



## GOOD RIDDANCE

by Elinor Lipman

---

### Summary:

*In a delightful new romantic comedy from Elinor Lipman, one woman's trash becomes another woman's treasure, with deliriously entertaining results.*

Daphne Maritch doesn't quite know what to make of the heavily annotated high school yearbook she inherits from her mother, who held this relic dear—*too dear*.

The late June Winter Maritch was the teacher to whom the class of '68 had dedicated its yearbook, and in turn she went on to attend every reunion, scribbling notes and observations after each one—not always charitably—and noting who overstepped boundaries of many kinds.

In a fit of decluttering (the yearbook did not, Daphne concluded, "spark joy"), she discards it when she moves to a small New York City apartment.

But when it's found in the recycling bin by a busybody neighbor/documentary filmmaker, the yearbook's mysteries—not to mention her own family's—take on a whole new urgency, and Daphne finds herself entangled in a series of events both poignant and absurd. (*From the publisher.*)



### Author Bio:

- Birth—October 16, 1950
- Where—Lowell, Massachusetts, USA
- Education—A.B. Simmons College
- Awards—New England Books Award For Fiction
- Currently—lives in North Hampton, Massachusetts, and New York, New York

Elinor Lipman is an American novelist, short story writer, and essayist, known for her humor and societal observations. In his review of her 2019 novel, *Good Riddance*, Sam Sacks of the *Wall Street Journal* wrote that Lipman "has long been one of our wittiest chroniclers of modern-day romance."

The author was born and raised in Lowell, Massachusetts. She graduated from Simmons College in Boston where she studied journalism. While at Simon, Lipman began her writing career, working as a college intern with the *Lowell Sun*. Throughout the rest of the 1970s, she wrote press releases for WGBH, Boston's public radio station.

### Writing

Lipman turned to fiction writing in 1979; her first short story, "Catering," was published in *Yankee Magazine*. In 1987 she published a volume of stories, *Into Love and Out Again*, and in 1990 she came out with her first novel, *Then She Found Me*. Her second novel, *The Inn at Lake Devine*, appeared in 1998, earning Lipman the 2001 New England Book Award three years later.

Lipman's first novel, *Then She Found Me*, was adapted into a 2008 feature film—directed by and starring Helen Hunt, along with Bette Midler, Colin Firth, and Matthew Broderick.

In addition to her fiction, Lipman released a 2012 book of rhyming political tweets, *Tweet Land of Liberty: Irreverent Rhymes from the Political Circus*. Two other books—a 10th novel, *The View from Penthouse B*, and a collection of essays, *I Can't Complain: (all too) Personal Essays*—were both published in 2013. The latter deals in part with the death of her husband at age 60. A knitting devotee, Lipman's poem, "I Bought This Pattern Book Last Spring," was included in the 2013 anthology *Knitting Yarns: Writers on Knitting*.

Lipman was the Elizabeth Drew Professor of Creative Writing at Smith College from 2011-12, and she continues to write the column, "I Might Complain," for Parade.com. Smith spends her time between North Hampton, Massachusetts, and New York City.

### **Works**

1988 - *Into Love and Out Again: Stories*  
1990 - *Then She Found Me*  
1992 - *The Way Men Act*  
1995 - *Isabel's Bed*  
1998 - *The Inn at Lake Devine*  
1999 - *The Ladies' Man*  
2001 - *The Dearly Departed*  
2003 - *The Pursuit of Alice Thrift*  
2006 - *My Latest Grievance*  
2009 - *The Family Man*  
2012 - *Tweet Land of Liberty: Irreverent Rhymes from the Political Circus*  
2013 - *I Can't Complain: (All Too) Personal Essays*  
2013 - *The View From Penthouse B*  
2017 - *On Turpentine Lane*  
2019 - *Good Riddance*  
(Author bio adapted from Wikipedia. Retrieved 2/27/2019.)

### **Book Reviews:**

The premise, which delves into questions of Daphne's parentage as well as her romantic past and future, is old-fashioned, sometimes to a point requiring some generosity from the reader.... Daphne comes across as a bit primly Victorian, prickly and unyielding. But Lipman dresses the plot up with contemporary cultural touches.... *Good Riddance* is a caper novel, light as a feather and effortlessly charming. It will not save lives or enrich them in an enduring way.... But the book inspires a very specific kind of modern joy. I read it fast, in a weekend, during which I did not find my social media accounts or tidying my house nearly as diverting as what was on these pages. Being more attractive than Twitter may sound like a low bar, but in these distractible times, it feels like a genuine achievement.

**Mary Pols - New York Times Book Review**

True to form, Ms. Lipman blends a pair of highly appealing love stories into this farrago. The author has long been one of our wittiest chroniclers of modern-day romance.... [T]he most touching subplot in *Good Riddance* follows Daphne's widowed father's intrepid attempts to rejoin the dating scene.... Ms. Lipman's writing is brisk and intelligent, and if the plot of this novel is zanier than her usual fare, that too may show just how plugged-in she is to our farfetched times.S

**Sam Sacks - Wall Street Journal**

[Lipman is] pulling off a clever trick, though it may not be evident until the last page.... The characters in *Good Riddance* don't necessarily develop.... It would be easy, and not messy at all, to say this isn't Lipman's best novel.... However, when you come to the end of *Good Riddance*, you might disagree, and you'll definitely be delighted. Can an entire book function as a shaggy-dog story? My answer is yes, although for me that twist ending wasn't necessarily worth the trip. What was: Lipman's portrait of Daphne.... Despite her complaining, Daphne is an intriguing heroine, and if you love Lipman's work, you may love her, too.

**Bethane Patrick - Washington Post**

Lipman's satisfying latest is a worthy addition to her long lineup of smart, witty novels.... [A] charming romantic comedy... with a stellar cast of supporting characters... and intelligent and lyrical prose... [This is] a delightful treat readers will want to savor.

**Publishers Weekly**

Fans of Lipman will cheer for a new novel in her signature style: funny, warm, sharp, smart, and full of love for family, no matter how flawed. —Julie Kane, *Washington & Lee Lib., Lexington, VA*

**Library Journal**

[A] smart, sassy, and satisfying rom-com.... [Lipman] once again delivers a tightly woven, lightly rendered, but insightfully important novel of the pitfalls to be avoided and embraced on one's path to self-discovery.

—Carol Haggas

**Booklist**

[P]retty silly, and very contrived, but this author has a black belt in silly contrivance and a faithful horde of fans who are looking for just that. Au courant elements like... online courses for becoming a chocolatier add a fresh twist.... Lipman's narrative brio keeps things moving at a good clip.

**Kirkus Reviews**

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:**

1. Why do you think Daphne chooses to get rid of the annotated yearbook that belonged to her mother? Were you surprised by her decision to get rid of it? Why or why not?

2. What is Daphne ashamed to admit about her marriage to Holden? Why does she believe that Holden married her? Does Daphne believe that she is a victim or does she accept any responsibility for her wrong turn? What does Daphne think can sometimes "take on the aura of romance" (14) and how did this affect her relationship with Holden? What does Daphne say that she had been waiting for ever since she learned of his true motive in marrying her?

3. What surprises Daphne about her father's decision to move to New York? When Daphne confesses that she has gotten rid of the yearbook as they are painting his new apartment, how does her father react? How

did he truly feel about his wife's involvement with the Class of 1968 and her attendance at their reunions? Were you surprised by his response? Why or why not?

4. What does Daphne mean when she says that she is debating "whether or not [she] could riff on this possible paradox: her mother's prudishness in light of the infidelity factor" (102)? Does the story brought to light by the yearbook influence or alter Daphne's sense of her mother's character? If so, how? What does she say that she now realizes about her mother? Does she ever come to terms with this?

5. What does Daphne find upsetting about Geneva's podcast? Who is featured in the podcast and what story does Geneva seem intent on presenting? What does Geneva say that "every story needs" (139)? Is the story that Geneva wants to tell a true or accurate one?

6. What insights does *Good Riddance* provide on the topic of modern romance? How would you characterize Daphne's relationship with Jeremy? What is dating like for her and for her father, who has recently become a bachelor? What does the book ultimately reveal about love and relationships?

7. What does the book suggest about the topic of ownership? How is ownership determined? How does ownership apply to art and to storytelling? Do you think that Geneva had a right to the yearbook and the stories that it contained? Why or why not?

8. How does Daphne come to repossess the yearbook? Do you agree with her choice to reclaim it? How does Daphne justify her decision to take it back? What does she do with the yearbook once it is back in her possession?

9. Explore the motif of truth. Why does Holly accuse Daphne of not wanting to go near the truth? Do you think that her assessment is correct? Where in the book do readers find evidence either refuting or supporting this? What other characters are caught between truth and lies? What motivates the characters to say things that are not true? Does truth ultimately prevail?

10. What does Jeremy decide to write about for the stage? Who does he believe should be the star of his show? How does Daphne respond to the work that Jeremy has created? Do you think that her response to the work is hypocritical? Why or why not?

11. How did you feel about the novel's closing lines?

12. What were some of your favorite lines or moments from the book? Which were the funniest? Elinor Lipman has been called "a diva of dialogue" (*People*). Do you agree?

13. Elinor Lipman's work is often compared to that of Jane Austen for its satirical look at contemporary society. What does *Good Riddance* reveal about our own society and how does the author's use of elements of comedy and the absurd help to reveal these points or observations?

14. What are some of the questions that were raised by the annotated yearbook? Are any of these questions answered at the story's conclusion? What ultimately becomes of the yearbook? (*Questions issued by the publishers.*)