



Title: You Comma Idiot

Author: Doug Harris

Description:

Marginalized and alienated, perennial fuck-up Lee Goodstone is a resounding zero: a small-time hash-dealing slacker with no ambition about where his life isn't going. One morning, Honey, his best friend's girlfriend, inexplicably jumps into bed with him. Then another friend, Henry, is accused of kidnapping a teenaged girl no one knew he was seeing. Lee gets embroiled in the melée, finds himself making flip remarks to the media, and his mediocre existence officially spirals out of control. Told in the second person, *You Comma Idiot* is a cringeworthy laugh-out-loud flight on the wings of the protagonist. The roller-coaster ride of a plot leads at breakneck speed to places even Lee can't anticipate.

Reviews

The Globe and Mail:

The book is written in second person, which is initially off-putting, but ultimately successful. The perspective ends up pulling the thread tightly throughout the story. Harris makes you be Lee Goodstone. It is not comfortable. It is downright awkward. Lee has so many flaws it's sometimes painful to be inside his head. He tries hard to be shallow and mostly succeeds. But, for an emotionally stunted party guy, this self-professed loser saves himself by virtue of the fact that he can really tell a story. He's a lowlife with some self-awareness, which he ignores whenever it suits him. He's smarter than most of his friends, so his observations of them are fairly amusing. This time in his life is an interesting one, and I found myself manipulated into not exactly liking him/me, but certainly empathizing and occasionally rooting for him/me.

Montreal Gazette:

If low self-esteem is what Harris is going for in *You Comma Idiot*, his quirky and dicey decision to use the second person point of view pays off. It is -- as it was almost two decades earlier for Jay McInerney in his breakthrough first novel *Bright Lights, Big City* -- the ideal narrative voice for self-loathing.

Harris has an advantage common to first-time novelists: a surplus of enthusiasm. The fun he appears to be having writing this novel spills over to those of us reading it.

In *You Comma Idiot*, Harris does his part to put a colourful but often overlooked corner of this city on the literary map.

Winnipeg Free Press:

Some critics have complained that Canadian novels don't reflect the realities of contemporary urban life. For anyone who shares that view, Montrealer Doug Harris's debut will be a welcome antidote.

DooneysCafe.com:

If you want to know what's gone toxic in Canada's prize-driven novel writing industry -- aside from the fact that it has become little more than just an industry -- look no further than this novel by 30-something Montreal writer Doug Harris. I don't mean this as a slur on Harris or *YOU comma idiot*. I mean that it probably wasn't in serious contention for any of the prizes, and that it should have been.

YOU comma Idiot is a well-written book by a talented writer, and both are more entertaining and relevant than any of the books that won Canadian literary prizes in 2010 or their authors. Harris' characters are more nuanced and authentic than you'll find in the prize winners, and what they're about -- the vast demographic of the young-and-demoralized at the bottom of urban Canada's dogpile -- is, page-by-page more quickening and alert and uncomfortable. It's a book full of surprises, some of them uncomfortable, a few uplifting, none plot-driven or arbitrary, and there's absolutely no navel lint clouding the view.

I wish there were more novels like it.

Uniter:

The novel is written in second person, which initially makes for an alarming read. It feels like you're being yelled at.

But eventually you adjust to it and realize that Harris is probably a genius for writing his novel this way.

By literally being inside Lee's head and hearing all of the horrible and hilariously offensive things he says about himself and other people, you develop a relationship with the character that reaches a level of intimacy rarely established even in first person novels.

Harris's decision to differ his style of narrative is the reason this book will resonate with an audience of this generation.

You, as the reader, end up cheering on this pathetic little man who has never really done anything with his life because if you don't, you'll lose hope for yourself too.

Harris's novel is littered with some poignantly funny remarks about the way our society has supposedly progressed that give the novel the punchy cynicism: "We now live in a perfectly harmonious, racially integrated land only TV seems to truly endorse."

Bitter, depressing and often politically incorrect, *You Comma Idiot* may not be high-calibre literature.

However, it is a sensationalistic read that makes a fair attempt at reflecting the apathy that young adults feel in a postmodern world where it's hard to commit to anything.

Montreal Review of Books:

You, Lee, do some contemptible things, but the story is much less about the wrong things, and much more about the repartee that comes afterwards, which is where the book is strongest.

That's ultimately how the novel negotiates the perils and pitfalls of its form as well as the drug dealing, relationship hopping, and kidnapping twists of its plot -- it talks its way out, with cool lines and quick smiles, only occasionally catching a fist in the

gut. Lee Goodstone may be an idiot, but he's fun to cruise around Montreal with. He doesn't want to change the world; he'd rather just go down to Girouard Park, hang out with his friends, and play a bit of hockey. Maybe smoke a fatty.

There's no harm in that.

January Magazine:

I have long been a sucker for the sort of fiction that might be known as lad lit, unless there was a better name for it, which there is not. To be honest, though, Doug Harris' *You Comma Idiot* did not necessarily hit me as such when I first picked it up. In fact, I wasn't quite sure just what it was. I knew only one thing: I couldn't put it down. Small-time Montreal drug pusher Lee Goodstone is the idiot that title refers to. Lee is coasting along slacker-drug-pusher style when a series of events pushes his life into a higher gear than he's entirely comfortable with. Debut author Doug Harris is a filmmaker and maybe some of that cinematic mojo shows up in *You Comma Idiot*, a book which seems long on both visuals and dialogue. But Harris' approach to novel writing, while novel is also very tight. You don't always know where you're going, but the ride is a whole lot of fun.

Hamilton Spectator:

Debating novelist Doug Harris has crafted a whippet-quick, greasy read in *You Comma Idiot*, and it starts with a believable group of characters -- Johnny's older brothers, who are big on the club scene; Baby, Honey's listless sister; Your Dealer, a drug kingpin given to philosophical ranting; single mom Stacey and son Zach (or "Ack!" to Lee); and a low-rent posse intent on leaning in on Lee's hash dealing. The author also does a splendid job in depicting in minute detail the fading jewel that is Montreal. [He is] a clever wordsmith/observer of the underengaged and slothful.

Brad Smith, author of *Big Man Coming Down the Road*:

You Comma Idiot comes barreling out of Montreal like a moonshiner's hotrod Ford, transporting hundred-proof style, crackling wit and withering social commentary.

You can wait for years for a writer like Doug Harris to come along. This guy is worth the wait.

SaltyInk.com:

You Comma Idiot, a novel in second-person, puts the fun back in books and is sure to be one of the fall's most entertaining reads. You'll bust your guts laughing and you might even crack a rib. More importantly, all humour aside, Harris is a great writer. There is a praiseworthy attention to detail here, and that's what makes it the page-turning accomplishment it is.

The Book Chick blog:

You Comma Idiot is not a book that you skim through. It's one that you'll want to take your time reading, especially because it is so rare to read a book written in the second person.

Completely different from anything that I've ever read before, *You Comma Idiot* is a treasure not to be missed. Doug Harris takes a lot of risks with his writing and his

characters, but it pays off in the end, resulting in a strangely satisfying read.

Quill & Quire:

Genuinely funny.

Suite101.com:

A hilarious and entertaining Canadian novel.

Maple Tree Literary Supplement:

Harris's novel is funny and at times offers unexpected insights and images ... a careful and witty examination of masculine potentialities in the slacker class.

Bookface blog:

What does it say about me that I actually enjoyed being Lee Goodstone

Don't answer that.

The problem or perhaps the point of this novel is that by the end you start to discover just how unsavory this character is. It's a nifty little psychological sleight-of hand. You like Lee/yourself at first. He's a lot like you. Doesn't quite fit in, not the best looking guy in the room, a little too smart for his own good. As you dig deeper into Lee's/your psyche you don't always like what you find there. It leaves you wondering, at the end, if you didn't just waste a lot of time being somebody you don't really like. What is the point of that

Then I took a moment to reflect on my own misspent youth.

Oh. I get it now.

The Rover:

A good part of the enjoyment of reading Harris' acclaimed first novel comes from watching the interplay between a tattered character on the page and his clever master, the author. You don't have to like Lee Goodstone to be drawn into his story. An appreciation for dramatic construction, witty dialogue and thematic audacity will suffice.