



*A WIDOW'S STORY A MEMOIR* by Joyce Carol Oates

As you read this memoir of the recently widowed author-narrator, you get more and more irritated with her when she quotes all her "famous" friends condolence messages boasting so to speak of her devastated state for the reader's benefit, wearing her sorrow on her sleeve. We nearly feel she's staging her grief, is it not a memoir but fiction after all ?

I suppose as a writer, she has had to use her suffering and sweat it out as it were. Yet after a while, you can't help being moved and becoming sympathetic with the widow's plight. However our anger is soon kindled again: "All right Ray was a wonderful husband, but now please, make up your mind, live or die but set your reader free."

In spite of all this, this memoir is well worth reading because it is exquisitely well written, for instance she describes with graphic details the circumstances in which a death certificate has to be produced by the widow just about a thousand times. In her wry humour she gives the reader a clinical vision of the conjugal bed turning into a cave-den.

What's more, she gives writers-to be a useful and ironical piece of advice: 'once you've written a story, you should move on and not try to dwell on it for too long'. Room has to be made for others !

I recommend reading this memoir if you are in a cheerful disposition, it will teach you how not to hurt mourners unwittingly.

Last but not least if you are a mourner it will help you put your grief behind. It was published in French in 2011 under the title : *J'ai réussi à rester en vie*.

*Towanda*

Find out more on the author : <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/joyce-carol-oates>



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