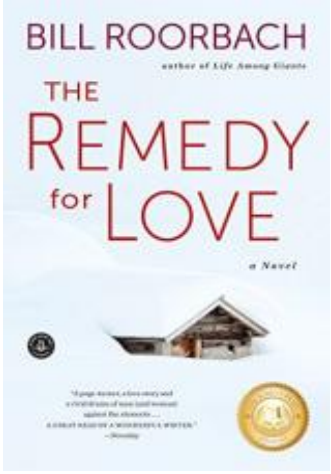
The Remedy for Love

by Bill Roorbach



About the Book

They?re calling for the ?Storm of the Century,? and in western Maine, that means something. So Eric closes his law office early and heads to the grocery store. But when an unkempt and seemingly unstable young woman in line comes up short on cash, a kind of old-school charity takes hold of his heart --- 20 bucks and a ride home; that?s the least he can do.

Trouble is, Danielle doesn?t really have a home. She?s squatting in a cabin deep in the woods: no electricity, no plumbing, no heat. Eric, with troubles --- and secrets --- of his own, tries to walk away but finds he can?t. She?ll need food, water, and firewood, and that?s just to get her through the storm: there?s a whole long winter ahead.

Resigned to help, fending off her violent mistrust of him, he gets her set up, departs with relief, and climbs back to the road, but --- winds howling, snow mounting --- he finds his car missing, phone inside. In desperation, he returns to the cabin. Danielle?s terrified, then merely enraged. And as the storm intensifies, these two lost souls are forced to ride it out together.

Intensely moving, frequently funny, THE REMEDY FOR LOVE is a harrowing story about the truths we reveal when there is no time or space for artifice.

Discussion Guide

1. A plot can sometimes be thought of as a cascade of events. Can you trace the elements of that cascade here? Which moments could be considered points of no return? Upon which elements does the story primarily turn?

2. Our protagonists meet in line at a grocery store, each with a basket of purchases that might or might not illuminate their characters. How do those purchases find their ways into the rest of the story? What role does food --- buying, cooking, serving, eating --- play in the novel?

3. Eric and Danielle seem ill suited for one another on the surface, yet as events peel away their defenses and their social strategies, an essential compatibility is revealed. Or is it? Do you think there?s a chance they will continue on beyond this adventure as a successful couple? Why or why not?

4. What did you expect from the story, and what did you hope for, and what might you change about the ending if it were yours to adjust?

5. THE REMEDY FOR LOVE is built in three parts. How do these divisions announce changes in the story? In the characters? In the reader?s understanding of both?

6. Something close to 100 percent of scientists agree that climate change is happening, is measurable, and is caused by human activities. One effect of climate change, already in place and predicted to worsen, is an increase in the number and severity of storms of all kinds, including winter storms. The reviewer for *Newsday* says that though THE REMEDY FOR LOVE ?contains no references to global warming, it might be the first grown-up climate-change love story.? What does she mean?

7. Did you start out liking one of the two main characters more than the other? Did your allegiances shift? If there was a particular moment your feelings changed about the characters, when exactly was it?

8. Who is saving whom in this story? In what ways does each character need help? In what ways does each offer it?

9. THE REMEDY FOR LOVE is a portrait, in its way, of small-town New England life, though it takes place mostly in the confines of a small cabin. What role does the community of Woodchurch play in the story?

10. Could the cabin be thought of as a character?

11. Both Eric and Danielle are deeply mired in relationships far from their immediate plight. How important are the characters who remain offstage --- Alison and Jimmy, in particular --- and in what ways do they make themselves known in the story, even central to it?

12. ?Man against Nature? is a common theme of literature. How does THE REMEDY FOR LOVE fit into that model? How does itsubvert it? To what extent is nature a character here?

13. What is the function of the beach Eric seems so intent on building; why does he spend so much time arranging his house, while Danielle waits on the porch?

14. The remedy for love, Thoreau has said, is ?to love more.? How does that advice play out in the novel?

15. Some readers come to the end of THE REMEDY FOR LOVE and believe that one or the other character or both of them have died in the end, while other readers are equally certain they are both alive. What?s the case for either point of

view, and to which do you subscribe?

Author Bio

Bill Roorbach is the author of 10 books, including the Montana Award-winning LUCKY TURTLE, THE GIRL OF THE LAKE, the *Kirkus* Prize finalist THE REMEDY FOR LOVE, the bestselling LIFE AMONG GIANTS and the Flannery O?Connor Award?winning collection BIG BEND. Roorbach has received fellowships from the Civitella Ranieri Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. His craft book, WRITING LIFE STORIES, has been in print for over 25 years. His writing has appeared in *Harper?s*, the *New York Times Magazine*, the *Atlantic*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Granta*, *Ecotone*, *New York* magazine, *The American Scholar* and other publications. He lives in Maine with his family.

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Publication Date: June 30, 2015
Genres: Fiction, Romance, Romantic Suspense, Suspense, Thriller
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: Algonquin Books
ISBN-10: 1616204788
ISBN-13: 9781616204785