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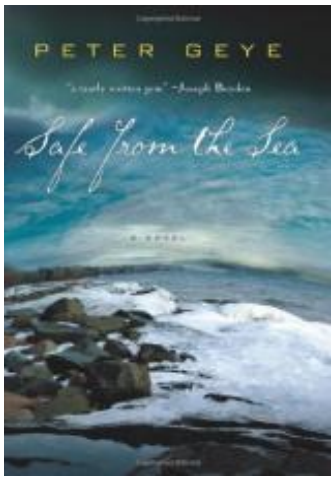
Safe from the Sea

by Peter Geye



About the Book

Set against the powerful lakeshore landscape of northern Minnesota, Safe from the Sea is a heartfelt novel in which a son returns home to reconnect with his estranged and dying father 35 years after the tragic wreck of a Great Lakes ore boat that the father only partially survived and that has divided them emotionally ever since. When his father for the first time finally tells the story of the horrific disaster he has carried with him so long, it leads the two men to reconsider each other. Meanwhile, Noah?s own struggle to make a life with an absent father has found its real reward in his relationship with his sagacious wife, Natalie, whose complications with infertility issues have marked her husband s life in ways he only fully realizes as the reconciliation with his father takes shape. Peter Geye has delivered an archetypal story of a father and son, of the tug and pull of family bonds, of Norwegian immigrant culture, of dramatic shipwrecks and the business and adventure of Great Lakes shipping in a setting that simply casts a spell over the characters as well as the reader.

Discussion Guide

1. How has grief changed the lives of the main characters in this novel?

2. How does setting affect these characters, and reflect them?

3. Did Noah make the right decision to go help his father and leave Natalie?

4. Noah is interested in ski jumping and in old maps. How do these metaphors shape the story?

5. Why do you think Olaf turned to Noah for help instead of turning to Solveig? Were his reasons deeper than the obvious?

6. How are these characters now safe from the sea?

7. Olaf presents his son with a special request. Do you think it was too much to ask? Were you surprised with how things played out?

8. Is this book about fathers and fatherhood? Or is it more a book about family?

9. Alyson Hagy, in praising the novel, said it was ?All shipwreck and rescue.? Do you agree? If so, how?

10. Some would argue this is a novel of redemption. Discuss.

Author Bio

Peter Geye is the author of the award-winning novels SAFE FROM THE SEA, THE LIGHTHOUSE ROAD and WINTERING, winner of the Minnesota Book Award, NORTHERNMOST and THE SKI JUMPERS.

Geye received his MFA from the University of New Orleans and his PhD from Western Michigan University, where he was editor of Third Coast. He currently teaches the year-long Novel Writing Project at the Loft Literary Center. Born and raised in Minneapolis, he continues to live there with his family.

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