

## Book Reviews

This month we feature book reviews by *Better Reading*

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### ***The Favour* by Rebecca Freeborn**

**‘There was a smug satisfaction in the knowledge that her friend’s picture-perfect life was tainted by a dirty secret. Quinn may be far from perfect, but she’d always have that over Hannah.’**

Old friends Hannah and Quinn have grown apart over the years as their lives take them in opposite directions. Hannah cares for her three young children, while her career remains on hold, meanwhile Quinn has a successful job in advertising, where she works hard and plays harder. But their friendship hangs together because of a terrible secret they share from their university days – a debt Hannah owes Quinn that they can never discuss.

Quinn has always kept her professional and personal lives separate, but these worlds collide when a colleague assaults her. As her life starts falling apart, Quinn decides to take revenge on her attacker – and she expects her old friend Hannah to help. But when things begin to unravel, Hannah must decide how much she’s willing to risk in order to return the favour.

In our Q&A with Rebecca Freeborn she writes that it wasn’t until she reached her forties that she began to “realise the lie society has sold us that the defining relationship of our lives should be romantic love”. Instead, Freeborn argues that female friendship is far more important. And this is certainly evident in *The Favour* through Freeborn’s portrayal of Hannah and Quinn. The relationship between these two characters is the driving force of the novel, and through them Freeborn is able to celebrate the joys and complexities of female friendship. While these two women lead very different lives, and share very different values, their friendship is based on love and loyalty, and it was so refreshing to see such an honest and poignant portrayal of female friendship here.

The novel also explores some of the darker issues that affect women, including rape culture and toxic masculinity in the workplace. Through her portrayal of Quinn’s assault, Freeborn asks some tough questions about victim blaming and who is deserving of justice. While this made for some uncomfortable (and enraged) reading, it was also extremely timely given Brittany Higgin’s rape allegations and the women’s marches in Australia recently.

Compelling, insightful and beautifully written, *The Favour* is a gripping story that examines the darker side of friendship, power and loyalty. I highly recommend this.