

# I'LL COME TO YOU

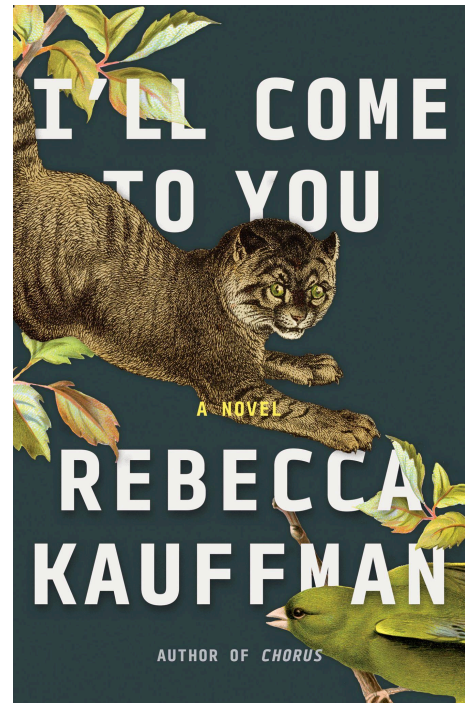
## READING GROUP GUIDE

by Rebecca Kauffman

### About the Book

A modern and classic story of family, *I'll Come to You* chronicles intersecting lives over the course of one year—1995—anchored by the anticipation and arrival of a child. With empathy, insight, and humor, Rebecca Kauffman explores overlapping narratives involving a couple whose struggle to become pregnant has both softened and hardened them, a woman whose husband of forty years has left her for reasons he's unwilling to share and the man who is now disastrously attempting to woo her, a couple in denial about a looming health crisis, and their son who is fumbling toward middle age and can't stop lying. Ultimately, these storylines crescendo and converge into a dramatic and harrowing turn of events. With heart, wit, and courage, and through pain, these characters traverse territory that both challenges and defines the bonds of family.

Sweeping yet compact, *I'll Come to You* investigates themes of intimacy, memory, loss, grief, and reconciliation, and the wonder, terror, frustration, fear, and magic of brushing up against the unknowable—both around us and within us.



### About the Author

Rebecca Kauffman received her MFA in creative writing from New York University. She is the author of *Another Place You've Never Been*, which was long-listed for the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize; *The Gunners*, which received the Premio Tribù dei Librai; *The House on Fripp Island*, and most recently *Chorus*. Originally from rural northeastern Ohio, Kauffman now lives in Virginia.

**“Rebecca Kauffman writes like a sunbeam, strong and warm on whatever lands in her path. This book only looks short—in reality, it reveals a family so richly drawn, so deep and complex, that it contains the whole world.”**

**—Emma Straub, author of *This Time Tomorrow***

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### Discussion Questions

1. The book considers the reverberations of new life. In what ways does Olivia's presence —both before and after her birth—impact those around her?
2. The book takes place over the course of one year, told in monthly stories. How did this structure impact your reading?
3. Do you have specific memories of 1995? Or is there a year in your life that felt similarly significant?
4. The first chapter, titled JANUARY 1995, takes place thirty years ago, from the date of publication of this novel. How are the lives and circumstances of the characters impacted by the timeframe in which the book is set?
5. In FEBRUARY, Corinne holds the belief that in spite of Paul's unwavering support and the love they share, there will always be "fissures and chasms...territory she would walk alone." Do you agree with her perspective? Why or why not?
6. In APRIL, Rob is "wallop[ed] by the immensity of his needs." How would you define these needs, and do you believe they relate to his pattern of lying?
7. In JUNE Pt. 3, Janet defines a daughter's superpower as her "... ability to give and to take so much and so fast that a mother could never feel anything fully ... [or] feel anything safely." What do you make of this assertion, from Janet's experience, and/or your own?
8. In the dramatic argument between the siblings on Christmas Eve, do you find yourself siding and sympathizing more with Rob or Corinne? What about in Ellen and Gary's argument in OCTOBER?
9. Gary and Ellen meet as recent divorcees. How are their experiences and journeys toward healing alike and different?
10. Paul seems unable to escape thoughts of his father. How does this shape his own experience of early fatherhood?

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11. There are various moments when characters reflect on the idea of being known. To what extent do you believe people can truly know one another? Or themselves?

12. Near the end of the book, Janet experiences a powerful desire to go back, "all the way back." Can you identify with this? What sort of circumstances and emotions might inspire this particular sense of longing?