Who doesn't enjoy a trip out of the city and into the countryside--especially someplace as comforting as Vermont? The benefits of such journeys help reveal the true meaning of the words "recreation" and "refreshment." Reading *Into the Wilderness* by Deborah Lee Luskin will do the same for you.

Throughout most of this delightfully tender love story of revival and renewal, "into the wilderness" seems to represent a later-in-life move to Vermont by the main character--a Jewish woman, widowed twice and quite sure she doesn't have the strength to love again--to the small town of Orton Center, Vermont. Here, a Gentile bachelor lives--a man who has also experienced love and loss. He's about to retire and doesn't know what life holds next. The ways of Rose Mayer and Percy Mendell are strange to each other.

Democrat is about to collide with Republican. Industry is about to confront Agriculture. Judaism is about to encounter Christianity. It's 1964: Kennedy is gone, LBJ is in. Interstate 91 from Massachusetts has opened up Vermont to more of the world. Life is changing in the Green Mountain state, but like the maple syrup produced there, its pace--and the novel's--is moving slowly, and deliciously, towards its intended target.

By the end of the novel, Deborah Lee Luskin (www.deborahluskin.com) has built a strong metaphor linking the exodus of the Hebrews from the bondage of Egypt "into the wilderness" of receiving unknown food, manna from heaven, to Rose's experiencing the love of strangers and community in Orton. Luskin has also taught the reader much about living closer to the joys of the earth: canning tomatoes, taking part in a quilting bee, speaking some Yiddish, listening to classical music, playing the piano with feeling, choosing the right wood for kindling and longer burns--even preparing a Passover seder! In other words, this book is about survival--especially how to survive many of the issues that bind and divide us today.

In this very human story of the Old Country widow, Rose Mayer, and the Puritan bachelor, Percy Mendell, the reader will find cultural partitions, like old curtains, delicately removed and replaced with something finer. Each character is able to overcome the past and enter into a new life. Along with all their friends and neighbors we find ourselves wishing them well. This novel will help you slow down, step back, smell the seasons and taste the goodness of life--and, best of all, taste love.

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