

9/1/22

# A joint memoir of adoption, loss, and love

## "Uncertain Fruit: A Memoir of Infertility, Loss, and Love"

Rebecca Majoya and Sallyann Majoya, Rootstock Publications, 2022.

In a jointly-told memoir, Rebecca and Sallyann Majoya tell the sad tale of the loss of their beloved adopted baby in 2014. Their story, narrated in chapters that alternate between their voices and points of view, focuses on the adoption, but it is not sequentially organized (helpfully, they have headed each chapter with a date). The technique allows readers to construct a picture of the couple's 14 years together in a close, blended family with Rebecca's two sons. But because the chapters about the adoption are so intense, the painful chronicle of infertility that provides context of the baby's loss emerges only gradually.

The fortunate people who have not experienced infertility, directly or indirectly, tend to assume it's

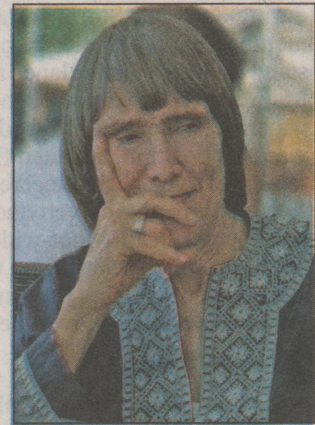
just a matter of patience. "Uncertain Fruit" destroys this assumption in a few short chapters that recount the couple's complicated and grittily determined efforts to have a baby. The problem begins after Rebecca and Sallyann have been together for three years, when Rebecca, whose two sons have led both women to assume that she could conceive and carry a third child, develops a condition which requires an emergency hysterectomy. Once Rebecca recovers, Sallyann, some 10 years younger than her partner, visits the doctor who had performed the hysterectomy, only to be told that she isn't ovulating, and so can't conceive a baby "without intervention." He recommends a fertility specialist, and she begins consultations with hope of success. Month after month, after the two women select sperm donors, Sallyann visits doctors (a 140-mile drive each way, sometimes twice in a week, to select the optimum time for implanta-

tion). Month after month, she performs home pregnancy tests that prove the effort has been futile. "Next month," the couple say hopefully, but as the months multiply into eight years, the cumulative failures become, as Sallyann puts it, "an epic failure to breed."

And then, as the loving couple approach middle age, with one son in college and one nearly there, a high school counselor tells them about a 17-year-old high school girl who was raped at a party and is going to have a baby boy in two weeks. She doesn't want the baby. Would they like him? In a flurry of long-postponed hope, Sallyann and Rebecca meet the girl (Delilah), her boyfriend (Corey—who is not the father), and Delilah's mother, who is by far the most difficult person in the arrangement. Lawyers are hired. Sallyann and Rebecca witness the birth and are immediately shown to a room where they can bond with the baby. They name him Sage, and they take him home to all the baby paraphernalia they have assembled in 10 days. The adoption isn't yet sanctioned legally, but that doesn't seem to matter ... until it does.

Within weeks of losing Sage, Sallyann and Rebecca move to Florida. "Sometimes life is so devastating that running away from home is the best option. So we are running." Importantly, after suffering

a traumatic loss of a child that often makes couples fly apart, they run together. As the conclusion makes clear, they also come back north together, four years later. Their love has endured, so while every word in this moving memoir witnesses their continuing pain, they have gone on. Readers who have finished the memoir may well find themselves thinking of Sage (now 8), and wondering what has happened to him. Like Sallyann and Rebecca, they can only wonder.



### One-Minute Book Reviews

Laura Stevenson

