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The Best Revenge: Short Stories (Hardscrabble Books-Fiction of New England)

Rebecca Rule

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The Best Revenge: Short Stories (Hardscrabble Books-Fiction of New England) Rebecca Rule
In nineteen finely honed, deftly realized short stories, Rebecca Rule crafts with gentle wit and striking clarity a conglomeration of sometimes ragtag but always appealing small-town denizens, each of whom squares off against a nemesis of a singular sort. With an eye for the signature detail, an ear for the rhythms of regional speech, and a strong feel for the nuances of rural culture, Rule maintains a fine balance between humor and pathos that prompted National Book Award winner Thomas Williams to comment, "Cold honesty gleams from every careful sentence."

Twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize, Rule captures the essence of small-town New England life as she paints with a sure hand the fallings-out and friendships, the trials and triumphs of the New England microcosm. In "Yankee Curse," elderly Miranda knits placidly at a town meeting, pondering an amazing string of unspoken invective against an enemy but stopping short at "a curse she would never levy, not even on Mort Wallace: to live too long." In "Minna Runs for Selectman," a middle-aged woman's battlefield is "the strange, incestuous politics of this eccentric little town" but her real opponent is her own insecurity. In "Jim's Boat" a young couple wages a silent struggle over priorities in their marriage; in "Fishing with George" a small girl worries that "there's a hole in our family that gets bigger every time" her parents argue; and in the title story a mother copes with a hated neighbor through a sculpture that "makes her laugh the kind of laugh that doesn't end in a sob." Children and grandmothers, trappers and college professors, lifetime Yankees or transplanted Flatlanders: each finds the truth in Rule's observation that "revenge takes many forms -- some of which can heal."

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