



Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood

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When Siddalee Walker, oldest daughter of Vivi Abbott Walker, Ya-Ya extraordinaire, is interviewed in the New York Times about a hit play she's directed, her mother gets described as a "tap-dancing child abuser." Enraged, Vivi disowns Sidda. Devastated, Sidda begs forgiveness, and postpones her upcoming wedding. All looks bleak until the Ya-Yas step in and convince Vivi to send Sidda a scrapbook of their girlhood mementos, called "Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood." As Sidda struggles to analyze her mother, she comes face to face with the tangled beauty of imperfect love, and the fact that forgiveness, more than understanding, is often what the heart longs for.

Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood Details

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Author : Rebecca Wells

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From Reader Review Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood for online ebook

Deb says

When the whole Ya-Ya craze was going on, my book club decided we'd better read it to see what all the fuss was about. In the end, we had to take a vote ("ya-ya" if you liked it; "no-no" if you didn't). I fell into the "no-no" group.

I found it disturbing that hordes of women were flocking to this book that is really about completely dysfunctional families and marriages and a really unhealthy attachment to friends from the past. It made me wonder what's going on with women that this kind of co-dependent group of friends was something to aspire to.

I had a similar reaction to Bridges of Madison County, although I did go see the movie, and Meryl Streep did get me, despite my skepticism.

Alex Farrand says

DNF

I tried, I really did. I know watching Monk instead of reading was distracting, but the writing was bland to me. It was slow, and I remember the movie being decent. Maybe, I'll pick it up again, but right now I just cannot do it. It just wasn't for me. I need to move on.

E says

[

Of COURSE the story had to end with a big white wedding! That signifies catharsis in every woman's life, right?

By the end of

Debbie Petersen says

I think Vivi WAS a tap-dancing child abuser. Any discussion of this fact ends at the "being whipped with the belt" scene. Vivi had no right to be enraged when this fact comes to light--she should have been embarrassed, yes. Her daughter arguably should not have revealed this dirty laundry but should have worked it through with her mother privately.

According to this book, a scrapbook of silly adventures with Vivi's zany friends makes that behavior forgivable...not an apology or explanation from Vivi. Daughter is chastened and forgives dear Vivi after reading the scrapbook.

Another thing...PLEASE, spare me the "Southern Women" stories. I live in the South and have never met anyone remotely like this...Thank God!

Eva says

I am so tired of this sort of storyline. A group of Southern women who form a timeless bond of woman-ness and Southern-ness and triumph in the face of all hardship because they are delicate as blossoms yet strong and fierce.

That said, when entering a genre so well-covered and sticky sweet, one must do something to make one's work stand out. I believe Rebecca Wells does an above-average job at this, and her book was a fun and easy read. It was hardly ground-breaking, nor did I find it moving, and I didn't shed a tear or laugh out loud. I just wrinkled my nose at the way everyone just wrapped up their lives with a nice bow at the end and no one walked away with residual hurt feelings or misunderstandings, then put the book down and decided to write this review before I promptly forgot it entirely.

If you watched *Steel Magnolias* or *Beaches* and thought they were profound, you'll just love this book.

Brandy (aka Marsden) says

My mother and her Ya-Ya's were called the sisters of Beta Sigma Phi sorority in Charleston S.C. I grew up on the marshes watching them swing dance, shuck oysters and throwing what always seemed like a never ending festival that celebrated life.

They did community work and supported the local theatre, but mostly they just had a good time. I grew up in the whirlwind of color and laughter that now seems only like a distant dream. Momma passed 18 years ago and I don't think I will ever be the same. I miss her, and her Ya-Ya's, Aunt Betty, Aunt Carol, Aunt Dolores with their respective husbands and friends in toe.

I live in New York now, not unlike Siddlee, but they are always with me especially when I revisit their split-a-parts in the tapestry of Rebecca Well's – *Divine Secret of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*. If you want to know more about who I am and where I come from read this book, it explains a lot!! So pass the "bloodies" sugar, it's time to get our panties in a knot!

marissa sammy says

Much of this book I found really aggravating -- the unthinking privilege of the Ya-Yas, their total narcissism, the constant and tedious drama -- and yet I found myself looking forward to my lunch breaks so I could read it. Despite the foreignness of the situations and location, the class and race, there was still enough of my mother and me in Vivi and Siddalee Walker to make the book resonate with me. In the end, that's what I enjoyed (not quite the right word -- you know what I mean, though) most ... but that said, if you don't personally connect with that particular mother/daughter dynamic, it might just leave you pissed off at the hamminess of it all.

Dixie Diamond says

To borrow an expression from the book, this sucker is "Trés ya-ya-no." How can a writer so obsessed with small town aristocracy manage to slip in so many references to peeing in one's pants?

I never manage to abandon books once I've started them, even when they're utter and total tripe. Thank goodness this reads fast so I didn't waste any more of my life on it!

I seem to be missing the Chick Lit Gene. I just flat-out do not understand, or identify with, this kind of writing. I'm not like this. My friends aren't like this. My mother, thank Heaven, is not like this. Our lovely Louisiana friends are not like this. I don't know anyone who is like this. I'm beginning to suspect that *nobody* is like this, except in pulpy pseudo-literature written by women with juvenile Scarlett O'Hara fantasies. I would be ashamed to be this kind of "feminine."

This is the story of Sidda, a dull, spineless, immature, 40-year-old with no identity of her own, and her malicious, self-absorbed, alcoholic, racist, mother, Vivi, who appears to be taking out on everyone around her the frustrations of a lifetime of being a legend only in her own mind. One gets the impression that Vivi needed the Ya-Yas so she could be notorious *somewhere*, since she doesn't have the class or discipline to accomplish anything of genuine value.

It's badly written, the dialogue is clumsy, and I think it must hold some kind of world record for wallowing in self-pity. Wells is also an unbearable "reference-dropper" (*River Road Recipes* , interspersed bayou French, Cajun fiddle, Community Coffee, etc.). Apparently the "divine secret" is that this bunch of self-centered superannuated teenagers chose to flash-freeze their high-school lives (and mentalities) at the expense of emotional adulthood, their marriages, and their children. Yeah, there's going to be drama and hardship in your life if you react to every little thing as if it's a catastrophe and use it as an excuse to drink and dope yourself into a stupor. "Complex" needs to stop being a literary euphemism for "manipulative, self-serving, toxic, and narcissistic." Ironically, Vivi is the least likable and least interesting of the four Ya-Yas, though she's supposed to be the luminary.

I guess it says something that Ms. Wells has lived in Washington state for the past 25+ years: If she loved Louisiana so much, why did she leave and then write boring, mindless, novels about it?

Jo (Bloomin'Chick) says

Oh I loved this book! I had a very complicated relationship with my mother and though a cliché, I could well relate to that aspect of the book! I also love the movie, but I love the book more! (I read it just before the movie came out). I've also battled severe depression and this book (and movie) is near to my heart. Overall, the details, descriptions & relationships are just amazing! Ms. Wells has Lyme disease and has had a horrible past few years, and when I joined the message boards on her website, I mentioned that I had Lyme disease and as a result have been battling many health problems myself over the years. I was asked by the moderator if I would write about what I've gone through so that fans could better understand her struggles ~ I was so honored and touched!

****Update 5/21/2014:** Unfortunately, as it turns out, I did not have Lyme disease, although I do have different debilitating auto-immune disease. I have Rheumatoid Disease (aka Rheumatoid Arthritis) and have likely had it since I was fairly young (aka Juvenile RA). Since beginning IV med treatments, I have had an improved quality of life (whereas prior I had no quality of life), but it was too far along to be 'cured' (there is hope to be 'cured' or put into remission within the first two years of the disease's appearance). I've been at and will continue to be at the disease/symptom management stage. It's incurable, chronic and progressive. It's WAY more than just arthritis - it affects my nerves, kidneys (5 surgeries to date in less than 10 years), my heart (which has damage due to an infection that caused a high fever which caused an alarming spike in my heart rate 4 years ago), my eye sight, my motor skills, leaves me at higher risk for heart attack, stroke and cancers vs healthy folks and leaves me open to picking up bacterial and viral infections at the drop of a dime - all in addition to/on top of chronic pain, swelling and fatigue.

Paula says

self-pitying, self-destructive characters.

Cheri says

Seriously not my cup of tea. Cutsey language, sentimentality run amok, and a deep sense of nostalgia for times that, well, I couldn't possibly feel nostalgic for. I'm not sure how an abusive mother is supposed to be funny or colorful, nor how transferring your disfunction onto you children is to be held up like a badge of honor. Maybe I needed to have crazy parents to understand it.

Traci says

When I was pregnant with my oldest child, a girl, I had a dream. In my dream, I was in the hospital, postpartum, holding not the one child I knew that I had been pregnant with . . . but two children. Both girls. One of my baby girls was quiet, observant, peaceful. She had big, open eyes that reflected her big, open heart. The other child was physically larger than the other baby and it's complete opposite. Ugly, angry, needy. I sat there holding both babies in their swaddling clothes while the one cried and demanded and writhed . . . and the other lay in my arms quietly observing . . . simply taking it all in. I had what has now become the all-too-familiar feeling of being in over my head - lost even before I had begun. And then, in my dream, my own mother walks into the room with the also all-too-familiar glower she has reserved for me for as far back as I can remember. The look that says "You don't deserve this".

I've never forgotten that dream and until recently, couldn't figure it out. Years later, I do in fact have two daughters and a son . . . born not in that order. My two daughters are almost a decade apart in age the older (bigger) one is definately NOT the noisy, demanding one. No . . . she's definately the open, loving one. (An old soul if ever there was one.)

What does any of this b.s about my dream have to do with Divine Secrets?

Basically, everything.

I have since sorted out this dream . . . my oldest daughter is now 17. A young woman. Just three years younger than I was when I carried her in my womb and dreamt of her and my mother and that demanding other child that needed so damn much all the time.

In the first few pages of Divine Secrets, you are plunged into the life of an interesting, lively young woman and her relationship with her mother. All the bad behavior, jealousy, rage, and hidden wounds.

When I read this book in 2002, I cried because I got that woman's rage towards her mother. I was that woman.

Now I find as my own daughter enters adulthood . . . I identify with the pain of that mother.

By the way, that demanding baby in my dream was me and frankly, that demanding baby in my dream is really a lot of us mothers to some degree or another. Raising our own daughters while trying to finish the job of raising ourselves where our mothers might have failed. Obviously, that analogy doesn't apply to everyone . . . but it's the link between that dream of mine and the thread of understanding that evolves in this book that are the same.

Kristy Trauzzi says

Has anyone else read this book and thought it sucked? I was very disappointed in it. I started off excited to read this book and that's where that enthusiasm left me.

To start - Wow religious! There are some books that make me go - hmm you're religious - I get your sense of peace from it. Or I can also read it and go ok you are one of the crazy religious people that are scary. This book was just like STOP TALKING ABOUT RELIGION!!! No one practiced what was preached and so I don't really understand the necessity of it. And they did a lot of "praying".

Now I'm not going to go into every detail, as this review would be incredibly long and no one would read it. However . . .

Nothing was resolved, nothing was solved, nothing remarkable happened, all in all, nothing! This girl randomly decides she can't marry her boyfriend because of her mother. Which - clearly this love/hate between mom and daughter is not something new. Way to be a bitch about it and just leave good man standing there. Nice. Very nice.

Then she goes making demands on her mom. Who hasn't really been there throughout her life, who hasn't always been the nicest to her, and who has disowned her because of a dumb newspaper article. And the mom - for some random reason - was like here! have this book! but that's all I'm giving you! Good thing this won't help you in any sort of way!

So then we get random stories of the mother and her depression and addiction, but still nothing is resolved. There is no epiphany in the mothers thoughts. No real regret shown to her daughter. And then it just abruptly ends with - in my opinion - many unanswered questions. And when her daughter does have more questions - it's not the mom who comes - it's her friends.

And then randomly - the daughter just forgives her mom - decides to get married again - and life is wonderful. WHAT!? Where the hell did that come from!? And her mom was kinda a bitch towards her on the phone. Something along the lines of I'm not sure if I will welcome you to come home. But - alas - of course she does!

What absolute garbage! I am so angry I wasted time on this book.

Does anyone have a different opinion? I would love to be proven wrong?

Jennifer says

I'm having a hard time deciding if I liked this book or not. On the surface, not so much. About 30 pages in, I wasn't sure if I was going to make it through, or if I was going to go insane if I saw the word "Ya-Ya" one more time.

There were some things that I liked about it. Friendship that endures, closer than blood. Knowing there's always someone there in your corner, and they've been there your whole life. Daughters learning that Mom had a life before she became a Mother, and has a separate identity apart from "Mom."

I think my main problem was that I thought the Ya-Yas were all a bunch of spoiled brats that we're supposed to love just because we're told to. Oh, they're so fabulous, it's okay that they desecrate a religious icon that means a lot to Vivi's mother! It's okay that they strip down naked and go swimming in the town's water supply! So the message seems to be that you can get away with whatever the hell you want, as long as you act like it's your birthright to be so obnoxious.

Meanwhile Sidda (daughter of Vivi, one of the Ya-Yas) pretty much seem to do nothing but page through the old scrapbook (the "Divine Secrets" of the title), avoid her fiance, and Think Deep Thoughts as she walks around the woods, or wherever the hell she is. She doesn't really seem to have much identity of her own, she just exists so there can be a Happy Ending, that we all knew was coming anyway.

The main conflict between Sidda and her mother seems to be that Vivi beat the holy hell out of her kids, and she's mad that Sidda is now famous enough to be interviewed for the New York Times and she told them about it. So Vivi's mad that...the truth was told.

So. I guess I'm glad I read it. I'm also glad I only paid half-price for it at the used bookstore.

Erika says

This book may be entertaining for someone who likes *gossip* so much, because here you can get to know all the juicy events that happened in the youth and life of four women who were best friends and thought they were absolutely amazing and called themselves the Ya-Yas.

So, this story starts when a *Petite Ya-Ya*, that's how the Ya-Yas called their daughters, (not so petite anymore) let escape in an interview with the New York Times that her mother, the awesome Vivi, used to hit her. Vivi becomes so mad at her, because this piece of dirty laundry has affected her reputation so much, and stops talking to her. Now her daughter is working at the theater and for some reason (i don't really remember) she asks her mother to help the theater, not her, with a book with many pictures and anecdotes and stuff from her past and the Ya-Yas', which she guards jealously. So her mother accepts, and with this book called the divine secrets, let's her enter in the past and adventures she had with the Ya-Yas since they were 8 years old.

These ladies thought of themselves like divas from a very little age, and now that they were old, it was no different. They sometimes use some words in French to feel they are very nice and create their own words

like something is Ya-Ya if it's nice and cool, or something is Ya-Ya-No if it's not. So, occasionally they'll say things like "That's *très* Ya-Ya-No" or "Let's go, *S'il vous plaît*". French is not a language i particularly like, so maybe you can see my annoyance with this aspect.

The rest of the book continued to tell stories of the pictures and things she was seeing in the scrap book, and it contained a ton of letters she and her mother kept writing to each other back and forth. So, if you really feel intrigued enough to know all of the adventures and things the Ya-Yas went through, then maybe it is an ok book for you. But, for me, **I don't care**. I started reading this with high hopes that maybe it would be interesting, that it could surprise me, until those hopes started to fade away and left me feeling with no desire to carry on in the least. Something like this, see:

I don't fucking care what these "fabulous" women did, and the fun they had, and how they were dressed, and how they did their hair or anything. So i didn't bother to finish it.

I picked this book to read along with someone in a buddy read, so i was trying to force myself to finish it, but then i realize, what is the point in that? i read enough of the book to understand i don't care for it, and there are plenty of other books i want to read to waste my time reading something i am not enjoying. So, i just skimmed through the book until the end to give me a basic idea of everything that followed... **None of my interest.**

I didn't hate it, though. This isn't a book i absolutely despise or anything. It's just a story i didn't find any interest on.
