



Against My Will

Benjamin H. Berkley

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Rose is a young girl and has just been liberated from a Nazi death camp. As she is convalescing in the hospital, a nurse hands her a journal and suggests that she records her experience before she forgets. Rose says that she will "never forget." 70 years later, her grand -daughter Danielle discovers the journal entries. Danielle is struggling in an abusive relationship. And the two lives intersect. This is the story of survival, self- discovery, justice, and ultimately about love.

Against My Will Details

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Author : Benjamin H. Berkley

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From Reader Review Against My Will for online ebook

Lori L (She Treads Softly) says

Against My Will by Benjamin Berkley is a novel with a message. Danielle Landau, a well educated but somewhat naive 29 year-old Jewish woman, is set up by her father and a matchmaker to meet and date Jacob Liebowitz. While she is more concerned with getting the results from taking the bar exam and starting her law career, Jacob is trying to push her into taking their relationship more seriously than she originally thought it should be taken. After they marry, Danielle quickly realizes what a horrible mistake it was to marry this man who must always be in control and has now become abusive. She puts up with the abuse, trying to be a good Jewish wife, until it finally becomes too much for her to tolerate any more and she talks to her grandmother, who tells Danielle to flee.

While we follow Danielle's story we also read diary entries from Rose, Danielle's grandmother. Rose lived in Austria in WWII and was sent to the Mauthausen Concentration Camp. She was chosen to work in the Commandant's kitchen, which resulted in her survival, but at a cost.

I must admit that as written, the character of Danielle's father was supremely annoying to me. All of the perfect catch talk and focus on Danielle's age as a reason she should marry someone right away just irritated me. And Danielle started off seemingly a woman with self confidence but then she let others push her into this marriage. Ugh. I understand people-pleasers like to follow the rules, including sometimes others wishes, but this seemed over the top for her to marry a man she really didn't seem to even like all that much. Additionally, I quickly became weary of all the Yiddish. It also made me feel disconnected to the novel. A little less might have improved my reception of the story.

However, the main point of this novel is the message delivered through the story. Danielle eventually learns that no woman is ever her husband's property and that she is not required to do anything against her will or tolerate his abuse. It's an important message and one that you would think women would all understand today, but, alas, as I know all too well, women still fall into the trap of tolerating many forms of abuse because they are married or have religious beliefs that discourage divorce. Today, though, the vast majority of woman are not trapped, as Rose was, in their abusive environments with no means of escape.

Recommended for the message

Disclosure: I received an advanced reading copy of this book from the author and Premier Virtual Author Book Tours for review purposes.

Beverly says

My thoughts:

I wasn't sure what to expect from this story; a story written by a man about control, love, self-discovery and survival. I was pleased by the story that unfolded on the pages as I turned them. I was impressed with the author's desire to write a story about a topic that is somewhat taboo and his ability to write such a story with such a profound understanding.

I understand the desire to do what you feel your parent(s) want and what "seems" like the right thing for your life. So I was not surprised by the fact that Danielle gets married, even with the reservations that she had.

It took me a bit to get the nature of the interspersed diary entries and put together that they belonged to her grandmother. I would have liked a bit more clarification about time frames in the diary, I felt that I was missing out on the rest of the story. It seemed as if there should have been something about getting out of the hospital and moving on with her life. That being said, the similarities in the situations was an interesting twist.

I loved the insight about love that Rose gives and how that comes through as Danielle moves on with her life. I liked that she was able to find closure to her own situation through the court case that she takes.

The relationship between Cliff and his job and Danielle and her grandmother's past is a great addition and truly makes the story. That the author introduces them on her flight from her present and then re-introduces Cliff into her future by helping her sort out the past is brilliant.

The story is filled with emotion, growth, courage and the insurmountable ability of the spirit to survive. My favorite part of the entire book is when Danielle gets to meet Irene and her phrase, "Save one life, seed a generation." In her saving Rose, one life, she seeded many a generation to come.

Inspiring and insightful, this was a wonderful story.

Ruth Hill says

So how do you rate a book that almost mirrors your life? Okay, not really, but trust me, there are similarities--I will get to that. Let's get the "negatives" out of the way. There is some profanity in the book, and the sex scenes are rather descriptive. The profanity wasn't too prevalent, and the sex scenes were necessary--due to the entire message of the book. But do approach this book with the knowledge that this is an adult book.

The cover alone is hauntingly beautiful. Even my students today found it pretty and commented on it. And my response was that I agreed, but it was sad. And it is. I had no idea until I read this book that marital rape was even considered a crime. I guess that is a piece of information that I will tuck away for a later time.

As I read about Danielle's marriage, I understood. It was hard to read. I was married for ten years to a controlling husband, and I divorced him before he became violent. Let me blunt here. He raped me once, and I let it happen. I remember it very clearly even to this date. I submitted so that I could go see a movie--talk about feeling like a prostitute. And I remained in the marriage for several years after that and even brought my beautiful daughter into the world. I was glad that my ex was nicer than Jacob, but there were still enough similarities that portions of the book were rather emotionally charged for me.

This book is expertly written, and it is hard to believe that it is written by a man. I am always amazed when men can create convincing female protagonists in books, and even in first person! This is Benjamin Berkley's first novel, but I hope it won't be his last. I think I need to look up his non-fiction based on this book alone. It is clear that he is quite an expert on this topic.

I found it absolutely genius on the author's part to tie a Holocaust survivor's story to the current story of the book. This added just the right amount of intrigue, and of course, the ending of the book is quite powerful in

this "side story." I would have even liked this portion of the book to be developed in more detail.

I believe that any woman who feels they can handle the subject and content of this book should read this book. I can also recommend it to men, too, as it is not some "chick book." Oh, and by the way, there is some romance in this book--for all those romance lovers out there!

I was sent a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review. I was not financially compensated, and all opinions are 100 percent mine.

Laurel-Rain says

Description of Against My Will:

Publisher: Frederick Fell Publishers, Inc., September 1, 2012

Category: Fiction- Relationships, Abuse, Romance, Holocaust, Suspense

Tour Dates: October, 2012

Available in: Print and PDF, 247 pages

Against My Will is the life changing novel about Danielle, a victim of marital abuse, who finds the strength to leave her husband and pursue a career in law.

At 29, Danielle Landau has a bright future ahead. She has finished law school and is looking forward to her career. But marriage is not on the horizon, and her father is concerned. He takes matters into his own hands and enlists the help of a marriage broker to introduce Danielle to Jacob Leibowitz.

Her father is obviously impressed with Jacob, so, setting aside her own instincts and the red flags that pop up everywhere, Danielle begins to date him. Almost as if she has given up her own desires and ignored her instincts, she eventually agrees to marry him.

Tradition is very important to Danielle, which is a big part of why she seems to ignore her own feelings. And there are certain appealing aspects to beginning a life in her own home.

Danielle's close relationship with her beloved Nana helps save her in the end when everything spirals downward in the marriage.

The story unfolds slowly in the beginning, interspersed with diary entries of a young woman imprisoned by the Nazis. We soon begin to see a connection between the modern day victim and the one from years ago.

By the time Danielle has finally escaped the violence of her marriage to begin again, she chooses LA, where a close friend lives. And when her career begins again there, we see her come into her own, striding ahead with confidence, almost as if the past has finally eluded her. There are moments, however, as she is trying a spousal abuse case, when it all comes flooding back.

I rooted for the character of Danielle and found Jacob so repugnant that it was hard to believe that this independent (albeit bound by tradition) woman would agree to spend more than a moment with him. The story picked up for me with a new love Danielle discovers on the way to reclaiming her life.

Some additional editing would have served *Against My Will*, as I was distracted by occasional grammatical errors. But the primary story, especially toward the end, held my interest and I enjoyed how everything came together for Danielle. 3.5 stars.

Cynthia Mcarthur says

I was conned into reading this book by being told that it was historical fiction. It is not. It is self-help fiction. *shudder*

In a 270-something page book, there are 21 pages of historical flashback.

I am all for women's rights, blah blah blah...but I just wanted to kick the "heroine" of this story in her pudgy butt for her lack of will. You can't go AGAINST something a person doesn't have.

She jumped from daddy, to abusive husband to second husband who made everything all better. *eye roll* Her grandmother would have been an interesting character, and historical, but her character was an under-developed shadow here.

Didn't like it. My apologies to anyone who cares.

Up All Night Book Addict says

I didn't dislike or necessarily like this book. Mr. Berkley could have done so much more with this story. He drug out unimportant parts of the story, and did not go deeper into the parts that could have made the book so much more interesting. The story-line was good, but the delivery was not as good as it could have been. There are many typos, incomplete sentences and poor formatting that I hope are fixed before another round of books are printed.

Teena in Toronto says

There are two stories in this book. Rose is a Jew and her family had been taken to a concentration camp during World War II. She is eventually saved but never sees her family again. To help her heal, a nurse suggest she record her experiences, which includes being raped, in a journal.

The second story happens almost than seventy years later with her granddaughter, Danielle. Danielle is hitting thirty, still living home with her father and has just passed the bar exam. Her father arranges for a matchmaker to introduce her to Jacob. Wanting to please her father, she quickly marries Jacob who turns out to be an A-hole. He's cold, controlling verbally abusive and repeatedly rapes Danielle since he feels she is his wife and his property and he wants a family. With the help of Nana Rose, Danielle escapes and makes a new life for herself.

Despite the subject matter, I really enjoyed this book. I liked the writing style and found it was well-paced.

I felt like smacking Danielle for giving in to the pressure of marrying Jacob even though she knew she didn't want to. But she hoped things would have gotten better but they never did. Good for her for eventually

getting out! Despite all that she'd been through, Nana Rose is cute and obviously loves her family. I liked her theory of giving things away while the hands are warm.

This is a sad but happy book and one that I would recommend.

Blog review post: <http://www.teenaintoronto.com/2013/02...>

Rebecca Graf says

A story of strength, courage, determination, and will is what you will find in Benjamin Berkley's *Against My Will*. In this story a young Jewish woman is guilted by her father to be respectful and traditional as he pushes a nice man toward her. Despite the lack of attraction and the hints she gets that something is not quite right, she gives into the pressure around her and marries the man. From the day of her wedding, she discovers she has married a cold monster who will do anything include raping his wife to prove who is more superior. She struggles with wanting to respect her father, obey her husband, and still not lose sight of who she is.

This is a very emotional read with well-developed characters. You'll be there wanting to comfort Danielle at her wedding and through the many trials she faces. You'll also want to strangle those that love her but just can't see the pain she is in. You'll cheer when she takes a stand and risks it all. By the end of the book I was sobbing.

The best part of it all was the excerpts from a diary that can be found after every other chapter or so. There are from Danielle's grandmother from when she was rescued from a concentration camp. You read how the courage to stand against those that oppress and declare, "Not Against My Will", kept them alive.

Mr. Berkley has done an excellent job of writing from an abused woman's perspective. I was truly amazed at the results.

I think you can see in what I have just written that this book contains some violence. There are several rape scenes, verbal abuse scenes, and some graphic descriptions of sexual encounters as Danielle and her grandmother face horror in each of their lives. Yet, this is a story of hope that makes you smile as you cry.

There were some editing issues. They were minor but noticeable. Don't let that stop you from reading it, please. It is too good of a read.

Note: This book was provided as part of a book tour with no expectation of a positive review.

Shoshanah says

Within the pages of this book we meet Danielle, a woman who naively walks into a marriage that very quickly becomes abusive (although it didn't seem that amazing before marriage either). We're also introduced to Danielle's grandmother Rose, and hear her story of how she survived the Holocaust as a young girl in Austria.

I really enjoyed getting to see Danielle grow as a character. In the first few chapters she comes off as so

naive (in some ways unrealistically so), but by the end she isn't just sticking up for herself, but others as well. And I really enjoyed Rose's chapters which were interwoven through the modern story. Although since they were only there for the first third, I wish Rose's story could have been extended.

I've always read reviews saying the author writes well, and not really understand what they meant. I think maybe it means I'm used to reading, and expect good writing. Also that I didn't have a comparison. Well, this provided that reference for me. All of the dialogue, just didn't work for me. It just seems too clinical and unrealistic, for example I've never heard someone casually say, "I am sorry," or "I am fine," but those phrases or ones similar to them were used over and over. And unfortunately the more I got frustrated with it, the more likely I was to notice them.

I do think this book had potential, and while I do like the basic outline, overall I wasn't a fan of this. But even though I wasn't necessarily enjoying myself I didn't have a hard time actually reading it. There is a good message behind this book, so I can still appreciate that message and do think I benefited from reading this.

Disclosure: I was provided this book through Virtual Author Book Tours. All opinions expressed are my own.

Lynelle Clark says

The book begins and ends with a wedding. But in between the two ceremonies lives were lived filled with trails, growth and maturity.

I truly enjoyed this book as it captivated you and held your attention through out the struggles of two women as well as several others. Mixed together to give you a broad perspective of the issue at hand. So sincere and heart warming as you get to know them in their daily lives. Filled with love and loving care for every one around them.

Rose and Danielle, grandmother and granddaughter sharing similar experiences but under different times.

Danielle is a young Jewish woman, just passed the Bar exam of New York. Standing on her own legs but still under the thump of her father who thought he knew best. Forcing her into marriage with Jacob, a man she never loved. Raping her at the end and she left for Los Angeles. Rebuilding her life one day at a time.

Rose which as a young girl of six ended up in the concentration camp in Austria, separated from her family and raped by the commandant of the camp. Irene a young woman who took her under her wing but at the end was parted when her role in feeding the Jewish people was discovered. Parting them for life but never out of mind.

Irene's impact into Rose life vibrating throughout her life time pouring over Danielle's live in a continuous thread.

Leaving us with two quotes and a song I felt to add in my review.

"Save a life. Seed a generation"

"Give while your hands are warm"

The story is set in three parts so that you could get a clear picture of every woman involved as time passed. Never boring you with too much information as told in a continuous flowing story. Well written with a important message until the end. Filled with compassion and a sincere heart, not over dramatize it that it fills you with bitterness, but rather with empathy for all characters involved.

The story begins with Danielle, a strong woman that could take care of herself but at the end had to bow her knee at her father's wants, following traditions but at the end she had to take the ultimate step and walk away from an emotional abusive marriage that ends with a rape. Getting on a train that would set her life in a new direction and meeting Cliff Warner. Compassionate and much in love with Danielle.

As she grow through her To do List we see how she made way for herself, making the decisions to change everything about her in a good way. Living on her own, getting a pet, her own battles against weight issues and falling in love with this sweet man, Cliff.

Her healing so swift that when Julia Ribbons marital rape file was handed over to her, she could handle it with tenacity as she fight for this woman that was willing to go through all the public scrutiny and a counselor steam rolling over Danielle standing up for what is right and win the case. The detailed court case taking you into the heart of the courtroom to experience the anguish and sweet victory.

But what stood out the most was the meeting with Irene at the age of 100 saying thank you for her unselfish attempts to save her Nana, receiving the biggest gift that was a silver thread throughout this wonderful book.

A truly heart felt book I can recommend to all Woman's Fiction Readers.

Kelly (Belle of the Literati) says

*"Save one life,
seed a generation."*

-Benjamin Berkley, Against My Will

Ok, so after reading the description of this novel I was immediately intrigued. Not only am I trying to read more adult fiction but this book also has a historical fiction element to it. Really excited! The story mainly focuses on Danielle and the relationship she has with her husband Jacob. She is in a bad spot. She enters into this marriage mostly by obligation (never a good start), she doesn't love him, and to top it off he is abusive. I have never read a book about marital rape or even really discussed the topic at all, but this book explores the emotional and legal aspects of this heinous crime. Interspersed in Danielle's journey are diary entries of her grandmother Nana of when she was in a concentration camp and her recovery in the hospital afterward.

The flashbacks were really well done. Small, little doses of her grandmother's journey that seemed to parallel so well with the struggles that Danielle was going through. As interesting as these were, I really felt more invested in Danielle's story. Her struggle, her hopelessness, her strength in trying to make the best of a situation. Her character was fantastic. While I disagree with how she even let herself end up in this marriage, her actions afterward make up for it. She does not back down, she is not a pushover. She fights. She stands up to her husband but he himself is also a force to be reckoned with. She can only do so much. And when it

does go too far, she doesn't skirt around the situation. She doesn't make excuses for him or contemplate her next move, she hits it head-on. LOVE this!

Her journey from this point is beautiful. She blossoms in a dark situation where so many would succumb to the dark. She is so courageous not only for herself but for others. The storyline at the end of the book is perfect and completely cathartic for her. I cannot tell you exactly what happens because I will not ruin any plot points. I have never read a book like this before and I am so glad I had the opportunity to read this. It is a quick read. The plot continues to move along nicely and the arc of the story goes places I never thought it would. I thought this story would be solely about one thing and it ends up being about so much more.

The strength of the characters in this book, both Danielle and Nana, are just incredible. These are two strongly written characters with a point of view and strong convictions. It was so nice to read about strong and independent women both in this day and age as well as in the past. I really just loved the back and forth of the two women's journeys.

Tia Bach says

Rating: 3.5 stars

On the surface, Danielle Landau has it together: she just recently passed the New York bar exam and is about to marry a guy her family likes. The problem, she's not in love. She looks past all the warning signs about Jacob, her new husband, in the hopes that things will get better. They don't. One evening, Jacob's controlling behavior escalates and pushes past what Danielle can overlook.

Thanks to the support of her Nana, who has been through a life most of us can't fathom, Danielle flees to California and starts over. There she begins to heal, passing the California bar exam and joining the District Attorney's office. When she becomes involved with a client with a similar situation, Danielle finds the courage and strength to get justice for her client and a sense of closure for herself.

Along the way, she meets Cliff. He brings the element she wasn't sure she'd ever find, a real and protective love. One she hadn't known since losing her Nana.

Although the story is told from Danielle's point of view, it's interlaced with diary entries from her Nana detailing the horrors of World War II. The author effectively switches back and forth, using both women to show the "story of survival, self-discovery, justice, and ultimately about love."

But because I was reading Danielle's story alongside Nana's, it was even harder to accept Danielle's fate. Today, women have so much more power to avoid situations like Jacob. The warning signs weren't small. In fact, they were glaring. I couldn't help but compare Nana's situation, where she had no power and faced horrific world events, with Danielle's situation, where she should have. I found myself aggravated with Danielle until she left. Then I saw the strength of her character, and I felt invested as a reader. By the end, I was a fan.

I commend the author for taking on very delicate subjects and not shying away from the horrors associated with them. The novel would benefit from better editing, but the story is powerful. I recommend it for readers who appreciate a raw and honest journey of strength and endurance.

Note: I received a complimentary copy for review purposes. A positive review was not requested or guaranteed; the opinions expressed are my own.

Melinda says

My thoughts on this book can be best summed like this: I thought this was a good rough draft of a novel. While I enjoyed the plot, I really felt that this book needed more work. Danielle's experiences and the holocaust storylines were every fully or effectively intertwined. There are a number of diary entries from the holocaust at the beginning of the book, and then they just disappeared.

I also felt that the character developments could have been improved. Danielle is the most developed character, but I could still never really figure out why she would agree to marry Jacob and then continue to stay with him. Jacob, on the other hand, was so repulsive from his first appearance that I couldn't figure out why Danielle would even give him a second glance, despite what her father thought.

There were also some glaring inconsistencies and errors in this book. For example, in one section the 23rd Psalm is referred to as the 29th Psalm. Had it been any other psalm, I think most people wouldn't notice it. However, the 23rd Psalm is the most well-known of the psalms and I believe anyone would have picked that one out. Another example occurs later in the book. Danielle says that she'll receive her bar results the Friday before Thanksgiving. She receives her results, a noticeable amount of time (and pages past) and then it is Thanksgiving. I had to go back in the pages to make sure I read it correctly.

Finally, and this is not really a fault of the author or the story, but there were glaring type-setting and formatting errors on the pages of the book. As a reader I found it very distracting to have to wade through all that.

I really feel that, with some re-writing and a fair amount of editing, *Against My Will*, could be a very successful novel. As it is now, however, it feels unfinished.

Jim says

Danielle and Jacob's marriage wasn't exactly a match made in heaven, but Danielle's beloved father thought the world of Jacob, and she wasn't getting any younger, so marrying seemed like the thing to do. In her worst nightmares, however, Danielle never dreamed that things could go bad so quickly. Jacob was an arrogant control freak who treated her as chattel property. Danielle's initial disillusionment with Jacob turned into despair, then a kind of gloomy acceptance until one brutal act forces her to take desperate measures to escape to regain her freedom and self-respect.

Danielle's story would have been fascinating enough on its own, but adding to the suspense and horror was the parallel story of her grandmother Rose's struggles to survive the horrors of a German concentration camp more than half a century earlier. Though separated by time and circumstance, their stories were remarkably similar in some ways.

Author Benjamin Berkley has written a superb novel that examines the issue of spousal abuse and, in a

broader sense, man's inhumanity. It was painful to see Danielle sinking into despondency as her marriage unraveled, but afterward, it was equally uplifting to see her taking charge of her destiny to forge a new, better life for herself. As a prosecuting attorney, her biggest case was one that would force her to face her troubled past and use her own pent-up anger to win justice for another abused woman.

As captivating as the story is, the finely-drawn characters are what make the book so memorable. Danielle Landau is an intelligent, independent thirtyish young lady who's been raised by her loving father and grandmother since her mother's death when Danielle was still a toddler. Her dad meant well, but his frustration at seeing his only daughter becoming an old maid made him desperate to find her a husband - any husband. Rose, her grandmother, had survived the Mauthausen concentration camp in World War II, and she carried the secrets of her time there to her grave. The two romantic interests in Danielle's life - Jacob and Clifford, are as opposite as night and day. Jacob, who seemed to be a decent enough fellow, did a Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde change as soon as the wedding was over. Clifford, however, was just the opposite - a loving, sensitive man who was searching for his perfect soul mate.

The most uplifting and poignant moment of the story came as Danielle's and Rose's lives came full circle to bring a measure of closure to both of their ordeals.

Note: Spousal rape is an act that has only recently been recognized as a crime in all fifty states. Because of the traditional belief that a husband had an inherent right to demand sexual relations with his wife, prosecuting these cases has been very difficult, not to mention the reluctance of many abused women to testify in court and be forced to reveal the intimate details of the incident. In the novel are two dramatic incidents of spousal rape that are described very graphically, including the shattering effects on the victims' well-being and self-esteem.

Kimberly says

Talk about a dramatic read. I wasn't expecting Benjamin Berkley's fictional debut to be such a raw, dramatic emotionally intense read but it was and it was a pleasant surprise. The book is told through the eyes two women from the same family told decades apart but their stories intersect when Danielle receives her grandmother's journal and it becomes the driving force behind Danielle's decisions throughout the book.

The book, like I said before is very dramatic. It is emotionally charged and the situations as well as the language (while the language is not extreme) is definitely an adult novel due to the nature of some of the scenes including a rape scene (not glorified). I was taken aback by the tone the author set in the novel but ultimately it intrigued me and had me reading late into the night.

Danielle's story of being married to a cold hearted, manipulative, narcissistic, man (and I use the term very loosely) was hard to read but Danielle was a really strong and convincing character. The reason I mention that is because a lot of the time when I come across a male author they have trouble writing a female character. Mr. Berkley honestly had no trouble with his characterization of Danielle or any of the other characters in my honest opinion. He made them very real and the story as horrible as the events in it were had a ring of truth to it in a way that you can believe the events happening in the novel are probably happening to some poor woman like Danielle.

I was also surprised that the author chose to write this story. I'm not complaining but I found that Mr. Berkley's take on such a touchy subject was written as tastefully and with great insight into his characters as

well as his plot. To be honest this is probably one of the best adult fiction novels I've read in the past year or so because of the authors skill.

I highly recommend this novel to everyone who loves fiction, especially dramatic fiction that makes you think about some hard issues while making you want to read on and on until you get to the end and feel a little shaken up by what you've read.

*I received a free copy in exchange for my free and honest review. I was not compensated in any way and all thoughts and opinions expressed therein are my own.
