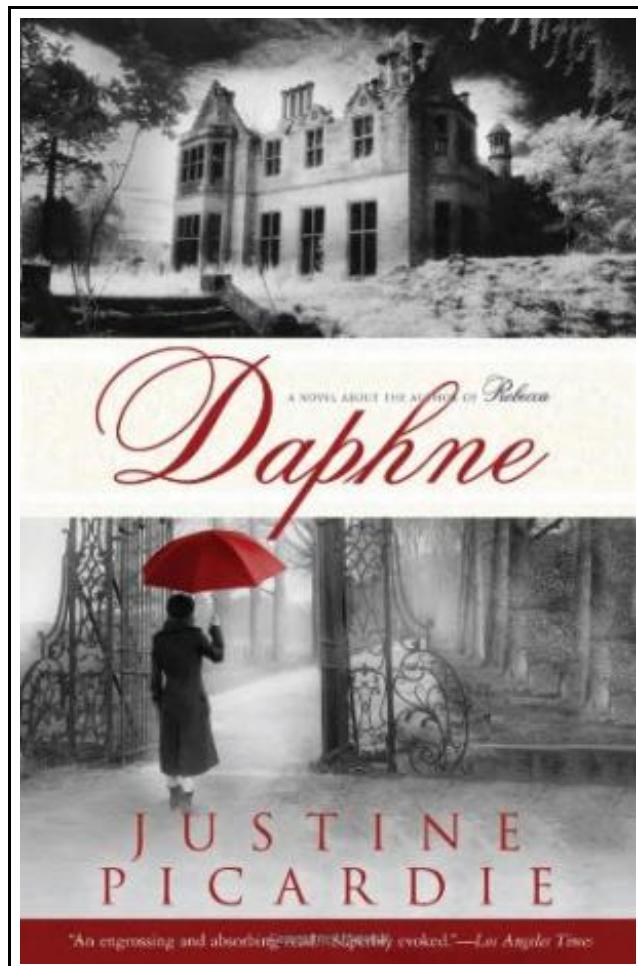


Daphne: A Novel



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Reviews

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(Ivah West)

DAPHNE: A NOVEL

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Bloomsbury USA, 2008. Paperback. Book Condition: New. A D V A N C E R E A D E R' S Edition. Bloomsbury USA 2008 A D V A N C E R E A D E R' S Edition New/ SOFTCOVER. Prerelease version. From Former BritishVogue editor Picardie (My Mother's Wedding Dress) gives us a fictional life of Rebecca novelist Daphne du Maurier (1907?1989) that founders in obsession. In the late 1950s, du Maurier, determined to establish herself as a serious writer, researched and wrote a biography of Branwell Brontë, the often-overlooked real-life brother of sisters Emily and Charlotte. Flash forward to the present, in which a nameless graduate student seeks out lost secrets about the relation between du Maurier and John Alexander Symington, the Brontë expert and curator to whom du Maurier dedicated her eventual Brontë book. Picardie's novel quickly becomes a tangle of redundancies, as the student, in one plot line, grows increasingly obsessed with du Maurier and loses touch with reality. Meanwhile, in another thread, du Maurier and Symington both flirt with madness in their separate Branwell quests. Du Maurier's fictional characters, especially Rebecca, haunt the story unproductively, as do the Brontës, Brontë protagonists, and Barrie's Peter Pan and the Lost Boys (who were inspired by du Maurier's cousins). Picardie does best with Symington, whose career ended in scandal: she portrays his dissolution coldly, letting observations rip in a way she never quite manages with the fictive Daphne.

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