maurier told the story. It was very vivid and I felt like I was there. Especially at the market stalls in France and in the market place in Algeria.

It got a three because I did not like the characters in the story at all. So possible spoilers.....

The main character Julius, was very vapid and narcissistic. And he just rubbed me wrong. What particularly got under my skin was the way how he courted Rachel, the woman who became his wife. He treated her like an object that needed to be possessed and not as a person.

Julius's daughter wasn't very likeable either. She thought she was entitled to everything. She treated her mother like dirt and thought her father very stupid, but played along. Which caused her to meet a very bad ending.

So this was a good story, I just didn't enjoy some of the elements of it.

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## **Annaleise says**

Really really enjoyed this. The main character is appropriately sinister for a Du Maurier novel, but clever and engaging as well as being decidedly unlikable. This has to be one of the few books I still found really enjoyable despite having a strong disliking for the main character, Julius. It reminds me of *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, especially the fourth part.

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