

READER'S GUIDE

This One Because of the Dead by Laure Baudot

INTRODUCING *This One Because of the Dead*

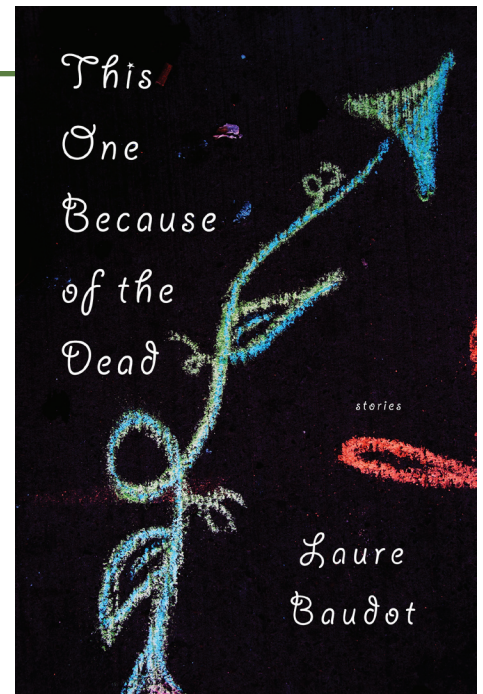
This One Because of the Dead is a collection of short stories that examine the power of what goes unsaid, and how unspoken truths can guide relationships in unexpected ways.

A former ballet dancer reflects on her complicated relationship with dance and with her partner while he is away climbing Mount Everest.

A girl fails to understand her artist mother.

A man's jealousy gets the better of him while swimming with his girlfriend in shark-infested waters.

A mother's fear of danger overcomes her on a family vacation.



IMPORTANT THEMES

Sexuality

Sexuality and perceptions of sexuality shape many of the stories in *This One Because of the Dead*. These stories explore sexual desire and the societal expectations that governs it. A woman's student film is challenged for objectifying girls. A businessman begins to suspect his relationship is about material gain. A girl fantasizes about the father of the child she's babysitting. A woman's sexual experimentation pushes her boyfriend's anger beyond control. A girl uses sex to cope with her resentment toward her family.

Expectations/Perceptions

Baudot's stories are about the failure of perceptions and expectations. Often what is not said speaks louder than what is said. The reality of a woman's relationship fails to match her expectations when her boyfriend indulges in his passion for climbing. A girl's expectations of a proper family are projected on to family friends, to the detriment of her relationship with her mother. A mother fails to perceive how her self-indulgent excesses affect her family. A man returns to his mother's home expecting to be pampered and fails to see her true circumstances.

Family

Many of the stories centre on a family, and the different types of families. Baudot's stories ask us to think about what makes a family, and what breaks one. What do we owe our family members? What does it mean to choose a family? What happens after families are divided or broken? Julie's close relationship with Akash's family fails to halt their growing distance. Sonya uses the Remingtons as a surrogate family when she can't connect with her mother. Catherine compares her young fantasies to her adult experience as a mother. Anna's fear distances her from her husband and daughter. Jeanne argues with her parents over her addict sister while Ames covers up his father's affairs.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How does Julie describe Akash and their relationship? How does this differ from Akash's view of Julie? ("This One Because of the Dead")
2. Akash's climb of Everest is an important part of the story. What does the climb reveal about Akash? In the end, are we asked to sympathize with him, or condemn him? ("This One Because of the Dead")
3. Sonya's mother Joy is a Holocaust survivor. Discuss how Sonya views her mother's painting. How does she see her mother compared to the Remingtons? ("Siblings")
4. How is disability portrayed in "Starting Somewhere"? How does Lydia's perception of sexuality colour her treatment of the clients?
5. Amy claims her film celebrates female power, while the film she and Jesse made as teenagers is objectifying. Do you agree with her? What does her argument reveal about the power of film and looking? ("Stage Presence")
6. What is the relationship between affection and money in "Restaurants With My Daughter"?
7. Discuss the positives and negatives Jeremy experiences in Japanese culture. How do these experiences mirror his perceptions of his relationship with Lise? ("Salary Man")
8. How does the older Catherine's interjections change the narrative in "In the Afternoon"? Is the older Catherine different from her younger self?
9. What stereotypes about motherhood are challenged by "Luck" and which are upheld? How does the story treat fatherhood?
10. How does Leo see himself and his violent side? Do you believe that his theory about inherited anger has merit, or is it a convenient excuse? ("Inheritance")
11. What is the family dynamic in "Angels Landing"? What does the ending suggest about the limitations of Anna's fear?



ABOUT LAURE

Laure Baudot is an author and martial artist. With Toronto as her base, she has travelled the world with her adventurous husband and three children. Her work has been published in various literary journals, including *The Danforth Review*, *The Fertile Source*, *Found Press*, and *Prairie Fire*.

12. What is the role of pride in "The Bread Maker"?
13. Compare Jeanne's relationship with her family to Ames's relationship with his. What are the similarities and differences?