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## State of Wonder: A Novel

By Ann Patchett



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State of Wonder: A Novel By Ann Patchett

“Expect miracles when you read Ann Patchett’s fiction.”—*New York Times Book Review*

Award-winning, *New York Times* bestselling author Ann Patchett returns with a provocative and assured novel of morality and miracles, science and sacrifice set in the Amazon rainforest. Infusing the narrative with the same ingenuity and emotional urgency that pervaded her acclaimed previous novels *Bel Canto*, *Taft*, *Run*, *The Magician’s Assistant*, and *The Patron Saint of Liars*, Patchett delivers an enthralling tale of aspiration, exploration, and attachment in *State of Wonder*—a gripping adventure story and a profound look at the difficult choices we make in the name of discovery and love.



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## State of Wonder: A Novel By Ann Patchett Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

**Amazon Best Books of the Month, June 2011:** In *State of Wonder*, pharmaceutical researcher Dr. Marina Singh sets off into the Amazon jungle to find the remains and effects of a colleague who recently died under somewhat mysterious circumstances. But first she must locate Dr. Anneck Swenson, a renowned gynecologist who has spent years looking at the reproductive habits of a local tribe where women can conceive well into their middle ages and beyond. Eccentric and notoriously tough, Swenson is paid to find the key to this longstanding childbearing ability by the same company for which Dr. Singh works. Yet that isn't their only connection: both have an overlapping professional past that Dr. Singh has long tried to forget. In finding her former mentor, Dr. Singh must face her own disappointments and regrets, along with the jungle's unforgiving humidity and insects, making *State of Wonder* a multi-layered atmospheric novel that is hard to put down. Indeed, Patchett solidifies her well-deserved place as one of today's master storytellers. Emotional, vivid, and a work of literature that will surely resonate with readers in the weeks and months to come, *State of Wonder* truly is a thing of beauty and mystery, much like the Amazon jungle itself. --*Jessica Schein*

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## Amazon Exclusive: Elizabeth Gilbert Interviews Ann Patchett

**Elizabeth Gilbert** is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestseller, *Eat, Pray, Love*, as well as the short story collection *Pilgrims*—a finalist for the PEN/Hemingway Award, and winner of the 1999 John C. Zacharis First Book Award from Ploughshares. A Pushcart Prize winner and National Magazine Award-nominated journalist, she works as writer-at-large for GQ.

**Elizabeth Gilbert:** As your close personal friend, I happen to know that you traveled to the Amazon to conduct research for this novel, and that you sort of hated the Amazon--can you share a little about that?



**Ann Patchett:** I absolutely loved the Amazon for four days. It was gorgeous and unfamiliar and deeply fascinating. Unfortunately, I stayed there for ten days. There are a lot of insects in the Amazon, a lot of mud, surprisingly few vegetables, too many snakes. You can't go anywhere by yourself, which makes sense if you don't know the terrain, but I enjoy going places by myself. I can see how great it would be for a very short visit, and how great it would be if you lived there and had figured out what was and wasn't going to kill you, but the interim length of time isn't great.

**EG:** Didn't I hear that you have a sort of magical story about a friend who is also a writer, who was also once going to write a book about the Amazon? Can you share this miraculous tale? Also, is your writer friend pretty?

**AP:** This friend of mine, who happens to be you, is gorgeous, and much taller in real life. Yes, you were writing a novel about the Amazon, and then you decided not to write a novel about the Amazon, and then I started writing a novel about the Amazon, and later when we compared notes (your book dismissed, mine halfway finished) they had remarkably similar story lines, to the point of being eerie. I thought this must be because it was an incredibly banal idea and we had both come up with a generic Amazon novel, but then you told me that ideas fly around looking for homes, and when the idea hadn't worked out with you it came to me. If this is true I think your name should be on the cover. It would increase sales significantly.



**EG:** Readers of your prior work--particularly the luminous *Bel Canto*--will be delighted to see that opera makes an appearance in this novel, as well. In fact, one of the most dramatic scenes in the book takes place at the opera. Is that a wink and a nod to loyal readers, or just an expression of your own deep and abiding musical passions?

**AP:** It's a wink and a nod to Werner Herzog and his brilliant Amazon film "Fitzcarraldo" which opens at the opera house in Manaus where the aforementioned scene takes place. I had very little experience with opera when I wrote *Bel Canto*, and since then it's become a huge part of my life. It was fun to write a scene set at the opera now that I know what I'm talking about.

**EG:** *State of Wonder* a rollicking adventure story, full of peril and bravery and death-defying action. I personally know you to be a homebody who likes to bake muffins for neighbors. How the heck did you pull off this wildness so convincingly? Was it as invigorating to write as it is to read?

**AP:** Ah, the life of the mind. All the adventure I need I can dream up in my kitchen. I love writing outside of my own experience, making imaginary worlds. If I wrote novels based on my own life I would not be making a living at this. I also love to write a strong plot. I want things to happen in my books, I want to be thrilled. I always think about Raymond Chandler. I'm sure I'm getting the phrasing wrong but the general idea is that when things get slow, bring in a man with a gun. If you can't find a gun, a poison arrow works just as well.

**EG:** The cover is a work of beauty. Authors are not always so lucky. Tell us how you managed such a miracle?

**AP:** When I first started writing this book, I came downstairs one night and found my husband listening to "Horowitz at Carnegie Hall". The album cover has a very lush filigreed border. I had two thoughts: first, I have an amazing husband who thankfully held onto his Horowitz LPs; second, that the album cover had the exact the feeling I wanted for my book--half jungle, half Baroque period. When I was finished writing the novel I sent the album to my editor, who sent it to the art department. They understood exactly what I was talking about.

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Patchett (Bel Canto) is a master storyteller who has an entertaining habit of dropping ordinary people into extraordinary and exotic circumstances to see what they're made of. In this expansive page-turner, Marina Singh, a big pharma researcher, is sent by her married boss/lover to the deepest, darkest corner of the Amazon to investigate the death of her colleague, Anders Eckman, who had been dispatched to check on the progress of the incommunicado Dr. Annick Swenson, a rogue scientist on the cusp of developing a fertility drug that could rock the medical profession (and reap enormous profits). After arriving in Manaus, Marina travels into her own heart of darkness, finding Dr. Swenson's camp among the Lakashi, a gentle but enigmatic tribe whose women go on bearing children until the end of their lives. As Marina settles in, she goes native, losing everything she had held on to so dearly in her prescribed Midwestern life, shedding clothing, technology, old loves, and modern medicine in order to find herself. Patchett's fluid prose dissolves in the suspense of this out-there adventure, a juggernaut of a trip to the crossroads of science, ethics, and commerce that readers will hate to see end. (June)

From [Booklist](#)

Marina Singh gave up a career as a doctor after botching an emergency delivery as an intern, opting instead for the more orderly world of research for a pharmaceutical company. When office colleague Anders Eckman, sent to the Amazon to check on the work of a field team, is reported dead, Marina is asked by her company's CEO to complete Anders' task and to locate his body. What Marina finds in the sweltering, insect-infested jungles of the Amazon shakes her to her core. For the team is headed by esteemed scientist Annick Swenson, the woman who oversaw Marina's residency and who is now intent on keeping the team's progress on a miracle drug completely under wraps. Marina's jungle odyssey includes exotic encounters with cannibals and snakes, a knotty ethical dilemma about the basic tenets of scientific research, and joyous interactions with the exuberant people of the Lakashi tribe, who live on the compound. In fluid and remarkably atmospheric prose, Patchett captures not only the sights and sounds of the chaotic jungle environment but also the struggle and sacrifice of dedicated scientists. **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** The award-winning, New York Times best-selling author's latest novel is being supported with an author tour, a national advertising campaign, blogger outreach, and a reading-group guide. --Joanne Wilkinson

## Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Bradley Loy:**

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**George Cornelius:**

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**James Ames:**

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**Robert Alcock:**

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