

What happens when a young boy from Connecticut becomes enamored with a world-famous ballerina who may – or may not – have a connection to multiple murders and the mob? Can the boy find the truth amid the raging hormones and the lust? Can the boy recover from the violence perpetrated on his family?

Those are the questions former writing professor Bill Roorbach seeks to answer in his novel, “Life Among Giants.”

When the book burst onto the publishing world in November, Roorbach admitted to being more than a little nervous. Even though the novel was selected as amazon.com’s book of the month in October, the author was anxious about its reception.

“I’m kinda scared, to tell the truth,” Roorbach said during an interview from his home in Maine. “I get quite excited and nervous.”

Roorbach’s rambling story swirls around young David “Lizard” Hochmeyer, a 6-foot-8-inch athlete, and although its many complicated plot lines seem daunting, the author is able to bring everything together at the end.

“The book has lots of layered elements in it,” Roorbach explained. “Lots of layered elements, and it covers a lot of ground – sports, ballet, restaurants, music – every aspect of my life and interests.”

Roorbach planned the book to be intricate.

“Structure is always an interesting problem when you’re covering so much time,” he noted. “One of my goals was to make it a whole life’s story, complicated and complex.”

The idea for the book came in the form of Sylphide, “the greatest ballerina in the world,” who lives with her rock star husband in a mansion across the lake from Lizard and his dysfunctional family.

“Sylphide came to mind years before I started the book,” Roorbach offered. “Later I wanted to put in place a Nick Carraway-type character [The Great Gatsby-1925] who finds himself getting tangled up in the lives of the people he is observing. Suddenly, I got it. This kid’s an athlete.”

Putting Lizard in the role of narrator was easy. Making a book out of it, Roorbach says, was not.

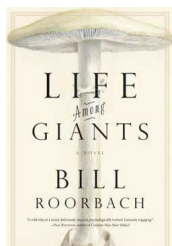
“Part of my goal was to make it seem easy,” he said with a laugh.

When it came to picking a publishing house, however, Roorbach had no problems. He chose Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

“My agent gave me a list of possible editors and I chose Kathy Pories,” he said. “I had a lot of other interest, but I really felt like Algonquin had a feel for the book and Kathy gave me the best ideas.”

Bill Roorbach on LIFE AMONG GIANTS: ‘It was easy to write a lot of pages. It was hard to boil them down

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