



Stone Motel: Memoirs of a Cajun Boy

Morris Ardoin

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Set in the wilds of rural Louisiana, *Stone Motel* brims with joy and pain. Morris Ardoin's memoir is filled with snapshots of Cajun life, labyrinthine in their detail.

Ardoin's parents were blue-collar professionals who pooled their cash to purchase a motel that was in a state of disrepair; they repaired and opened it when their children were young. Their children contributed to help make this family business work, though in between periods of intensive labor, they also enjoyed idyllic childhood rambles and games of canasta.

Its details atmospheric and near photographic, the book builds its backdrops well, moving between Ardoin's grandmother's peaceful home and his family's house at the motel. Intense rivalries between his twin sisters are recalled, as are sketchy motel regulars, time spent wrestling with the lawn mower, and the buggy, hot fig harvest.

The book's scenes are vibrant, even through the constant additions of new people to the mix. As the story moves past Ardoin's adolescence, it also encompasses his parents' strained marriage from a thoughtful distance, as well as the decline of his father. Whispers about sweet times past conclude this work.

Photographs, along with Cajun and Creole terms (Ardoin's grandparents are Mémère and Pépère), bring out the color of Ardoin's childhood locales even more. He grapples with his troubled relationship with his father and grows into his sexual identity, the tension of both threading through less serious moments, including when a half-naked motel guest yelled for Ardoin to call the cops to, euphemistically, "save" her from her partner.

Its details impressive, *Stone Motel* is a layered memoir, both nostalgic and forthright in recalling family struggles.

LAURA LEAVITT (May / June 2020)

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