

# Diary of a Mad Housewife: A Novel of Sexism, Suburbia, and Sanity

Sue Kaufman's 1967 novel, *Diary of a Mad Housewife*, is a powerful and moving exploration of the themes of sexism, suburbia, and sanity. The novel follows the life of Tina Balsler, a housewife who struggles to find her place in a world that seems to value women only as wives and mothers.



## Diary of a Mad Housewife: A Novel by Sue Kaufman

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 4389 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Print length : 320 pages



Tina's husband, Jonathan, is a successful doctor who expects her to be the perfect wife and mother. He is dismissive of her interests and ambitions, and he often makes her feel like she is not good enough. Tina is also isolated from her friends and family, who live far away. She feels trapped and alone, and she begins to question her own sanity.

As Tina's frustration and anger grow, she begins to lash out at her husband and children. She also starts to have strange and disturbing dreams. Tina's behavior becomes increasingly erratic, and she eventually has a nervous breakdown. She is committed to a mental hospital, where she is diagnosed with "hysteria."

The novel ends with Tina's release from the hospital. She has come to terms with her own sanity and the insanity of the world around her. She is no longer willing to conform to the expectations of others, and she is determined to live her life on her own terms.

Diary of a Mad Housewife is a powerful and moving novel that offers a unique perspective on the lives of women in the 1960s. The novel is still relevant today, as it continues to explore the challenges that women face in a world that is often hostile to them.

## Themes

Diary of a Mad Housewife explores a number of important themes, including:

- **Sexism:** The novel is a powerful indictment of the sexism that was prevalent in the 1960s. Tina is constantly belittled and dismissed by her husband and other men in her life. She is expected to be a perfect wife and mother, and she is not allowed to have any interests or ambitions of her own.
- **Suburbia:** The novel also explores the theme of suburbia. Tina lives in a suburban neighborhood that is filled with Stepford Wives and well-manicured lawns. This is a world that is stifling and oppressive, and it is a world that Tina longs to escape.
- **Sanity:** The novel also explores the theme of sanity. Tina is constantly questioning her own sanity and the sanity of the world around her. She is diagnosed with "hysteria," but it is clear that she is not really crazy. She is simply a woman who is struggling to cope with the sexism and oppression of her world.

## Characters

The novel's main characters are:

- **Tina Balsler:** Tina is the protagonist of the novel. She is a housewife who is struggling to find her place in a world that seems to value women only as wives and mothers.
- **Jonathan Balsler:** Jonathan is Tina's husband. He is a successful doctor who expects Tina to be the perfect wife and mother. He is dismissive of her interests and ambitions, and he often makes her feel like she is not good enough.
- **Dr. Lester:** Dr. Lester is the psychiatrist who treats Tina. He is a kind and compassionate man who tries to help Tina understand her own sanity.

## Setting

The novel is set in a suburban neighborhood in the 1960s. The neighborhood is filled with Stepford Wives and well-manicured lawns. This is a world that is stifling and oppressive, and it is a world that Tina longs to escape.

## Reception

Diary of a Mad Housewife was a critical and commercial success when it was first published in 1967. The novel has been praised for its powerful and moving exploration of the themes of sexism, suburbia, and sanity. The novel has also been praised for its strong and relatable characters.

Diary of a Mad Housewife has been adapted into a number of films and television shows. The most famous adaptation is the 1974 film starring

Richard Benjamin and Carrie Snodgress. The novel has also been adapted into a stage play and a musical.

## Legacy

Diary of a Mad Housewife is a classic of feminist literature. The novel has been praised for its powerful and moving exploration of the themes of sexism, suburbia, and sanity. The novel has also been praised for its strong and relatable characters.

Diary of a Mad Housewife is still relevant today, as it continues to explore the challenges that women face in a world that is often hostile to them. The novel is a must-read for anyone who is interested in women's literature, feminism, or the 1960s.



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