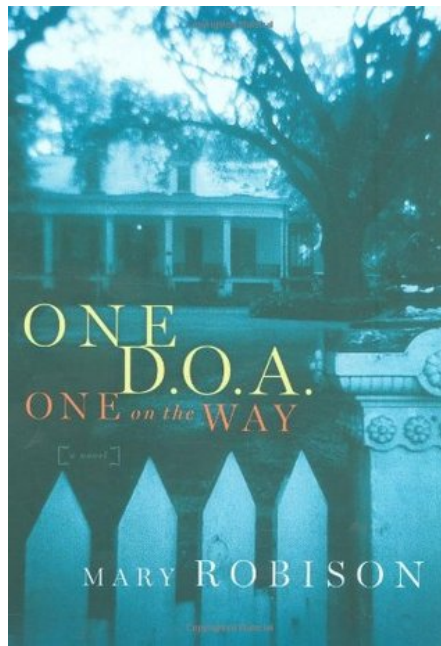




One D.O.A., One on the Way

Mary Robison

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One D.O.A., One on the Way Mary Robison

Enter Eve. Based in New Orleans, she's a location scout for a movie production company and complacently married to Adam. "Now you know," she says. "Our names really didn't bother me that much until the mail started arriving addressed to 'Adam and Eve Broussard.'" He's just been diagnosed with a grave illness and gone back to the palatial family home where his parents reside. It's all fine with Eve—or so she tells herself at the beginning.

But standing left of center in this still-prosperous but mortally wounded family does not get easier as the weeks wear on. As she negotiates her way around the anger of Adam's despised twin brother Saunders, maintains her friendship with his beautiful and volatile wife Petal, and protects what's left of the innocence of her niece Collie, Eve finds more than the Louisiana heat oppressive.

Effortlessly smart and deliriously off-kilter, *One D.O.A., One on the Way* will keep you guessing until the last page.

One D.O.A., One on the Way Details

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From Reader Review One D.O.A., One on the Way for online ebook

Nicole says

I'm really not sure what to make of this one. It's a jigsaw puzzle of tiny little pieces, chapters a page, half a page, a bulleted list, two sentences long. Jarring transitions. The fragments add up to something bigger, yes--an image of post-Katrina New Orleans; a warning about the hazards of carrying on simultaneous relationships with identical twins; a sense of many layers of desperation in both these characters and this place, some unmistakable and others muddled. Or, if not muddled, their purpose in the context of this story is at least unclear. Not that I'm trying to hate on the desperation, mind you. Desperation is juicy story stuff. It just works better for me if it's relevant desperation, I guess.

The cool thing about these little sips of chapters is that reading them is a bit like watching a tennis match in which balls are being lobbed in from nine different angles at once. There's no time to process where they came from, let alone hit them back in the same direction, so I'm left watching them bounce haphazardly around, wondering which ones will collide first and where. It's fascinating in the same way that watching an imminent train wreck might be fascinating.

The other cool thing about such short chapters is that each one has to catch attention--this can be up to three chapters per page that need to jump out and grab us, which leads to some pretty sharp lines of prose. Examples? Of course I have examples:

"Where do you keep the paper cups for baking cupcakes?" she asks me.
I say, "This is Mars and we're on it."
"They're colored paper *cups*," she says.
I say, "Oh, those. They're in the drawer with my parakeets."

One of the doors hangs open and she's motioning her cigarette smoke outside. Without conviction. With no real success.

I don't know for how many minutes I've been sitting out here watching, too jittery to turn the engine off and go into a store and buy things. Equally unable to drive the fuck away.

Like the narrator in that last quote, the prose is jittery, which in turn makes me jittery. I feel like I'm dancing around something with it in all these brief and, at times, only tenuously connected, bits of prose.

Which leads to what might be my biggest disappointment on finishing this book: I can't figure out how this series of snapshots of these lives and this place lead logically to the end that we get, and this leaves me scratching my head a bit and wondering what the heck I just read.

Rebecca McNutt says

Darkly humorous and deep, *One D.O.A., One on the Way* is often very morbid, but ultimately a wonderful story of friendship, love and family.

Matt says

A kind of strange one, which is what I get for taking suggestions from BookForum:)

It's a collage-type presentation of life in New Orleans after Katrina, though it works a different vibe that Treme-- here, a white woman is a location scout for Hollywood, and also involved in some odd, gothic type family drama. Though to say either as if they are plots is an overstatement-- they provide a kind of structure, a series of sets against which to lob words like paint.

Robison is a compelling and interesting prose stylist, and this book does take up a number of styles, all assembled in small fragments: lists of various sorts (ie: facts about alcohol consumption, or where musicians live after the Hurricane), sociological or other ruminations, etc. There's a recurring series, about holsters for guns and which are best for which purpose, which pays off in the end, and the title, I suppose.

But all of it really is intentionally scattershot and interested more in accretion than linear movement. We have a woman at loose ends in a city where you can say the same. To point a line into or out of either situation would be against any sort of realism, and Robison has the conviction to not do that. But the lack of some central something aside from that portrait makes it hard to really warm up on the book-- reading it is an experience, but it's one that didn't, for me at least, linger much after I finished the book, even if I kind of admire it.

Drew says

Brutal, hilarious, everything you'd hope for from Robison. Plus, it's set in New Orleans and the main characters are Broussards, so... just about everything this guy could hope for.

Renee Swindle says

My guess is that Mary Robison isn't for everyone but she is the queen of minimalist fiction and I bow at her feet.

Laurel Beth says

(from the diary of lil boogie, 1/21/2013)

...Mary Robison makes a compelling case for New Orleans, if your mind is rotting water pipes too. I'll insist to her that rotten urinary tracts also pose some of the same problems.

I wonder where she lives and can I just go there. I can find out where she's tenured and I can just roll the Sisyphean rock of my grad student debt into an MFA on emotional dissonance and short paragraphs and women driving on southern byways at night.

I can smell the death in me, cause it's all related to the evil, evil shallows and depths of my own inner byways. I can't believe my car exploded on Christmas Eve. And exactly 16 years to the second, probably, that I got my first period. *I do not* believe these incidents are at all related.

****OLD REVIEW****

(not as good)

first read 2/22/12 to 2/23/12, physical copy from HPL.

should i create a new shelf "from the henrico library"? i joined just to get this book. i go to varina, cause i am obsessed with the way you go through that train trestle from the dense city and get spit out right into blazing country.

this book made me want to move to new orleans cause it's described like tama janowitz describes new york in the 80's.

also i am loving mary robison's "writer's block" phase where little vignettes are written index card length and then she arranges them into narrative.

write more novels babe. i need them!

Gregory says

Mary Robison is the one I go to when struggling to craft masterful dialogue. A minimalist with a wry sense of humor and almost surgical prose, Robison doesn't disappoint in this fractured tale of post-Katrina life. She breaks up her first-person narrative with lists ranging from New Orleans factoids to "things I will never do again" and keeps what little plot there is alive and kicking, if only with deftly drawn characters and her voice--as distinctive as always. Her viciously dark humor and gift for understatement makes me want to beg to be her Facebook friend--if nothing else for her status updates. Few writers can make so much of 120 characters as Robison. As one of her characters states--"I need to house what's true in my head."

Colleen says

Mary Robison turns her wry, minimalist eye on a maximalist city during a chaotic period in its history. Having lived alongside her characters in New Orleans post-Katrina, the results were, for me, keenly observed, necessarily fragmented, and all too real. She writes with an insider's savvy, but notices things locals would overlook. Some of the best lines in the book speak to that tension:

"I'm not from here and I'll probably never get used to things, but I doubt if I'll ever leave."

"New Orleans is full of meanings I haven't learned. I've had many of them explained to me but the words didn't get through. I still don't understand."

Maureen says

i thought this book was going to be another, by now fairly typical, story of Things That Were Lost In The Flood. It IS about life in post-Katrina New Orleans for a film location scout and her family: her old money husband sick with Hep C, his identical twin brother, whom she starts sleeping with and can't tell apart, a sister in law who she helps commit to a mental health facility, and their young kleptomaniac daughter. Nobody sleeps, everybody drinks. Yes, that is the cast, but the narrative is very different from most other books I've read, and certainly takes a different tone than every other book about Katrina I've read. It's like she's talking to you directly, but in a vague, detached, sarcastic way, through chapters organized by scenes, vignettes, conversations, lists. What I think I like about it is that it seems like these people are familiar, until you realize they live with a lot more pathos and dark emotions and alcohol than you do. They casually create huge problems and then just sit down and have a drink, above reproach. I also really like the way she writes, she uses grammar and punctuation in a really interesting way that is so similar to the way people really talk i find it surprising i haven't seen it before. what's the word for that?-ah, fresh. And she comes up with damn good dialogue and witticisms for her characters.

quotes:

"im not from here and i'll probably never get used to things, but i doubt if i'll ever leave. a rest might be an idea. there's too much eating. there's altogether too much sex, dancing, carousing, reveling. all of it goes on for far too long. there's powdered sugar dust on everything. there are twinkle lights burning every day of the year. funerals, jello shots, fishing, swearing, barbecues, back door gigs, vats and vats of jambalaya. there are too many houses and sidewalks disappearing under weeds and vines in yards that look impenetrable, too many neon signs, too much on the stoop drinking, corruption, and technicolor clothes, too much crawfish shucking, too much stale beer, too many heroin junkies shooting up in the balconies, too many big homes, and trees snapped off, too many steel billboards bent to the ground, too much andouille sausage, too many second lines, too much money, and debauch, and cars parked all crooked.

"do you ever tire?" i cry from the car window." = p.3

"In a city that is only seven miles long:

alcoholic beverages are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

alcohol is the leading cause of death for louisiana youth

drinking in the street is acceptable and legal, although not from a glass bottle

bars and clubs provide plastic go cup containers

most have walk up windows for refills

more undergraduates die from alcohol-related causes than the number who receive advanced degrees."

"the days thundershower is over. my powers not out. there's nothing whatsoever to keep me from vacuuming."

"Saunders needs monitoring today. petal's in jamaica or somewhere and she asked me to go over, check on her husband, make sure everything's ok. so, here's his car, parked catawampus at the foot of the driveway. from this point, i can trace his every step, stumble, and fall.

he gets out, goes a little way up the drive, veers off, collides with these scrubs and crushes them to hell.

here's his key chain, and his keys, anybody want them. drops his white hankerchief also. i'm sure his wallet's on the ground here too. then he trips over the newspaperbasket, topples onto a bench, knocks that on its back. comes to again, gets up, finally makes it to the door, but no keys, he can't get in. bashes the doorknob with a rock several times. that does nothing. breaks the window with the rock, throws it somewhere. reaches in, works the knob, bloodies his hand but gets the door open, and ah, here he is, utterly unconscious one, two, three feet inside. " p. 29

"i'm through putting xeroxes of dollar bills into change machines.

no more drinking from the milk carton in the dairy section of the store.
i'm never again burping the alphabet.
no more wearing white stockings and being anybody's nurse.
no more stories about ever having been a carmelite nun." p .32

"you could fill your time easily, going around and noticing this type of shit. such as there, dragging along, is a woman wearing one bare foot and the other in a satin dinner slipper.
my address book is nowhere to be found, nor my jean jacket, the box of coffee filters, the good cookbook, the tiny ballerina from my childhood jewelry box, my gymbag, a rhinestone studded belt, the globe!" p. 35

'i say, there's a special ability i've developed, by way of staying awake too long. even with the sound muted, i can hear mariska hargitay." p.38

"here are the twins, I've Seen Fire and I've Seen Rain, propped on their sides of the bed, a chessboard between them; both shirtless, both gazing hard at the board. i think my husbands the one in pajama bottoms, and the other is just wearing jeans." p.38

"in their joint ownership- they have chosen now to show me- is a shoebox filled with cocaine.
we just need you to be aware of it, adam says.
in case something should happen, says saunders.
he says, "do not, i repeat do not tell petal."
"like what are you afraid will happen?" i ask.
"lets close our eyes and let our minds wander," he says.
"ok," i say, "of course, right, of course. cat four hurricane. no wetlands to absorb it. floods crashing. tinker toy levees crumbling to bits. water rising in a hurry. no one is coming. shots fired. slow cooking on a roof, and dying of thirst for days-"
"sing it sister," adam says.
i say, "none of that's going to occur."
"wow," saunders says, his arms crossed and his eyebrows lifted.
"but suppose we were to experience that scenario," i say. "the plan is then, for me to stay behind here and guard all your cocaine." p 39

"it's 6:30 in the a.m. Collie's opened my bedroom door a little. i see her eye. "where do you keep the paper cups for baking cupcakes?" she asks me.
i say, "this is mars and we're on it."
"they're colored paper cups," she says.
i say, "oh those, they're in the drawer with my parakeets."
"never mind," she says and steps in and leans against a wall.
scooting along the wall now.
i say, "you could go and rock the porch swing off its chains."
she heaps herself onto the end of the bed as if to climb it. "what's the difference between lying and when you're making things up?" she asks.
"i know of none," i say.
"what about stories in books?"
"they don't count," i say. "they're made of writing."
two of my half-slips are missing,
as well as a filing cabinet,
a tea ball,
the drill bits,
my wedding album,
the bread maker. " p 46

"lucien is late for meeting me at the carousel bar at The Monteleone. same as ever, it's a piano bar with a working carousel. Truman Capote, Hemingway, Tennessee Williams. Drank themselves to vomit sick her many, many times." p.49

"seen in a different way, what i just conducted was the confinement of my lovers wife.
and that now i'm speeding away and in possession of her loaded firearm" p. 57

"the temperature has dropped below 85, so my windows are open, and there's a breeze carrying in the smells of molasses, oranges, chicory, papayas, camellias, rum, sorghum, powdered sugar, gumbo, newspapers, dogs, road tar, cigars, garbage, etouffee, perfumed women, babies, lumber, jambalaya, sex, car exhaust, saltwater, bourbon, horses, manure, coffee, absinthe, roses, seafood, urine, tabasco, crawfish, prostitutes, lemonade, barbecue, pianos, sweat, the river, bananas." p. 66

"this isn't as pretty as i planned to look to go see my husband. there's just no time to make the big improvements that looking pretty would entail:

fat camp

the swimsuit i wore at seventeen

bach suite 3 in D major played on the cello by yo-yo ma

a walk through the carwash

my grandfather, back from the dead

a motorcycle. " p.105

"...but i dont want to develop any wider understanding of a situation in which a cracker barrel hostess with gum and scarlet lipstick and a cleopatra haircut and wearing socks with her size-five capezio shoes is lucien's grandmother. that there's plenty for me to know. and that she's mean. that there's a meanness she's been dipped into many, many times. coats of meanness she then allowed to harden." p.109

"listening to old music. smoking some boo that was sold to me by a cajun waitress at the Camellia Cafe. getting reefer requires some effort. i have to try and even pay for it on occasion. in new orleans, nothing would prevent me from purchasing liquor ever.

not if i were a naked baby.

on hands and knees.

crawling down the goddamn center of the street.

at four in the morning.

on easter sunday.

p.125

"don't interfere" the father says to anyone. and says, "this is the disciplining of my child." like a sign over the tire shop of his behavior. " p. 138

"no more mailing my laundry to the IRS," i tell petal. "no more faking with crutches at the airport."

"i would probably," she says, "decline another mohawk haircut."

"through hiding in the bushes from people," i say. "i dont have enough guilt to do that anymore."

she says, "i'm never again spitting in the palm of my hand. never getting out of here."...

she looks so pretty. her champagne hair, immaculate skin, a gargantuan sweater. her hands tug the sweater's sleeves down her wrists against some inner chill. everything about her is graceful, even in her sickness and despair. " p. 142

" i get a call and it's the producer sounding brassy and miniaturized and inquiring about where to go tonight to hear music and have some fun. this is tempting. a right answer would be to start at Preservation Hall in the Quarter, move on to the Dragon's Den above the Siam Cafe on Esplanade, then on to Snug Harbor and the Spotted Cat on Frenchman Street, but leave before too late and end at Sweet Lorraine's in the back of the

Marigny. There are assorted wrong answers." p. 159

"we roll on the lawn. he pulls me under him, and drags off some of my clothes. there's plenty of darkness. there's a candy smell. the only light is in flashed of heat lightning. there's the faintest sound of far-off people laughing. what a place this is. god almighty. the amenities you can count on. i've been walking around in the dewy yard since Saunders wandered off toward the house to fetch his bouron. he's coming back along the path now, having forgotten the bourbon, it would seem. he did, however, bring his white dinner jacket to throw over me. we move into the cover of a mangrove tree that's strung with vines. i lean in to kiss his throat. he says, "i'm not sure i wanna be out here. dont you think we'd do better inside?" "oh, that's too tricky," i say, "adam might be awake. he shudders, and stands off, nodding his head. "madam, i'm adam," he says with no life in his voice." p.163

Julie Failla Earhart says

Before I purchased Mary Robison's eighth novel, *One D. O. A. One on the Way*, I was unfamiliar with her writings. Her style, at least in this outing, is sparse and grim. Told in two-hundred-twenty-five vignettes, the story is set in post-Katrina New Orleans, at a time when the camera crews have all gone home.

The story centers on Adam and Eve Broussard who have returned to his familial stately plantation home to await Adam's death from Hepatitis C. Along with Adam's parents, there is also his identical twin brother Saunders, his rather unstable wife, Petal, and their daughter, Collie.

While Eve is out scouting for movie locations and wondering if she's wasting her time or the film crews will come back, Adam and Saunders fret over Adam's disease, drink aimlessly, and horde cocaine.

The entire family is haunted by the years-earlier death of Adam and Saunders' sister, who is immortalized with the statue in the pond where she drowned. Two black swans, eerily representative of the twins, swim slow circles around the obelisk.

Amidst the vignettes, the reader is informed by startling statistics of life in the new New Orleans (80,000 dwellings remain vacant. 86,000 families still inhabit FEMA trailers).

When Eve begins to have an affair with Saunders, the plot becomes even more menacing.

This sort of format is rather hard to read, but does readers some favor. By leaving out the minute details that make up a fully crafted novel, Robison paints a vivid picture of harsh reality.

Printable Tire says

Post-apocalyptic New Orleans with a location scout, evil twins, and some facts about gun safety.

Kallie says

Love the writing, the witty, terse, dead pan style narrating dysfunctional family stories in a city rendered dysfunctional by the very attitudes that permeate the family . . . I wasn't quite ready for the end, or would give this 5 stars. I will certainly read more Robison.

Linda Lipko says

Many of my friends are ministers, social workers, writers and/or artists and some are endearingly unconventional. Going to the movies with them is exceedingly frustrating because they find artsy, subterfugic, religious overtones in every single film.

While I am quite capable of appreciating symbolism and can easily find the beauty in art that elicits various feelings and thoughts, I usually shake my head at their perceptions that defy my logic.

After the show, while consuming a glass of wine, they will say "What? You didn't get that concept?" "How could you NOT see that Das Boat has religious meaning throughout?" Refusing to feel dumb, I simply smile and tell them they are getting way too deep.

Reading this book felt like going to the movies with my friends. Somehow, I am a deer in the headlights stunned with bright, searing strobes of information coming at me while all I saw was a dark, story that seemed messy. For me, this book felt way too "artsy", way too Pulp- Fiction like, way too "messy."

Set in post hurricane Hurricane Katrina, crime-ridden New Orleans, the author confusingly tells the story of Eve, married to Adam who is a twin, has very rich parents and is afflicted with Hepatitis C, while she then intersperses bullet like statements regarding New Orleans.

As the males deteriorate into a life of alcoholism and drugs and Eve is drawn to her husband's twin, the author also includes the sister in law who is institutionalized and, for a smattering of more confusion, sneaks in the parents that are manipulative and controlling.

I imagine there is some correlation between the references to crime in New Orleans --

- . 88 percent of the murder cases in New Orleans result in acquittal.
- . 3,581 suspects, many charged with murder, walked free in '07 when the prosecutors failed to gather evidence in time.
- . The per capita homicide rate is 15 times higher than that of New York City
- . Alcohol is the leading cause of death for Louisiana youth

-- and the upside down life of Eve and the twins and the sister in law and the parents and the people in the restaurant and the junk in the water fountain....., but it is all way beyond my logical comprehension.

The bottom line -- if this convoluted story is made into a movie, my friends can count me out because I am NOT attending the show with them.

Helen McClory says

I couldn't help myself but re-read at a terrible pace - there's just so much to love about this sharp, knowing, woozy, sultry, sullen flash novel.

Matthew says

Well, that escalated quickly.
