



AUTOPSY OF A BORING WIFE

by Marie-Renee Lavoie

Translated by Arielle Aaronson

Summary:

"Marie-Renée Lavoie's *Autopsy of a Boring Wife*

tells the hysterically funny and ultimately touching tale of forty-eight-year-old Diane, a woman whose husband leaves her and is having an affair because, he says, she **bores** him. Diane takes the charge to heart and undertakes an often ribald, highly entertaining journey to restoring trust in herself and others that is at the same time an astute commentary on women and girls, gender differences, and the curious institution of marriage in the twenty-first century. All the details are up for scrutiny in this tender, brisk story of the path to recovery. *Autopsy of a Boring Wife* is a wonderfully fresh and engaging novel of the pitfalls and missteps of an apparently "boring" life that could be any of ours."-- Provided by publisher.

Source: <https://houseofanansi.com/products/autopsy-of-a-boring-wife>

What's the meanest thing someone can say about you? "You're boring" ranks right up there among the top ten insults. But there's a big difference between being a boring person and having a boring life.

Diane Delaunais, the main character in Marie-Renée Lavoie's novel *Autopsy of a Boring Wife*, is (despite the title) not at all boring. After Jacques, her husband of twenty-five years, unexpectedly leaves her and their empty nest near Quebec City for a younger woman, Diane's equilibrium (if she ever had any) spirals out of orbit. Trying to regain her footing, she lurches from scene to scene in escapades often featuring her sympathetic friend Claudine. The story zips along in chapters with snappy headings that foreshadow the coming action. A personal favourite, "In which Claudine tries unsuccessfully to help me," degenerates as Diane

talks through what went wrong in her marriage to Jacques, a man she still considers faultless. When Claudine reminds her that “he called you boring to your face!” Diane thinks, “I used to believe that if we say them often enough, words become worn and faded, little slivers of soap that slip between your fingers – but I was wrong. They had taken on a terrible destructive force, covering me like a slick of oil. Boring. It sliced through me like a dagger.” Later she meets her daughter Charlotte and they wind up shopping for skinny jeans. In the fitting-room mirror, Diane beholds her body “in all its disgrace [...] Every part of me saidboring.” She crumples to the floor. Charlotte crawls under the door and, without saying a word, takes her mother into her arms. It is a touching scene, the two women embracing. Diane recognizes her daughter “had dived alongside me into the quicksand, demanding nothing. It made me want to dig in my heels.”

Diane does dig in her heels, in surprising ways that keep the plot moving as fast and furious as her state of mind. She sees a therapist, tries flirting with a colleague, and hires a private investigator who dredges up Jacques’s past and gives her a thick envelope of evidence that suggests the ex-husband may not be so faultless after all. Eventually, Diane starts taking control of her life, and that is the redemptive message of the novel.

Sometimes, the action veers into slapstick. Diane doesn’t overthink, she just acts – emptying a pitcher of ice water on her ex’s new lover. Egged on by Claudine, the two conspire and the result is sometimes ludicrous, undermining Diane’s real anger and emotions expressed elsewhere in the novel. **There’s much to praise in *Autopsy of a Boring Wife*.** The characters are vivid and entertaining, especially Diane and her reckless feistiness. Her emotional trajectory saves the novel from being just another post-break-up tragedy. The scenes and dialogue can be laugh-out-loud funny, and the narrative hums along smoothly, facilitated by the fine translation from French by Arielle Aaronson.

While intelligently written, this is not a deeply intellectual book. Diane is smart, sassy, and she can make you laugh, but she’s conventional. At the risk of overthinking things, Diane might have shown a little more awareness of the privilege inherent in her middle-class life. Yet there’s truth to Diane’s

occasional nuggets of insight. After another turbulent episode, she concludes, "That's the good thing about being boring: the most insignificant little thing becomes a gripping adventure."

Source: <https://mtlreviewofbooks.ca/reviews/autopsy-of-a-boring-wife/>



About the Author:

Born

Quebec, Canada

Marie-Renée Lavoie has a particular gift for living dialogues, earthy heroines and everyday poetry.

Since *La petite et le vieux* (Éditions XYZ), her first award-winning novel, she has never ceased to amaze and move with her fictions which sound fabulously true.

She also conquered the youth audience with *The curious story of a moribund cat*, the *Zazie* series and *The last camelot* (Éditions Hurtubise).

Marie-Renée Lavoie was born in 1974 in the Limoilou district of Quebec. She holds a master's degree in Quebec literature from Laval University. She currently teaches literature at Collège Maisonneuve.

Source: https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/5618640.Marie_Ren_e_Lavoie

Book Reviews:

PRAISE FOR MARIE-RENÉE LAVOIE AND AUTOPSY OF A BORING WIFE

Finalist, Forest of Reading Evergreen Award -- A CBC Book of the Year

“Lavoie keeps her novel short, offering chaotic humour and snappy observation to balance the pain and loss . . . A readable, recognizable, tragicomic account of coping with domestic disaster.” — ***Kirkus Reviews***

“Lavoie’s fiercely hilarious take on the pains and triumphs of marital abandonment feels perfectly right.” — ***Toronto Star***

“With great humour and tenderness, Marie-Renée Lavoie recounts Diane’s journey to regain trust in both herself and the people around her . . . A piercing commentary on gender, marriage, and the nuances of self-love.”
—***Toronto Life***

“Autopsy of a Boring Wife is slapstick, funny, and absurd, but underlined with a tenderness and poignance that will have you rooting for happily ever after after that.” — ***Pickle Me This***

“Marie-Renée Lavoie is a highwire artist who derives her strength from her knowledge of human foibles.” — ***La Presse***

“Fresh, funny, and a lot of fun to read.” — ***Consumed by Ink***

“With writing that makes us fall in love from the very first page, and with a view of married life that is oh so lucid, Lavoie journeys with Diane to the bottom of the barrel, providing unforgettable scenes of altercations with her

former sister-in-law, mother-in-law, and ex-husband's new girlfriend before she surfaces by virtue of tactics that are simultaneously confrontational, true-to-life, and wildly entertaining.” — **Huffington Post Québec**

“A novel that surpasses sadness to find a place in the light.” — **Bible Urbaine**

“Employing the tone and construction of a classic comedy, here’s a novel that engulfs us in the wake of a woman on the verge of an unabating nervous breakdown . . . wacky, scathing humour, good dialogue and assuredly lively.” — **Le Devoir**

“Brimming with energy, *Autopsy of a Boring Wife* narrates Diane’s survival of her separation (cue Gloria Gaynor). Lavoie deploys wit and the vernacular to render wholly believable the story of someone who is not a fighter, but a woman like any other.” — **Tête de Lecture**

“Marie-Renée Lavoie leads us through all her heroine’s states of mind with vivid writing that shoots arrows fashioned from anything at hand; we are not exhausted for a moment and accompany Diane everywhere and in the most unlikely of situations. At the end of it all, we love this ‘boring’ woman, we really do.” — **Journal de Montréal**

Source: <https://www.amazon.com/Autopsy-Boring-Marie-Renee-Lavoie/dp/1487004613>

BOOK DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How did you **experience** the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to

"get into it"? How did you feel reading it—amused, sad, disturbed, confused, bored...?

2. Describe the main **characters**—personality traits, motivations, and inner qualities.

- Why do characters do what they do?
 - Are their actions justified?
 - Describe the dynamics between characters (in a marriage, family, or friendship).
 - How has the past shaped their lives?
 - Do you admire or disapprove of them?
 - Do they remind you of people you know?
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3. Are the main characters **dynamic**—changing or maturing by the end of the book? Do they learn about themselves, how the world works and their role in it?

4. Discuss the **plot**:

- Is it engaging—do you find the story interesting?

- Is this a plot-driven book—a fast-paced page-turner?
 - Does the plot unfold slowly with a focus on character?
 - Were you surprised by complications, twists & turns?
 - Did you find the plot predictable, even formulaic?
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5. Talk about the book's **structure**.

- Is it a continuous story...or interlocking short stories?
- Does the time-line move forward chronologically?
- Does time shift back & forth from past to present?
- Is there a single viewpoint or shifting viewpoints?
- Why might the author have chosen to tell the story

the way he or she did?

- What difference does the structure make in the way
you read or understand the book?
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6. What main ideas—**themes**—does the author explore? (Consider the title,

often a clue to a theme.) Does the author use **symbols** to reinforce the main ideas? (See our free LitCourses on both [Symbol](#) and [Theme](#).)

7. What **passages** strike you as insightful, even profound? Perhaps a bit of dialog that's funny or poignant or that encapsulates a character? Maybe there's a particular comment that states the book's thematic concerns?

8. Is the **ending** satisfying? If so, why? If not, why not...and how would you change it?

9. If you could ask the **author** a question, what would you ask? Have you read other books by the same author? If so how does this book compare. If not, does this book inspire you to read others?

10. Has this novel **changed you**—broadened your perspective? Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world?

(Questions by LitLovers.)

Source: <https://www.litlovers.com/run-a-book-club/questions-for-fiction>