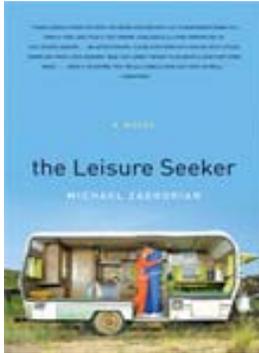


## Review: The Leisure Seeker

by Becky Blanton



Route 66 has been the setting for a lot of memories and dramas, but none quite like the last adventure for John and Ella Robina. The Robinas are the main characters in a book by Michael Zadoorian called *The Leisure Seeker*.

Married for more than fifty years the Robins are now in their eighties, and both are seriously ill. Ella has cancer. John has Alzheimer's. Ella has decided to stop her treatment and let life, and death, proceed on a more natural time table. But she's not ready to go out without one last adventure.

The only thing standing between her and Route 66 and the adventure at the end of it in California, is her children—both adults, both convinced the best place for their aging and ill parents is the retirement home in suburban Detroit where they live.

Before John's Alzheimer's progresses to the point where he forgets how to drive their '78 Leisure Seeker RV, Ella packs the RV and kidnaps them both from their retirement home. She and John set off for Disneyland for one last great hurrah before the cancer and the Alzheimer's catch up with them both.

While the characters are obviously terminal - the story isn't. John drives and Ella reminisces, directs and reflects. The two are 80-year-old runaways—hiding from their adult children while remembering them along the way — driving desperately to reach Disneyland before their children find them and have the state patrol return them to Michigan.

*The Leisure Seekers* is one of the most poignant and humorous books I've read in a long time. Whether you've ever RVed or not, you can still identify with this odyssey into the couple's past. The common theme of the challenges of marriage, of having kids who want to keep their ailing parents safe, but who suffocate them instead are comfortable stereotypes told in a non-stereotypical way.

It's not a sentimental feel good story as much as it is a very real look at the challenges aging and ill seniors find themselves in. Zadoorian's own father had Alzheimer's and died in 2004. So he writes from having been there with ill parents.

Ella is not a Betty Crocker, chocolate-chip, cookie baking grandmother of the 50s. Her language gets salty and harsh at times—so would mine if I were dying from cancer and dealing with John. But their story is believable and, for me at least, reminiscent of at least a few of my own road trips.

The couple revisits the ghost towns, campgrounds, tourist attractions, giant roadside icons, and dusty history that once thrived along Route 66 when they were a young couple with children. This isn't a story about a journey as much as it is about a couple and a decision to take back their freedom. The challenges of traveling and living with a partner with Alzheimer's aren't glossed over, but they aren't recounted in depressing detail either.

Zadoorian uses just enough insight and compassion to show the reader the challenges in a way that allows us to cheer their escape while understanding the inevitable frailty of human health.

If you're looking for a good read, some reflection, a few tears and a story that will challenge you to think about the kind of memories you're making for yourself, *The Leisure Seeker* is a great pick.

You can purchase **The Leisure Seeker: A Novel** in paperback, hardback (<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0061671797>) or Kindle e-book formats (<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001QB9FDA>).

*Becky Blanton is a full-time freelance writer and RVer. She writes for Airstream Life Magazine, Trailer Life and Motivated Magazine, among others. She is based in Richmond, Virginia and is a former journalist.*