



**Title:** The Cure for Grief

**Author:** Nellie Hermann

**Description:**

Ruby is the youngest child in the tightly knit Bronstein family, a sensitive, observant girl who looks up to her older brothers and is in awe of her stern but gentle father, a Holocaust survivor whose past and deep sense of morality inform the family's life. But when Ruby is ten, her eldest brother enters the hospital and emerges as someone she barely recognizes. It is only the first in a startling series of tragedies that befall the Bronsteins and leave Ruby reeling from sorrow and disbelief.

This disarmingly intimate and candid novel follows Ruby through a coming-of-age marked by excruciating loss, one in which the thrills, confusion, and longing of adolescence are heightened by the devastating events that accompany them. As Ruby's family fractures, she finds solace in friendships and the beginnings of romance, in the normalcy of summer camp and the prom. But her anger and heartache shadow these experiences, separating her from those she loves, until she chooses to reconcile what she has lost with whom she has become.

Nellie Hermann's insightful debut is a heartbreakingly authentic story of the enduring potential for resilience and the love that binds a family.

**Reviews**

***Chicago Sun-Times:***

A work of great ambition, *The Cure For Grief* is a shining debut from writer Nellie Hermann.

The similar nature of tragedies (both father and Nathan die of brain tumors) and the springing of sudden madness (Abe's violent revolts are blameless forays into making sense of a senseless world) lend counterweight to the repetitiveness. One wonders if Hermann meant these as elliptical references to the destructiveness of the Holocaust.

*The Cure for Grief* is fine writing. In a touching scene, a disturbed Ruby is comforted by her brother Aaron, his pale words bubbling into nothingness. The reader is brought to the point of lashing out on Ruby's part, which she does, and this realization, this stage-setting -- more than anything else -- is the mark of a great writer.

***Kirkus Reviews (starred review):***

[Hermann] delicately illustrate[s] the ways in which grief circumscribes [Ruby's] life and her ability to connect to those she loves, including her surviving family. Profound, poetic and original. Hermann is a young author to watch.

***Boston Globe:***

In her first novel, Nellie Hermann sets herself a daunting task: to tell the story of the Bronstein family, which is hit by lightning, not once, but several times.

As deeply as one feels for this family that has been virtually halved by fate, the reader, and especially the reviewer, sometimes feel ambushed by so much tragedy. Yet this is the way it was. And here is a quintessentially Jewish 20th-century story. What Hermann makes vividly clear is that surviving the Holocaust doesn't ensure an unblemished future. For some families, there is no end to the price that must be paid, and the pain of that simply becomes what "life" means. By the time I finished this moving book, I realized that Hermann had no choice. And now that she has written this brave first novel, let us hope she will let her imagination soar and take her to places where her obvious gifts can develop even more.

***Washington Post:***

Nellie Hermann's first novel is proof that in the hands of a skillful writer, the most familiar themes can still surprise us with their potency and truth.

Why do bad things happen to good people, to our people And how are we survivors to go on with the business of living without forgetting the dead These questions are old. But Ruby's search for her own answers and her struggle to reconnect are moving and surprisingly suspenseful. Now that Hermann has worked through her childhood, it's worth watching to see where she applies her considerable talents next.

***Time:***

The calamities that strike Hermann's characters might be outtakes from the Book of Job, but she renders them with an emotional acuity that makes them believable. And though the shifts in perspective that frame the novel may seem gimmicky, the rhythmic quality of the prose never falters. As for the bleak title, it will surprise the reader to find that, for Ruby at least, there is a cure for grief. It is hard won, yes -- but, in Hermann's telling, it's worth the winning.

***Booklist:***

[T]he book is inarguably well written and clearly deeply felt by its author. Accordingly, readers who enjoy serious ... literary fiction will embrace it.

***Elle:***

You might choose to believe for a moment or several that *The Cure for Grief*, Nellie Hermann's debut coming-of-age tale about Ruby Bronstein, a Jewish girl whose adolescence is colored by the torrent of tragedies -- illnesses, indignities, incurable losses -- that hits her tight-knit family, is a work of pure fiction. But the novel's telltale train of outrageous circumstances, coincidences, and bleakly meaningless juxtapositions ultimately (irony of ironies) precludes the suspension of disbelief.

Hermann, Bronstein's alter ego, is a lyrical archivist, wistful in the retelling of her family's undoing and insistent that she get all the way inside the memories and, with the help of hindsight, deconstruct them. It's a story we are asked to bear with despite little in the way of relief -- which is all too realistic, as well.

***Mary Gordon, author of *Circling My Mother*:***

*The Cure for Grief* is a searingly beautiful, stunning debut, saturated in the lyricism of loss and mourning yet rooted in the everyday. The book's sadness is irradiated by a wild hope as the characters take their places among the living; we are drawn in by the force of their sorrow, but elevated by their rich and complex attachments to each other, the past, the future, and their own inner lives.

**Shira Nayman, author of *Awake in the Dark*:**

*The Cure for Grief* is a profound and thrilling achievement -- an exemplar of the reason books should be written and read. Nellie Hermann is wise beyond her years, though to say this is to miss the point -- that all great artists float beyond age and outside of time. *The Cure for Grief* is a coming-of-age story that reaches far beyond its subject; it shimmers with clarity and grace, fulfilling the deepest of literatures promises -- drawing us into a searing, riveting world, punching us with emotion, revealing the most secret truths of the soul. Her vision is that of the seer, whose illuminating beam might help the reader learn how better to live.

**Dossier:**

Nellie Hermann is a master of memory. In her harrowing debut novel *The Cure for Grief*, nine-year-old Ruby, the youngest of four and the only girl in the Bronstein family, lives through unfathomable loss. When a number of family members succumb to illness in the opening chapters, the book might initially read as over-dramatic ("Loss! Regret! Change!"). But rather than tell the story of Rubys life in strict linear fashion, Hermann carefully doles out memories from Ruby's past, resulting in a story that is much truer to the actual grieving process, as we tend to only allow ourselves to remember after time has passed. The novel quickly becomes more about Ruby's learning to grieve than about the events she is going through. It is as though Hermann herself is becoming more comfortable with the audience, allowing us to see behind the wall Ruby has constructed to deal with her grief.

Perhaps the most beautiful segments in the novel come when Ruby allows herself to be angry at God and to cry and scream. It is here that her fathers words come back to her and carry throughout the rest of the book: "Life is the highest good. Whenever it is possible, choose life." This is not, Ruby comes to realize, just about keeping things alive, but about choosing to truly live the life you were given. Life keeps going, as beautiful and strange as it may be, and we can hope that this young author will keep going, and keep writing.