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The Orchid Thief: A True Story Of Beauty And Obsession (Ballantine Reader's Circle)



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • A NEW YORK TIMES NOTABLE BOOK • A modern classic of personal journalism, *The Orchid Thief* is Susan Orlean's wickedly funny, elegant, and captivating tale of an amazing obsession. Determined to clone an endangered flower—the rare ghost orchid *Polyprrhiza lindenii*—a deeply eccentric and oddly attractive man named John Laroche leads Orlean on an unforgettable tour of America's strange flower-selling subculture, through Florida's swamps and beyond, along with the Seminoles who help him and the forces of justice who fight him. In the end, Orlean—and the reader—will have more respect for underdog determination and a powerful new definition of passion. • In this new edition, coming fifteen years after its initial publication and twenty years after she first met the orchid thief, • Orlean revisits this unforgettable world, and the route by which it was brought to the screen in the film *Adaptation*, in a new retrospective essay. Look for special features inside. Join the Random House Reader's Circle for author chats and more. • Praise for *The Orchid Thief* • • "Stylishly written, whimsical yet sophisticated, quirkily detailed and full of empathy . . . *The Orchid Thief* shows [Orlean's] gifts in full bloom." • "The New York Times Book Review • "Fascinating . . . an engrossing journey [full] of theft, hatred, greed, jealousy, madness, and backstabbing." • "Los Angeles Times • "Orlean's snapshot-vivid, pitch-perfect prose . . . is fast becoming one of our national treasures." • "The Washington Post Book World • "Orlean's gifts [are] her ear for the self-skewing dialogue, her eye for the incongruous, convincing detail, and her Didion-like deftness in description." • "Boston Sunday Globe • "A swashbuckling piece of reporting that celebrates some virtues that made America great." • "The Wall Street Journal

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First, a few caveats (it's always best to be up-front about ones biases and assumptions): 1) I haven't read Ms. Orlean's 'New Yorker' article, so I have no basis of comparison between it and this book. 2) I have never lived in South Florida, and have only visited Miami Beach twice, so my ability to say what is "true" about Florida's history and culture is somewhat limited and I won't even bother to attempt to verify any of Ms. Orlean's assertions. Fact - or slightly modified fact - I don't know...That being said, this book is a very enjoyable, engaging read. No, it does not have a particularly suspenseful or intriguing STORYline, especially if what you're looking for is an amazing-but-true mystery with high drama and a surprise ending. The author says, from the beginning, that she can only deal in the facts of the case - if she wants to keep this a non-fiction book, she's limited by real events. What she does, very successfully, however, is reveal the fascinating world of obsession and collecting - in this case, for a particular form of plant. And she does this with amazing ease and grace. Like her guides in the swamps, Ms. Orlean takes us through lessons in history, evolution, geology and botany - subjects which could be incredibly dry in someone else's hands - and connects them neatly with her incredible descriptions of current orchid mania - the characters, the controversies, and the competition. Her ability to make those connections allows the reader to take a step further, and make their own, outside of what she has written. I constantly found myself saying, "Oh my, that's the (explorer/patron/flower) that (did this/went there/made that).

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