ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

GENERAL

Nor'east Love Storm
Peter Sonderegger
Xlibris
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Two Stars (out of Five)

A nor'easter—a legendary storm that can cause havoc across New England—becomes a catalyst of change for four lives in Peter Sonderegger's Nor'east Love Storm. Married couples Eric and Susan Forster, an orthopedic surgeon and a university soccer coach, and Jack and Janet Meacham, a retired pro football player and a school teacher, are set to meet for a friendly winter getaway when the nor'easter strikes. A weatherman warns, "'there appears to be a major storm headed into Maine that will hit the western hills first…drive with caution because there will probably be a combination of snow and freezing rain falling with significant winds in the foothills.'"

Jack and Susan escape the university where they work, but are forced to take refuge at the Forsters' lakeside home. Eric and Janet are stranded just as they reach the rustic Benoit Lodge. With that, the storm disrupts more than just their ski plans. All that happens—and doesn't happen—between the two disparate couples alters all four lives, as the characters make personal and professional discoveries. While readers might be surprised with the story's resolution, it is amply foreshadowed.

Nor'east Love Storm is a quick read that will appeal to those who enjoy romantic fare. There are sexual encounters, and the book concludes with a happily-ever-after resolution, but one that is unlike those usually encountered in the genre. Sonderegger's prose is straightforward and plain-spoken, but relies too much on telling rather than drawing the reader into nuanced scenes. For example, the author writes, "The discussion would have continued, but the waitress brought their lunch, which they ate in relative silence with smiles of happiness transmitted back and forth."

The dialogue is easily followed, although some remarks from minor characters seem unnatural. "Eric, you must have the patience of Job not to do what should have been done in a bed between a beautiful girl and a handsome boy," a friend says.

The author also has a tendency toward repetition. For example, he opens a chapter with

Eric stating, “Mom and Dad have asked the two of us to stay with them.” After a brief exchange of dialogue, Eric repeats, “My folks have invited us to stay in their house.”

Sonderegger, who has a degree in journalism and has worked in advertising and as a business owner, is clearly knowledgeable about his Maine setting. He has sketched his characters and their backgrounds with sufficient depth to render their actions believable. Despite its flaws, Nor’east Love Storm’s interesting premise will please romance fans.

Gary Presley