



## Marrying Off Mother: And Other Stories

*Gerald Durrell*

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## **Marrying Off Mother: And Other Stories** Gerald Durrell

A collection of short stories by a world-renowned naturalist and author of *My Family and Other Animals* introduces an eccentric cast of characters including a prize-truffling pig in France and an aging Memphis belle.

## **Marrying Off Mother: And Other Stories Details**

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Author : Gerald Durrell

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## From Reader Review *Marrying Off Mother: And Other Stories* for online ebook

### Margaret Capozzolo says

Well, that was quite a shocker! Our darling little Gerry, youngest of the Durrells of Corfu, grew up to be quite a raconteur, collecting unusual specimens of the human variety rather than animal species, which were his first love. The chapter entitled "Marrying Off Mother" was his only homage to his younger days with his quirky family on the lovely Greek island. His collection of characters includes a ghastly encounter with a deranged man in Paraguay, an ex-nun who believes her mission from God is to break the bank at Monte Carlo while wearing a dead woman's clothes, and Ursula, a gorgeous girlfriend whose every sentence includes a malapropism, who is traveling with an x-rated parrot. It is worth overlooking Gerry's late-British-empire condescension to enjoy his version of laugh-out-loud twentieth-century British humor.

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### Liz says

This is another of Gerald Durrell's books of short stories, made up of leftover material from his other books. Several favorite characters – Ursula, the beautiful but unbearable girlfriend, for one – are found here. In the title story, taken from the period of *My Family and Other Animals*, Mrs. Durrell finally is able to turn the tables on her often-outrageous offspring. They decide, as a body, that she should remarry. She protests, but then "falls in love" with a friend of her oldest son, Larry. The friend, an actor, readily agrees to her scheme, and plays the part of a boring, obnoxious, self-centered, greasy fellow, who alienates the entire family – except for Mother! When Mother announces that they are going to move to Athens and live together (in sin!), and have made plans for the children to get "congenial jobs" and "stand on their own feet" (except for young Gerry, who must go to school), the family explodes in protest, until the trick is revealed.

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### Ian Smith says

Confession time. I am a Gerald Durrell addict. Having been away from his writings for quite some time, I started working my way through his 'collected works' a few months ago. And it's wonderful! But if there was a single book that threatened to break my addiction, then this is it. Perhaps expectations were too high. After all, his other collections of short stories - such as 'Fillets of Plaice' and 'The Picnic and Suchlike Pandemonium' are quite simply delightful.

Not so with this often dreary and formulaic series of stories, which he freely admits are only loosely based on fact. He starts off brilliantly - the first paragraph is vintage Durrell - exquisite evocative language describing his first loves - food, wine and the natural world. Sadly it's down hill all the way from there, save for a characteristically humorous yet beautifully told story (fictional?) of his childhood in Corfu.

And that's perhaps what makes these such a disappointment. For if the truth is so easily dispensed with, characters so readily caricatured beyond recognition, then whither the magic of his childhood, the wonder of the exotic expeditions, the charm of zoos? Are these too just fabrications of a wondrously creative mind?

And did he really mean to finish the last story so abruptly? I turned the final page with a profound sense of frustration and disappointment.

But I have no doubt my faith will be restored. For I still have 'My Family and Other Animals' to turn to. Perhaps I should leave it to last.

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### **Exina says**

A collection of short stories. I have mixed feelings: I loved the family stories, especially the title one! As well as the lovely story of Miss Booth-Wycherly, and the facetious story of Ursula. But the rest of them are not for me. They are not as light as they would be expected by Durrell.

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### **K.J. Charles says**

Picked up on a cheapie. I loved Durrell's writings as a teen and this collection had a lot of what I enjoyed--some bits hysterically funny, some lyrical writing, and even if he's very obviously a wild embroiderer of the truth when he isn't outright lying/writing fiction, he's got a knack for making you believe in his bizarre world.

Which said, some of these stories are really badly dated--xenophobic, pretty cringeworthy whenever race comes up, and with an unpleasantly misogynistic tang that now makes me wonder what I'd find if I went back to the books I loved. Heh. There's probably a reason this collection wasn't reprinted before.

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### **Txe Polon says**

Aunque quizás es el más flojo de los libros de Durrell que he leído, no puede negarse que la mayoría de las historias incluidas en este volumen tiene su interés (la cerda buscatrufas, el capitán de barco, el verdugo, la monja ataviada, el loro y el cura pedófilo), si bien algunas resultan un poco más endebles y otras tienen un final abrupto que no siempre cuadra.

Actualización (21/08/2018): Aunque hace dos años fuera el más flojo de los que había leído, a día de hoy tengo que reivindicarlo.

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### **Debbie Young says**

I love Gerald Durrell, both as a writer and as a pioneering conservationist, and admire him enormously, but his publisher and editor have let his reputation down by (a) not editing some of these pieces down which are far too rambling and (b) letting into the public domain some stories that are highly offensive in the 21st century, treating a vicar's repeated paedophilia against choirboys as if it is high comedy. Completely repellent. Avoid it if you want to retain your respect for him as a man and a writer. I feel like I now want to destroy my copy to suppress it. Very sad.

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### **Iona Stewart says**

This is a good collection of short stories by the late Gerald Durrell, who is the funniest author I know.

Durrell wrote his books in order to finance his Jersey zoo and his various animal collecting expeditions in Africa and such places.

He informs us that some of the stories in the book are true, while some have “a kernel of truth and a shell of embroidery”; I don’t really care whether the stories are completely true or not, since those that may be partly fictitious are not less funny for being so.

A few of the stories are, though still good, written in a different style than the author’s usual style, and are more dark and/or less funny.

The first is a tale about an enormous truffle-finding pig called Esmerelda. The author comes across her in a wood ; she smells of a particular perfume called Joy and loves the cheese he feeds her.

One of the funniest stories is a tale about one of Durrell’s experiences when on a lecture tour in the Southern USA, where he has an involuntary stay at the home of an American family (he would have preferred to spend the night at a hotel). The great-uncle in the family is under the impression that the South and North are still at war. The butler Fred does not approve of strong liquor (or fornication) so the lady of the family disguises the whisky and other strong drinks as Coca-Cola, only to be distinguished by their odour.

Another story tells the tale of one of Durrell’s lady friends who takes pity on a “reverend gentleman” thrown out of the Church owing to his having committed serious transgressions against a whole choir of choir-boys (this is of course not funny, but Durrell is not particularly politically correct, in fact not at all). She had decided to cheer up the reverend by presenting him with a parrot, addicted to vodka and tonic, which turned out to have a vocabulary like an extremely foul-mouthed docker.

You’ll appreciate the book if you’re a fan of the author or in need of something to make you laugh.

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### **Judy says**

One of the funniest books ever. This even tops the other Durrell books I've read. It's hard to beat a gambling nun, pornographic parrot given to a priest, the Durrell kids trying to marry off their mother. One common denominator was translation/miscommunication - whether that be different languages, cultural norms or IQ levels. All the stories were a lot of fun.

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### **Felicity says**

Totally enjoyed reading more about the crazy Durrell family, I love them all! Not usually a fan of Short Stories, this won me over very quickly, and after thinking I had already read my favourite story, Gerald save the best one for last.

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### **Lesle says**

Gerald Durrell a British naturalist. He was always interested in animals, but his passion exploded when his oddball family moved to Corfu. He has been described as a cross between Bill Bryson and Sir David Attenborough (entertaining wisdom vs wildlife educator).

This book has eight stories, of which Gerry has a natural way of telling the stories with almost a poetic form when describing the nature. His words are easy to read and flows with humor, smiles and giggles along the way.

My favorite is the scheme he and his siblings come up with to marry off their mother who is driving them nuts, only to have her turn it around on them! Followed up by Esmeralda the prize truffle hunting pig that is thought to be stolen and held for ransom, but returned and pampered so you would have thought she was Queen of Sheba.

Cannot wait to indulge in his other books!

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### **Juan Hidalgo says**

Muy Entretenido: en la línea habitual de Gerald Durrell y con ese toque de humor inglés tan suyo

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### **Anne says**

The publication of Gerald Durrell's *Marrying off Mother and other stories* follows on from ITV's brilliant drama *The Durrells*, celebrated as 'tip top' in a four star review from *The Telegraph*. The entertaining collection introduces an eccentric cast of characters and was first published in 1991.

It's been a long long time since I read *My Family and Other Animals* by Gerald Durrell, I really enjoyed it many years ago and the recent ITV drama, *The Durrells* resurrected my interest in his writing. I thought the TV adaptation was very well done, despite some of the changes to times and places. The Corfu setting was stunning - it's no secret that I adore Corfu, and anything that reminds me of that beautiful island is welcome!

This collection of short stories were written in Durrell's later years, and originally published in 1991. Whilst the beautiful cover shows a wonderful painting of Corfu, and the title story is set on the island, the majority of these stories are set elsewhere and are a very mixed, and at times, a little eccentric selection of Durrell's writing.

There is no doubt that the writing is dated and there were a couple of sharp intakes of breath at some of the language used. However, on the whole, I did enjoy revisiting Durrell's stories and the reader can certainly hear his voice throughout each of the tales in the book.

*Marrying Off Mother and Other Stories* is beautifully presented, the cover image is stunning. Fans of Durrell will appreciate these stories, but I'd urge new readers to start with his earlier works to experience the true beauty of his work.

<http://randomthingsthroughmyletterbox...>

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## QNPoohBear says

This book is a compilation of humorous short stories that have nothing to do with bugs or snakes-just people. Gerry states in advance that "All of these stories are true, or, to be strictly accurate, some have a kernel of truth and a shell of embroidery. Some were my own experiences, others were told to me and I appropriated them for my own purposes... Which of these stories is true and which is semi-true I have, of course, not the slightest intention of telling you..." So the guessing game begins! I'm guessing most of the stories are pure fiction and some may have a "kernel of truth."

The first story "Esmeralda" is one of the funniest. During a sojourn in the French countryside, Gerry comes across a pig smelling of expensive perfume and wearing a gold chain. She delicately enjoys his cheese before nodding off smelling of expensive perfume and cheese. He simply MUST find her owner. The characters here are so full of life, including Esmeralda herself. She is quite a personality and much beloved by her owner. The story does veer into the category of farce-slightly resembling a P.G. Wodehouse story, but it's very entertaining.

"Fred- or a Touch of the Warm South" is full of every stereotype about people from the American South-their proud heritage (bourbon, whiskey, genealogy, the Civil War), eccentric relatives and attitudes towards the help. I'm not from the South so I found it entertaining and amusing-until the very last scene. I'm not sure that much would be true. I don't know if a southerner would enjoy this story as much as an outsider unless it's not a stereotype and people are able to laugh at themselves.

"Retirement" takes place on board a small ship full of women headed from Australia back to Britain. Gerry and the Captain are the only men. The women, naturally, all have a crush on the Captain while he can't wait to retire and go home to his wife. This story is mildly funny at first but again it goes from realistic to completely silly quickly. I also found it a bit sad.

The title story "Marrying Off Mother" is another delightful adventure in Corfu. It clearly inspired the screenwriter of the current TV series. Larry and Leslie think Mother needs a man in her life. She insists she's fine. When Larry's friend, Antoine de Vere, a handsome movie actor, comes to stay, he manages to antagonize everyone except Mother! How could this be?! As with the memoir/novels, Gerry paints his family as a loving bunch of eccentrics. As always, all Larry thinks about is sex; all Les thinks about is guns and Margo is so selfish and stupid she never knows what's what. The story is as funny as the longer books and well worth reading for fans of the Durrells in Corfu. Poor Louisa! This is the best story in the collection.

"Ludwig" is a forgettable story about a German without a sense of humor. Gerry comes across as kind of caddish and not very kind. He reminded me a lot of his older brother Larry! The situation here goes on too long and since I lack a sense of humor, I feel sorry for Ludwig. I was shocked that Gerry cavalierly gave Ludwig a sedative AND they took it with wine!

"The Jury" is a macabre story set in South America. Gerry's newest acquaintance, James Menton, was a hangman by trade. Haunted by the memories of people whose lives were lost at his hands, he has turned to drink, a fact which Gerry is late to discover. In light of revelations, Gerry doesn't call the doctor as the doctor requests, Gerry continues to allow his host to drink and be melancholy. The ending wasn't a surprise but shocking and horrible all the same.

The penultimate story "Miss Booth-Wycherly's Clothes" was another one of my favorites. It features an elderly lady fallen on hard times who maintains her grace, humor and a trunk full of old clothes. There's also a delightful gambling nun! Who would believe it? This story is touching and funny! Gerry doesn't seem to be one of those who believes in God's voice directing people so he treats the matter with slight skepticism and humor as only a Durrell can tell the story. Again he sounds a bit like Larry without the rude snarkiness.

The final story "A Parrot for the Parson" doesn't hold up to today's values. The filthy talking parrot was funny but the parson was not. I was shocked at how cavalierly Gerry and his girlfriend treated their relationship with a predatory clergyman. Sorry Gerry but sex predators are not amusing characters for a story.

I didn't care for grown-up Gerry so much. He was so charming and sweet as a boy. He clearly learned how to treat women from Larry. This collection is a mixed bag for me.

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## **Serena.. Sery-ously? says**

Durrell mi aveva abituato super bene con "La mia famiglia e altri animali", che avevo adorato e mi aveva fatto un gran ridere..

Trovandomi di fronte questo titolo al Libraccio, non ho saputo resistere, pronta a gustarmi altre pazze avventure di questo naturalista in erba e della sua strambissima famiglia..

Che dire, un paio di orette carine le ho passate, ma nulla a confronto del primo libro! La storia che più mi è piaciuta è "Come far sposare la mamma" che è ambientata nuovamente a Corfu.. Le altre sono simpatiche, ma nulla di trascendentale!

Dando una sbirciata alla quarta di copertina mi è caduto l'occhio sulla biografia dell'autore e ho scoperto che è morto nel 1995. Ok, era nato nel 1925.. Ma la notizia mi ha messo tanta tristezza ;\_;

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