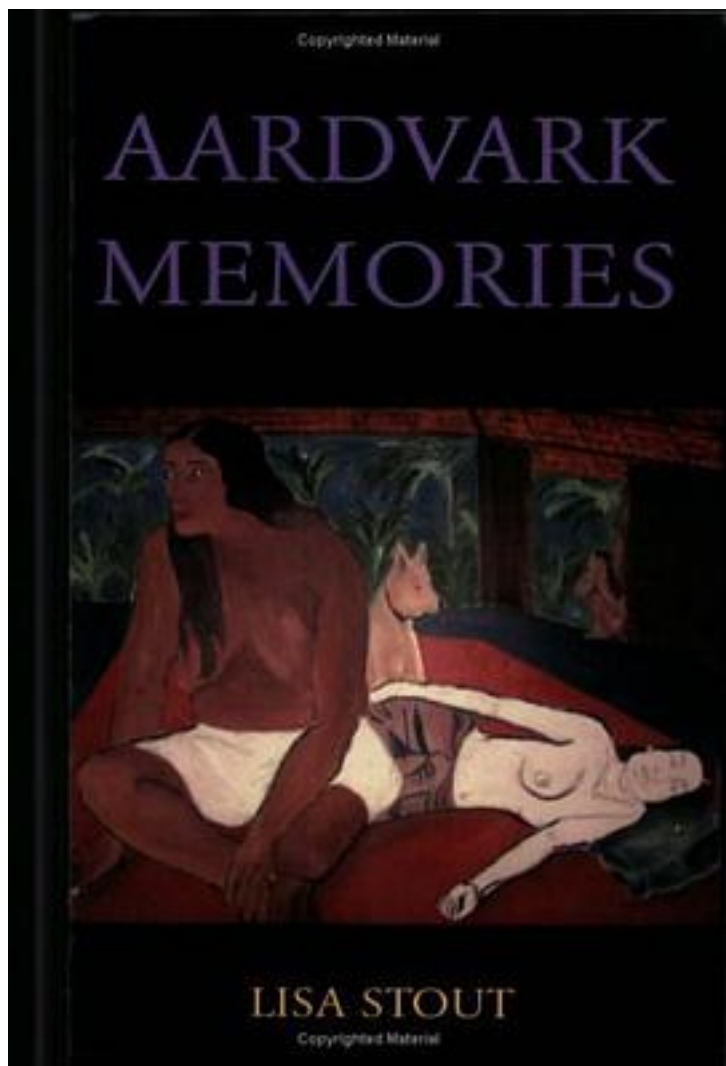


# Aardvark Memories



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How often when flying do we ask for an aisle seat but get stuck in the middle? And when we're twisting our bodies into yet-named yoga postures in order to stow our belongings under the seat in front of us, will we question the outcome of the flight? Not likely if it's a fair weather day. We'd be more inclined to dwell on aviation safety if snow was falling on slick runways, if thunderstorms were forecast at our destination, or if the homeland security level was posted orange or red. Certainly we'd take notice when a woman pilot welcomes us over the PA. Unlike male passengers who may then begin to squirm, women feel proud of her. Like the grand lady seated in 11B. She is of an older generation and, after plucking the reading glasses from her nose, she nods to the young college student beside her who is contemplating the word "Cockpit, heavy with innuendo. Little do they know that their pilot considers her workspace a "Flight Deck wherein she often jots practical notes-to-self on her flight plan - notes like, "clean aquarium filter." "Aardvark Memories takes the reader on a journey from a northern Chicago suburb to a coastal oasis in Los Angeles and back again. Gone from home four days of every week, co-pilot Claudia covets days off. A born taskmaster, she writes ambitious lists. But, placing her personal needs ahead of tedious chores becomes more difficult as she settles into her mid-forties. Until her mammogram reveals a shadow. Then, for Claudia, life comes into excruciating focus. Too late now, Claudia realizes she should have hired a neighborhood kid to mow the lawn so she could have gone on more walks, eaten fancy cakes and enjoyed more evenings on the paddle boat with her husband, Jake. They should have taken camping trips once a month. Snorkeled the Great Barrier Reef. And moved to a wooded five-acre parcel; a place they'd often dreamed about for their retirement years. Why had she procrastinated? Could it have been lack of will, Claudia wondered? As her life transitions toward death, Claudia again struggles with To Do list self-deprivation. Torn between shifting priorities of past loyalties, does she place herself at the top of the page? Or will Claudia choose the trinity of troubled women in her life--homeless Kimberly, blind Charlotta, and orphaned Susan--over her friend and pilot colleague, Lily, who suffers post-9/11 trauma? Unanswered questions die with Claudia until her recording is found. Transcribed, the cassettes tie together loose ends like a ribbon-adorned gift. "Aardvark Memories celebrates the friendship of women and reminds us to live life to our fullest authentic potential so that, like Claudia, we harbor few regrets and remain forever hopeful. -A richly-woven plot develops into a well-paced page turner that brings new appreciation for the simple, often overlooked blessings of life. -"Anne Denton, author -Like the sight of a lone eagle soaring in a crisp blue sky, "Aardvark Memories takes your breath away. -"Toni Louise Diol, poet -Captain Stout's riveting adventure defines the somber airline term "souls on board." -"Catherine White, MS -Heart wrenching misfortune wrapped in a heartwarming tale of true friendship. -"Elizabeth Froehler, AMC -Finally Aviation technical accuracy...from a female pilot's point of view -"Sue Miller -Spectacular episodes with unpredictable twists culminate in an emotional, exciting conclusion. -"Candace B. Harding, CFI/ATP -Stout's masterful debut novel takes real-life tragedy along a fulfilling journey of hope. -"L.M. Krag, X-LAXT ATCS - Wrapped inside the framework of "Aardvark Memories is revealed the story of survival in modern times. -"Peggy Chat

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