



I Hate to Leave This Beautiful Place

Howard Norman

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“A bracing and no-nonsense memoir, infused with fresh takes on love, death, and human nature.” — *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

As with many of us, the life of acclaimed novelist Howard Norman has had its share of incidents of “arresting strangeness.” Yet few of us connect these moments, as Norman has done in this spellbinding memoir, to show how life tangles with the psyche to become art. Norman’s story begins with a portrait, both harrowing and hilarious, of a Midwest boyhood summer working in a bookmobile, in the shadow of a grifter father and under the erotic tutelage of his brother’s girlfriend. His life story continues in places as far-flung as the Arctic, where he spends part of a decade as a translator of Inuit tales—including the story of a soapstone carver turned into a goose whose migration-time lament is “I hate to leave this beautiful place”—and in his beloved Point Reyes, California, as a student of birds. In the Arctic, he receives news over the radio that “John Lennon was murdered tonight in the city of New York in the USA.” And years later, in Washington, D.C., another act of deeply felt violence occurs in the form of a murder-suicide when Norman and his wife loan their home to a poet and her young son. Norman’s story is also stitched together with moments of uncanny solace. Of life in his Vermont farmhouse Norman writes, “Everything I love most happens most every day.”

In the hands of Howard Norman, author of *The Bird Artist* and *What Is Left the Daughter*, life’s arresting strangeness is made into a profound, creative, and redemptive memoir.

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