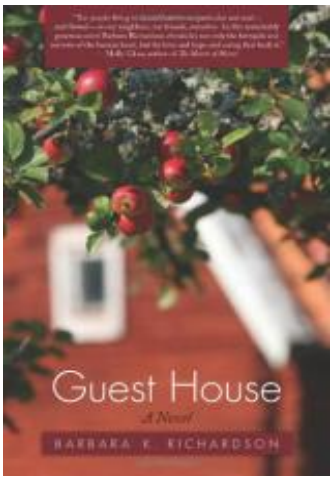
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Guest House

by Barbara K. Richardson



About the Book

Sometimes you have to step out of your protective shell to be your greatest self. For Melba Burns, a midlife go-getter, it?s the uncanny pull of a shy, ingenious 10-year-old boy that cracks open her solo world.

Melba witnesses a terrible accident, which stops her in her high-achieving tracks. She quits her job and retreats into her beloved old farmhouse to live in simple peace. But peace and Melba?s new roommate, JoLee Garry, have never met. The buxom JoLee brings boyfriends, booze and layoffs into Melba?s household, not to mention an alcoholic husband who has kidnapped their son Matt. The desperate, half-broken Garry family trails a series of unexpected guests into Melba?s semi-retirement. Melba sees in Matt, almost too late, someone genuinely worth protecting.

Guest House explores the grace that flows from daring to intervene in a stranger?s suffering. It is a fast-paced tale set in Portland, Oregon and Atomic City, Idaho, the absolute center of nowhere. Readers who may have forgotten the power of living simply, and anyone in their middle years whose life has been hijacked by love, will fall under the spell of these all-too-human characters and the relationships which they destroy and forge.

?This being human is a guest house,? the poet Rumi says, ?Every morning a new arrival??

Click here to watch the video trailer, ?The Inspiration for Guest House.?

Discussion Guide

1. You meet the four main characters of Guest House in chapter one. Which is your favorite character. Why?

2. Melba Burns jumps off the fast track, sidelines her car, hauls groceries home in a wheelbarrow. Do you relate to Melba?s retreat from motorized society? Would you ever consider giving up your car?

3. The Garry family is a family on wheels. How have vehicles impacted their lives?

4. Matt is so private. How does Melba draw Matt out?

5. Matt enthusiastically takes apart Melba?s Volvo. What else do the two friends have in common? Their ages are decades apart. Why does their bond go so deep?

6. Will JoLee ever find her perfect mate? How many women do you know who work full time at securing a life partner?

7. Gene Garry is a likable drunk. What redeems him from utter uselessness?

8. Matt creates internal worlds to get him through hard times. Is imagination a real tool for coping with difficult circumstances? Does it help and/or harm?

9. What avenues of support does our society give to children in troubled households?

10. Melba has no legal right to step into this family. Can you justify her interference on behalf of Matt Garry?

11. Atomic City plays a major role in Matt?s life. How does this derelict town contribute to the richness of the **Guest House** story?

Author Bio

Barbara Richardson earned her MFA in Creative Writing at Eastern Washington University. She has taught prep school, sailed the Pacific in a 44-foot boat, managed an independent bookstore and run her own landscape design business. She lives in Salt Lake City.

Critical Praise

"Richardson, who is part comedienne, part landscape artist and part Zen master, reveals the vulnerability of her characters with utmost delicacy?there is salvation here, and it happens in this addictively-readable and often hilarious novel..."

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