

LIBRARY JOURNAL

Lovely, Stephen. **Irreplaceable**. Voice: Hyperion. Feb. 2009. c.352p. ISBN 978-1-4013-2282-3. \$24.95. F

The last thing in the world grieving Iowa widower Alex Voorman wants is to hear from the woman who now has his wife's heart. It's been a year since his beloved Isabel was killed in a truck/bicycle accident, and he's barely moving on. Close to his mother-in-law, Bernice, he resents her push for him to speak with Chicagoan Janet Corcoran, who was near death until she received Isabel's heart. First-time novelist Lovely writes unflinchingly of the medical and emotional realities that attend a heart transplant and the terrible toll it can take on recipients and their families, who are desperate to stop worrying, and the donors' loved ones, who will never stop grieving. First novelist Lovely throws into the mix a couple of over-the-top elements, including the truck driver, a disturbed young man whose intrusion into the lives of the two families adds a tension that goes a bit too far as the novel draws to its powerful close. Still, Lovely's sensitive handling of families going from catastrophe to something that looks like normal bodes well for a long, rich career. Strongly recommended.—**Beth E. Andersen, Ann Arbor Dist. Lib., MI**