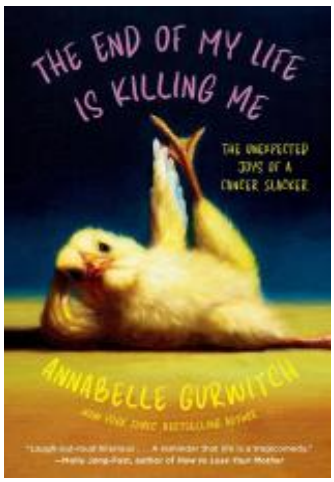
The End of My Life Is Killing Me: The Unexpected Joys of a Cancer Slacker

by Annabelle Gurwitch



About the Book

In this deftly comedic and deeply contemplative memoir, *New York Times* bestselling author Annabelle Gurwitch faces life?s biggest curveball only to find resilience in the most unlikely places.

After Annabelle Gurwitch received an out-of-the blue diagnosis of Stage 4 lung cancer, an existential dread set in. Precision medicine offered a temporary reprieve --- but instead of turning into a cancer warrior, Annabelle declared herself a *cancer slacker*. Her motto: no runs, no ribbons, no religion.

Told with her signature wit, warmth and gimlet eye, Gurwitch draws inspiration from Greek mythology and TV comedies, Kermit the Frog and Samuel Beckett. She accidentally acquires an angel, embraces being in it ?just for the sex,? and finds herself on a European van tour selling merch for a heavy metal band.

In this hilariously and deeply affecting meditation on mortality, the actress and activist illuminates life with chronic disease, inequities in care and celebrates tiny victories, the crusty ends of baguettes, the discreet pleasure of sucking at a hobby, and the unshakable bond of female friendship. She upends the notion of *living each day as if it were your last*, as she discovers you can carpe too much diem, embracing, instead, the extraordinariness of the ordinary.

Discussion Guide

1. The title balances humor and dread in a very particular way. How did it shadow your expectations before you dived in?

2. Annabelle Gurwitch often uses humor where another writer might lean into seriousness. What were some distinct moments of this approach? Did those moments surprise, relieve or unsettle you?

3. The book traces a shift from mere survival to a more active embrace of living --- especially when it felt uncomfortable. How did you interpret Gurwitch?s reframing of the old adage ?carpe diem,? and did it resonate with you?

4. Illness introduces a new social script: what to say, how to behave, how to be supportive. Did the book make you rethink how you?ve shown up for people who were sick?

5. Several essays interrogate both the promise and pressure of optimism. How does the book complicate the idea that a positive attitude is always necessary, or even helpful?

6. Relationships with family and friends subtly shift throughout the book. What were some standout moments when illness clarified a relationship by strengthening it or revealing something that had always been there?

7. The book touches on alternative medicine and wellness culture with curiosity and skepticism. Did it challenge any beliefs or validate any doubts you hold?

8. Several essays hinge on small details --- a remark from a doctor, a line from Samuel Beckett --- that end up carrying disproportionate emotional weight. Which specific detail lingered with you most, and why do you think it became so resonant within the larger narrative?

9. Were there moments that felt familiar for you or a loved one, even if your circumstances were different?

10. After finishing the book, what stayed with you most, whether it be a specific image, a line, a question or a shift in perspective?

Author Bio

Annabelle Gurwitch is an actress, activist and *New York Times* bestselling author of six books and a two-time Thurber Prize finalist. Her essays and satire have appeared in such publications as *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*. Her books include the *New York Times* bestseller I SEE YOU MADE AN EFFORT and YOU'RE LEAVING WHEN?, a *New York Times* ?Favorite Book for Healthy Living.? Annabelle co-hosted the fan favorite ?Dinner & a Movie? on TBS and was a regular commentator on NPR. She is a Jewish mother, lung cancer survivor and patient advocate, a terrible ukulele player, and an unrepentant cat lady who lives in Los Angeles.

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Publication Date: March 17, 2026
Genres: Memoir, Nonfiction
Paperback: 240 pages
Publisher: Zibby Publishing
ISBN-10: N/A
ISBN-13: 9798992377071