

## Suzanne Davis Gets a Life

*Paula Marantz Cohen*

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## **Suzanne Davis Gets a Life** Paula Marantz Cohen

"Incredibly charming...Suzanne Davis Gets a Life has an emotional honesty and moments of real wisdom."—Philadelphia Inquirer

Suzanne Davis lounges around her tiny New York City apartment in her pajamas, writing press releases for the International Association of Air-Conditioning Engineers, listening to the ticking of her biological clock, and wondering where life is taking her. As her 35th birthday looms, Suzanne embarks on a wrong-headed, but very funny, quest—to find Mr. Right and start the family she hopes will give meaning to her life.

Her quest plunges us into the world of her Upper West Side apartment building, a world of overly invested mothers, fanatical dog-owners, curmudgeonly longtime residents, and young (and not so young) professionals. All are keenly observed by Suzanne, whose witty self-deprecation endears her to us even as it makes us want to shake some sense into her.

Light in its tone but incisive in its social satire, *Suzanne Davis Gets a Life* balances its wit with true concern for its protagonist. We can't help but wish Suzanne success in "getting a life." But can such a search possibly yield the meaning she craves? When her extremely annoying mother arrives on the scene, it appears that her plan has been hijacked. But serious illness opens her to new people and a new perspective. She ends by getting a life—even as she may lose one.

Cohen "portrays timeless and universal challenges through a buoyant combination of humor, pathos, and gumption."—Booklist

"Suzanne Davis Gets a Life isn't just seriously entertaining, it's entertainingly serious...I want my romantic comedy heroines to have wit, but I want them to have character too, and be as interested in the world as in themselves. Paula Marantz Cohen has given me all of that."—Margo Jefferson

A "witty commentary on contemporary life, enriched by a funny, flawed, and likable heroine."—Kirkus

"Ms. Cohen is a perceptive, comic writer."—Wall Street Journal

**Paula Marantz Cohen's** novels include *Jane Austen in Scarsdale or Love, Death and the SATs*, *Jane Austen in Boca*, and the recent *What Alice Knew: A Most Curious Tale of Henry James and Jack the Ripper*.

## **Suzanne Davis Gets a Life Details**

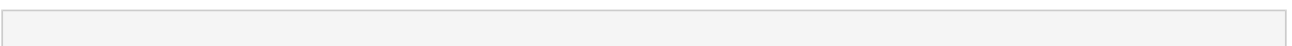
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## From Reader Review Suzanne Davis Gets a Life for online ebook

### Rebecca says

Who knows, maybe it had something to do with what was going on in my life when I read it, and maybe it doesn't deserve the superlative rating. I don't care. I just plain loved it. It was funny and relatable.

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### Kaitlin Marie-Brown Salter says

I'm not a huge fan of modern chick-lit but this book was fantastic!! For some reason my copy had pages missing, but I won it for free so I can look past that

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### Barbara says

It's really 3.75 stars: "Suzanne Davis Gets a Life" pretty much sums up what happens in this delightful novel. It's Chick-lit at it's finest, with a little twist. You have your self-deprecating protagonist (Suzanne), the bossy Mom, the outspoken BFF, and a pushy neighbor. Suzanne finds herself to be 35, single, with a job she can do at home in her PJ's. Which she does...a lot...never leaving her NYC apartment. In a "Bridget Jones" sort of way, she decides she's going to make serious changes to get herself a life. If you are a Jane Austin fan, you will love this novel, as Suzanne makes continuous references/comparison's about Austin's books and Suzanne's life. This novel is intelligent, witty, and accurate. I do remember being 33, single, with an abysmal dating history, thinking the same things Suzanne does. It's a fabulous read and a perfect summer beach read. I give it a 5 star rating in Chick Lit. It's very satisfying.

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### Mary says

I read this light, sharp book in one reading.

I couldn't help comparing it to both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones' Diary* for obvious reasons. Its pitch is much closer to that of *Pride and Prejudice*, with plenty of social satire that simultaneously invokes Austen and keeps the book modern. Its heroine is much more self-sufficient and much less ditsy than Bridget Jones. But it's also much shorter than both *Pride and Prejudice* and *Bridget Jones*; I was disappointed to see so much wrapped up so quickly at the end.

I think Ms. Cohen wrote this with well-read beach-readers in mind as her audience. On one hand, she openly acknowledges one point where the readers "may get ahead of" her narrator, which basically saves the scene; on the other hand, she repeats certain narrative ticks with annoying frequency (e.g., her narrator's inability to mention her psychologist without the phrase "\$200 an hour"), as though we all had memory problems. She must assume we're all going swimming every 3 pages...

All in all, I'm probably over-ranking it by giving it 4 stars. As beach reads go, it's a 5-star book. As a work of literature? More like 3--adequate, not stellar. So I'll give it 4, as we all need a few more light-but-not-stupid

books in our lives.

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## Angela Amman says

Suzanne Davis is infuriating — she rationalizes why she can't do charity work, complains about her studio apartment on West 76th Street and is so wrapped up in her own ideas about how life should look that she misses a few big things on her journey. In other words, she's exactly the type of person most of us are — sometimes, at least — a little self-absorbed but trying really hard to wrangle our expectations back to manageable.

*Suzanne Davis Gets a Life* by Paula Marantz Cohen begins with the aforementioned Suzanne trying, some might say desperately, to find a husband with whom she can procreate and move on to the next stage in her life.

Cohen's novel is my favorite type of chick lit: smart, funny, and light without being overtly formulaic. Readers will find themselves cheering on Suzanne, and even though the book's setup helps shift the possibility of a happy ending into almost-certainty, no one will be exactly sure of how Suzanne's life — once she gets one — will fit into her idea of what it should be.

Read more of my review at [Playing with Words](#)

Disclosure: I received a copy of this book for consideration for review. All opinions are my own.

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## Dale says

In spite of my being an early thirtysomething, female NYC-dweller, pretty much the target demographic for these books, I'm not at all what one would call a "chick lit" person. I have absolutely no interest in the *Bridget Jones's Diaries* of the literary world or any of those other books you'll find with jackets splashily showing cartoonishly thin renderings of trendy cosmopolitan young women clutching oversize designer purses and tiny dogs on leashes. No, thanks. So I was a little skeptical when I picked up *Suzanne Davis Gets a Life* on a friend's recommendation.

However, I was pleasantly surprised to find myself really enjoying this book. There's too much plot to discuss in a short online review, but I'll mention just a few parts that I loved. First, the basic plot is intriguing for a literary-nerd lady like myself and the book is genuinely funny. Suzanne is on a quest for her own Mr. Darcy, but she realizes that Elizabeth Bennet found hers among just the few inhabitants of a tiny 19th-century English village, whereas Suzanne lives in the immensely populated New York City of today. So she decides to scale down her search for Mr. Darcy to just the contacts she has within her own Upper West Side apartment building. I found this conceit truly inventive and a fun framework for a novel. And throughout, there is so much well-executed comedy, I found myself chuckling aloud as I read it.

Second, I thought it was great that I started out the novel kind of loathing Suzanne, but by the end of it I came to admire her and to wish I had some of her brassiness. Her character progression is realistic, well done, and praiseworthy. I also appreciated reading from the viewpoint (and this is not a spoiler because it's mentioned on the book cover) of a person dealing with serious illness with humor and self-deprecation. I

think in real life a lot of people deal with illness that way, but we so rarely get to see or read about it in popular culture. I'd compare this novel's treatment of it with that of the excellent film *50/50* or with David Rakoff's wonderful essays about his own disease, which he ultimately succumbed to.

Suzanne is not a character you're going to immediately get behind. She's selfish, diet-obsessed, cynical, lazy, oblivious, and a bit overly conscious of her biological clock. But as the book progresses and you spend more time with her, you quickly begin to realize that she is also curious, intelligent, funny, self-aware, generous, and willing to grow and learn from her mistakes—attributes we all should strive for. I delighted in following Suzanne on her journey to find her Mr. Darcy, and really, herself.

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### **P Bright says**

I really enjoy Ms. Cohen's work. This was a truly touching look at how a thirty something takes charge of her life and realizes her dreams in totally unexpected ways.

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### **Amy Vey says**

As soon as I started reading, I started giggling at some of the author's references about life, relationships, and men. The book was an easy read from start to finish. I definitely enjoyed the fast minded, talking and thinking on the author's part. I was glad to know someone could babble on like me sometimes. I also related to the love/hate relationship with her Mother. Ultimately, no matter what the circumstances or relationship, they are still your Mother. I laughed hysterically at the debacle with Kurt and Phillip; too funny! I wasn't expecting the story to turn the way it did, however, I was glad to see that someone can shed a positive light, mindset, disposition on what most would consider a big fat negative in their life. I am going to borrow this to a friend who has been in the author's shoes, just a different form of it, and hopefully she can see the positivity in the book. Thanks for allowing me to be a Goodreads winner! Much gratitude!

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### **Connie Fischer says**

Suzanne is a 31...OK...34-year-old single woman living in a tiny apartment in New York City. Her job is as a technical writer for an air-conditioning company. With her biological clock ticking away, she has yet to find the perfect man. As she works mostly from home, her every day life is pretty predictable. However, she is determined to step up her search for a husband and decides to start by spending time on the apartment's playground observing the mothers as they interact with their children on a daily basis. She slowly gets to know some of them which gets her introduced to several men and involved with a book group. A couple of the men she meets aren't too bad but neither are they the greatest.

Suzanne has a mother who has driven her crazy all of her life resulting in her now amassing large fees from her shrink. Thank goodness her mother lives in Arizona.

The story takes us through some of the dates Suzanne has with men and the resulting sexual encounters. In addition, she introduces readers to the characters in her apartment building that will leave the reader

laughing.

Life continues on this flat line way until Suzanne is diagnosed with breast cancer. What follows is an account of her reaction to her illness and her treatment.

The novel has a number of laugh out loud moments. The biggest thing that struck me was that I could just hear Woody Allen telling this story. It was perfectly written for him to narrate it.

While I enjoyed some of the humorous moments and goofy characters, I found that the book became a bit monotonous after awhile. However, I'm sure many readers will like the comedy.

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### **Peebee says**

OK, so this may not have been the perfect book, but it gets 5 stars from me: 1) because if I could write a chick lit book, this is exactly the kind of book I would write; and 2) the author's name is the same as mine, so maybe this is the kind of chick lit book I could write someday. Suzanne Davis is not very likeable in my book -- her personality is not one towards which I would naturally gravitate -- but she is a real and genuine heroine. So many of these books are all about meeting Mr. Right, and how life first becomes interesting due to all the interactions they have (positive and negative) and then becomes perfect when they both succumb to their attraction. Suzanne Davis' life transformation was not dependent on meeting the guy, and was more about when you have the right priorities and fix the broken things in your life, then the people who come into it become worthy of your attention. I like the philosophy and accordingly, I liked this book a lot.

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### **Booktart says**

I didn't enjoy this much at the beginning and almost put it down but I'm glad I kept with it. Suzanne Davis, the narrator, becomes more and more likable as the story goes on and she encounters certain challenges in her life. While this may be characterized as "chick lit" (a genre that I enjoy) the story was unique and offered some valuable lessons.

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### **Kathleen Kelly says**

Suzanne Davis Gets a Life is how one unhappy woman decides to do some changes in her life. She has a rather boring job, even though she has the luxury of working from home. She has issues with dating and a mother who is a very annoying woman, albeit helpful when Suzanne is diagnosed with cancer. We learn a lot about the characters that live in her Upper West side apartment. We go along with Suzanne for the ride of the hell that cancer can be, through chemo treatments, losing her hair, wig shopping and generally not feeling well. I know what this is like having had a husband go through chemo treatments. It is not a fun ordeal for the person suffering from it not the caregivers observing it. But persevere she does with sarcastic wit and a best friend and her mother to help her through the worst of it.

Does Suzanne Davis get a life and is it the one she most wants?? You have to read the book for those answers... I loved this fast paced at times snarky novel. It is easy to read and full of interesting and eccentric people, most of whom live in Suzanne's apartment building. Great story!

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## Jennifer says

This book took a turn in the middle I totally didn't expect and is all the better for it.

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## Story Circle Book Reviews says

Paula Marantz Cohen's plucky heroine in *Suzanne Davis Gets a Life* is a 34-year-old single woman living in a "shoe-box" sized apartment in Manhattan and writing press releases for I-ACE, the International Association of Air Conditioning Engineers. With a far-from-glamorous job, a ticking biological clock and not even a Mr. Right-Enough in sight, Suzanne has decided enough is enough. "Let's face it; I want more," she tells us straight. "I'm not asking for a Jane Austen novel, but I want love or at least companionship and maybe a bigger apartment. In short, I want a life." (p.7)

Suzanne goes about the getting of a life in a humorous and determined way. Taking inspiration from Jane Austen, who focused her plots on a few families in a small English country village, Suzanne decides to focus her husband-hunting efforts on the dozen or so people in her New York apartment building.

As a tech writer working from home, Suzanne has a flexible schedule and she takes full advantage of it. She decides to launch her find-a-mate project by studying the mothers in her building who frequent the playground across the street. They have succeeded at marriage and motherhood and must, she concludes, have something to teach her. Before long, she has them categorized into three groups. First are the very young, "dazed"-looking moms who seem to be "wondering how it was they had gotten here." Next are the slightly older moms who have left work to stay home full time and are secretly exultant if a little guilty about it. Finally there are the really old moms who are completely engrossed in every aspect of childcare to a worrying degree. "All that care—how could it not result in serious neurosis?" Suzanne asks.

It isn't long before Suzanne "makes contact." Pauline, a forty-something mom of a precocious young daughter asks Suzanne to join her book club, promising that one member is a suitable, unattached young man who might be just the one she's looking for. Of course it is never quite that easy. Suzanne picks the least suitable choice more than once, but seems to be making some kind of slow progress when she is suddenly derailed by a diagnosis of "pretty good," curable breast cancer.

Suzanne faces her illness without flinching, humor intact, even though the medication she'll have to take for the next five years probably means that a biological child will not be in the cards. Cancer is a major bummer, but not without its perks. As Suzanne puts it, "It was the first time that I found myself a member of a club where I didn't have to exert myself to belong; I didn't have to make lanyards or sing in the choir or do community service or chatter in Spanish around a lunch table. I didn't even have to read books. It was nice to be congratulated for doing nothing." (p. 197) She's even getting along better with her irritating mother. It all has something to do with perspective. Suzanne realizes that she already has a life, one she's willing to fight for.

The twists and turns of Suzanne's quest to get a life—or rather to fight for the one she already has—are funny in themselves, but funnier still is her dry, sarcastic wit that shows her to be astute but not bitter. This is a book that will really, truly, actually make you laugh out loud. Suzanne Davis is just plain likeable, the kind



of character you not only enjoy but wish were a real person so you could be friends. And the happy ending is at least as satisfying as any Jane Austin novel could be.

by Lisa Shirah-Hiers  
for Story Circle Book Reviews  
reviewing books by, for, and about women

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### **Barbara says**

Suzanne is single, working at a boring job and living in a tiny apartment in NYC. She kvetches big time, but eventually is able to adjust to her world with grace and humor. Funny observations, and good life lesson!

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