

The Femme Fatale Hypothesis by David R. Roth

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A psychological thriller that tests the thin line between mercy and murder

More accurately a love triptych than triangle, *The Femme Fatale Hypothesis* is the story of one spring when three people form intimate bonds forged in the fires of their respective tribulations. As Rose Geddes's lung cancer progresses toward its inexorable end and her husband's ability to care for her diminishes, their widowed neighbor, June Danhill, stumbles into the middle of their intersecting crises. June's only son, daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren have recently moved to the west coast. She embraces the opportunity to distract herself from her loneliness by helping to care for the Geddes. It isn't long before June realizes that Rose wants more from her than she is willing to give. Love and loss, family secrets, a long-forgotten keepsake, and the sexual cannibalism of the false garden mantid all fuel this dark drama that tests the thin line between mercy and murder.

—David Roth brings a scientist's sensibility and toolbox to his storytelling, and his are rare instruments. He has a preternatural ability to trap moments in characters' lives and preserve them in words that amplify and crystalize human emotion. There are so many sentences in this book to be dissected, admired and marveled at. The sum total is a story that feels both self-evident and astonishing.”

—Nomi Eve, author of *Henna House* and *The Family Orchard*,
a Book-of-the-Month Club main selection

“*The Femme Fatale Hypothesis* is an expertly tuned and suspenseful story crafted with great intelligence and skill, a slow-burn book that moves deftly to its incendiary ending. Roth is a careful craftsman and a bold provocateur.”

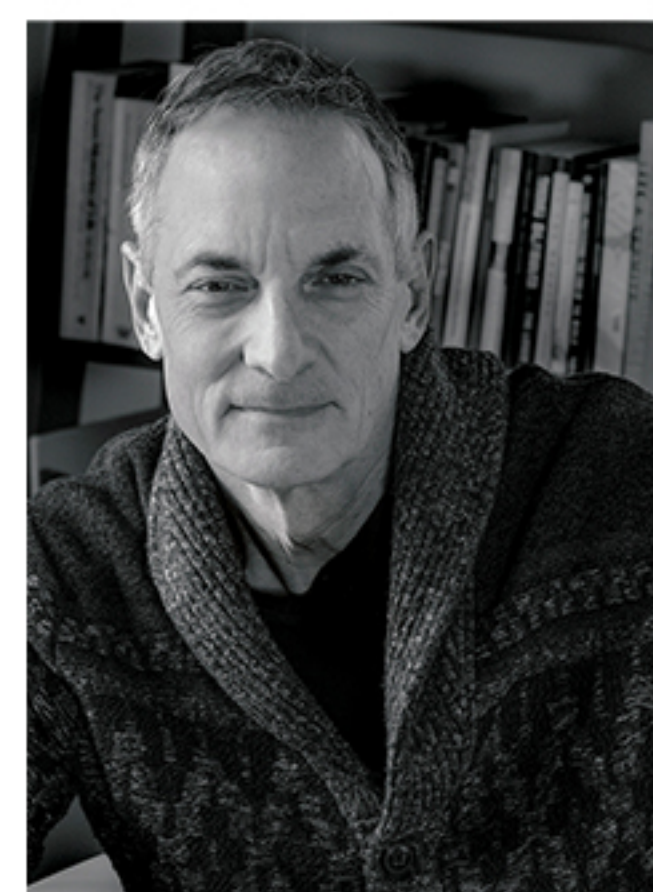
—Keija Parssinen, author of *The Ruins of Us* and *The Unraveling of Mercy Louis*

“A luminously written and impeccably well-crafted novel that explores the deepest human mysteries: love and death.... *The Femme Fatale Hypothesis* has a profound resonance in this time when we are all contemplating life's ultimate questions.”

—Jake Lamar, author of *Bourgeois Blues* and *Rendezvous Eighteenth*

“David Roth's *The Femme Fatale Hypothesis* feels like the antidote for a culture numbed by excess, clamor, and shock-value. Here is a story that offers a necessary, yet understated, grace; that pulls quietly at a new sole-string with every turn. Here is writing informed by an archeology as human as it is humane. Add to that a dose of humor that is playful, witty, occasionally life-saving. The scientific turn is multi-dexterous. Expect to hear a good deal more from this level-hearted writer.”

—Robert Antoni, author of *As Flies to Whatless Boys*, recognized with a
Guggenheim Fellowship, and *Cut Guavas*



About the Author:

David R. Roth's short stories have appeared in *Passager Journal*, *Moss*, *Every Writer*. His work focuses on fictional lives lived in fictional river towns in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, his real home for four decades.

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