



Outfoxed

Rita Mae Brown

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From the bestselling author of the landmark work *Rubyfruit Jungle* comes an engaging, original new novel that only Rita Mae Brown could have written. In the pristine world of Virginia foxhunting, hunters, horses, hounds, and foxes form a lively community of conflicting loyalties, where the thrill of the chase and the intricacies of human-animal relationships are experienced firsthand--and murder exposes a proud Southern community's unsavory secrets. . . .

As Master of the prestigious Jefferson Hunt Club, Jane Arnold, known as Sister, is the most revered citizen in the Virginia Blue Ridge Mountain town where a rigid code of social conduct and deep-seated tradition carry more weight than money. Nearing seventy, Sister now must select a joint master to ensure a smooth transition of leadership after her death. It is an honor of the highest order--and one that any serious social climber would covet like the Holy Grail.

Virginian to the bone with a solid foxhunting history, Fontaine Buruss is an obvious candidate, but his penchant for philandering and squandering money has earned him a less than sparkling reputation. And not even Sister knows about his latest tawdry scandal. Then there is Crawford Howard, a Yankee in a small town where Rebel bloodlines are sacred. Still, Crawford has money--lots of it--and as Sister is well aware, maintaining a first-class hunt club is far from cheap.

With the competition flaring up, Southern gentility flies out the window. Fontaine and Crawford will stop at nothing to discredit each other. Soon the entire town is pulled into a rivalry that is spiraling dangerously out of control. Even the animals have strong opinions, and only Sister is able to maintain objectivity. But when opening hunt day ends in murder, she, too, is stunned.

Who was bold and skilled enough to commit murder on the field? It could only be someone who knew both the territory and the complex nature of the hunt inside out. Sister knows of three people who qualify--and only she, with the help of a few clever foxes and hounds, can lay the trap to catch the killer.

A colorful foray into an intriguing world, *Outfoxed* features a captivating cast of Southerners and their unforgettable animal counterparts. Rita Mae Brown has written a masterful novel that surprises, delights, and enchants.

From the Hardcover edition.

Outfoxed Details

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From Reader Review Outfoxed for online ebook

Frances L. Ehrig says

Talkative Animals

A fun and fascinating reading exercise. The birds talk, the hounds talk, the red foxes talk, the grey foxes talk, and the horses chat. It an interesting device to move the plot forward, but I had to try to remember all of the names of these characters and finally did, but the story ended. The murderer is finally revealed and that was a surprise. I now know more than I will ever need to know about Fox hunting, but it made an interesting background for the mystery.

Jana says

This book is great if you want to learn about fox hunting. I knew nothing before I read the book and now I find the sport and the people involved very interesting. I would give the book four stars for the fox hunting knowledge that I gained. In contrast, the talking animals were very distracting to me and the murder didn't occur until so late in the book I found the crime solving to be rushed. I could only give the book two stars.

Jo Ann says

I found this book to be a different type of mystery book. I kept waiting for the murder to occur, but it only did approximately 2/3 through the book. I am still digesting this approach. While at times I found myself racing through the book to get to the "murder," I was fascinated with the juxtaposition of the conversations among the people and the animals. I know nothing about hunting so I did struggle with all the details that revolved around the hunt. I especially enjoyed the character of " Sister." What a no nonsense woman; I would like a friend like that! I think I am intrigued enough by this series to read the next installment. While I don't think that it will ever be one of my favorite series, I still may well find it a nice change of pace.

George says

First in the "Sister" Jane fox hunting set in Virginia mystery series. Hunt master "Sister" Jane Arnold has her hands full in this mystery with a murder, heated rivalry between two over becoming joint masters that is splitting the hunt club, and various relationship problems. As in her other series, Brown has animal characters that play a prominent role in the story. A very enjoyable read.

D. says

I think that this book deserves constant love and praise as well as a pedestal to follow it around so it is

always being worshipped. Yes, people, it is that good! Rita Mae Brown is a fantastic writer and her characters are so realistically flawed that you can imagine them as clearly as you can imagine your best friends. The relationships between the characters are full of the raw human emotion that exists in real life and the challenges that these characters face are heartbreaking. The beautiful Virginian countryside is a marvellous setting for this incredible mystery. I love all of the insight that it gives in regards to the sport of foxhunting. I had always thought that foxhunting was a cruel practice that was deadly for the foxes, but Sister's story taught me how much the foxhunters respect the foxes that they chase without any hope of catching and how they take care of their furry friends as best they can. The mystery is wonderfully woven through a cast of fantastic characters which is topped off by Sister herself, a woman that I admire as if she really existed, living out her days in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. Sister's place in the community is very interesting, and I only respect her more for not abusing that power. I would recommend this mystery to all fans of wonderful books, for it is so much more than just a detective story; rather, it is a story of love, heartbreak, friendship, and the beauty of nature.

<http://agirlandherbookshelf.blogspot.com>

Kimberly says

I mostly enjoyed this book. I really liked the characters and love the talking animals. I was completely clueless when it came to the killer. My issue was that there was too much detail about fox hunting. The murder didn't even happen until over halfway thru the book. Some info on fox hunting would of been fine, but there was just too much detail, about hound bloodlines, clothes, and the hunts themselves. I hope that the next book doesn't go into as much detail because I would like to read more in this series. :)

Mary B. Grove says

very slow start but turned out worth reading

the murder doesn't happen until you're about 60% through the book, so it was hard for me to find the story's center, especially given there were whole chunks of time when I felt I was drowning in the minutiae of Virginian fox hunting. (I thought I had somewhat of a handle on it after reading fantasies based on the hunt, but no.) Then, too, Sister Jane is obviously meant to be a sympathetic character, but I found her difficult to pace until after the murder when her personality begins to shine. I think the book was a slow setup to the series, but I look forward to the next story after coming to care for Sister, the dogs, foxes and human members of the hunt

Eyehavenofilter says

Jane, also known as Sister, now 70 years old is the matriarch of the fox and hound set in Virginia, must contend with all of the petty behavior of the selfish members of the locals. She must also keep the local riff-raff, criminals and thieves from destroying the age old life styles of the rich and infamous. It isn't easy. Especially when most of the wealthy feel that they are entitled to do anything they want, and the not so wealthy feel exactly the same way.

But Sister has it all under control...or does she?

Brenda Hicks says

An interesting gaze into the world of gentrified foxhunting. It is a world, I confess, I know or care little about. However, an animal lover can smell another good enough so it kept me reading even though no one dies in this murder mystery until page 240. After that, the pace of the novel picks up considerably. The book is well written and the scenery and characters well painted. I suppose, if you hold a romanticized view of the perfectly pressed but incredibly fragile world of these country gents and ladies, then you will be interested enough in this telling of a story about horses, hounds and their prey. Me, I prefer the barefoot, jeans and flannel, messier world of *Where the Red Fern Grows*. Though I can admire the technical strength of the writing, the book didn't really work well for me until we had a dead body and a mystery to solve.

Kristal says

I was a bit nervous about starting this book. Not a book I would normally read. But I was impressed. The heroine is smart, mature and sophisticated. The author's details on the foxhunt are great. I actually really liked seeing the story not just from a human perspective, but from the animals perspective as well. The book did start out a bit slow, but I am hoping that the second book will be better.

Julie says

I fell in love with "Sister" Jane and the hunt club so much, I tried to talk my husband into buying a 30 (or so) acre farm in Virginia. And we live in Southern California. It didn't work - I still live in Los Angeles. So I have to get my hunt club thrills vicariously and the "Sister" Jane series have been just the ticket.

Monique Marshall says

Thus began my Sister Jane addiction. Being into foxhunting it was a joy to finally find a novel (a whole series!) dedicated to our sport. I found Sister Jane to be quite endearing and lovable and was sad when I'd finished the series.

Hodges says

I've admired Rita Mae Brown for many years but had never read any of her "Sister Jane" mysteries until recently. I was hesitant the first time I picked one up at the library when I realized the series is largely centered around American Foxhunting - a sport I know zip about! - and that, in addition to the human characters, there is an entire cast of various animal characters as well. About midway through that first book, however, the concept began to grow on me. The characters, both animal and human, are well drawn, the stories entertaining and, as is typical of Rita Mae, reveal something about human nature and our relationships with one another. I am now working my way through the series and would highly recommend them!

Lisa says

I picked this book up from the shelf available at a vacation rental. A blurb on the back cover says this is a "snappy" book. It is anything but, in reality. It takes almost two hundred pages to get to the crime. The Crime. 200.

This is supposed to be a murder mystery.

The actual climax of the book is barely a blip. Then the protagonist sends the murderer off to think about what she's done after she is revealed. Really?

The detail about hunting is mildly interesting, but the package it's wrapped in is tedious. Perhaps some of Brown's earlier or other books are of higher quality. This one was a waste of time.

Abbey says

BOTTOM LINE: This first "Jane Arnold, Master of Jefferson Hunt, rural Virginia" novel is a truly fantastical cosy, but definitely not for those who do not enjoy talking animals, as there is a superfluity of them here. However, the plot - and characters are very well-done, and there's a nice leavening of humor throughout. Comfortable cosy, albeit annoying at times.

Hunt season is coming on, and The Jefferson Hunt is readying horses, dogs, and people for Opening Hunt. Unfortunately someone plans to kill one of the contenders for Joint Master (an extremely influential position, second only to Jane) on that day, and lays plans almost as carefully as Jane does, to ensure the desired result.

I always enjoy Rita Mae's "take" on people and places, and she doesn't disappoint here. The characters are wonderfully sassy, and the setting is a sort of glorified "Beatrix Potter's Garden" for adults (all the animals talk to each other and can understand humans, although the reverse isn't true), making this a place I very much enjoyed visiting. There was, however, far too much foxhunting detail for this city girl's taste, and while the buildup was enjoyable it was far too long - the murder doesn't occur until page 220 or so, and the book could have used some pruning, weighing in at over 400 pages. In an attempt to educate those of us who know absolutely nothing about foxhunting, there are far too many bits of information for a novice to grasp - I wanted to scream "just get ON with it!" in many places, as my eyes glazed over.

The murder plot was classic with a nice twist, setting up not one but two positively despicable people that you'd gladly see murdered any old time. And the setting of "rich and privileged folks behaving badly" was really entertaining. Plus I absolutely adored Sister Jane, the Master of the Hunt, a savvy, energetic 70-year-old who takes no guff from anyone, be they human, horse, dog or wild animal. But this suffered from an overabundance of good things - too many wild rides over the beautiful landscape, too many instances of showing how awful the two potential murderees could be, and, a far more telling problem, there was far, far too much animal dialogue for my taste.

Rita Mae does that sort of thing better than almost anyone (except Rousseau Murphy IMO), but here she doesn't seem to know when to quit. We "visit" with the foxes in their dens almost as often as we sit down

with Jane, and that becomes wearing after a while. Although I must admit the “characters” of one little fox and one particular hound (why does that make me think of Disney?) were wonderful, really appealing, and I look forward to “meeting” them again along with Jane.

But Rita Mae needs to pare down the conversations between the animals to what is necessary, and also to tighten up her plotting. While the lead up to the murder is good (if too long), the actual murder itself is so complex as to be nearly totally incomprehensible. And the “catch” that you need to know to solve the puzzle is such an esoteric one that it’s almost missed, although Brown does mention it many times. What bothered me most was the denouement, wherein Jane leaves a note “telling all” for the murderer, in a place that, supposedly, only they would know (how or why is never cleared up) and expecting the murderer to turn themselves in, as is only proper for a Hunt Member In Good Standing. Fantasy. yep. But rather enjoyable for the most part.

Brown can do far better than this, although generally her mysteries do tend to depend upon character and setting far more than plots. This world she has set in motion is a rich and enjoyable one, and I will likely read more of this series, eventually.
