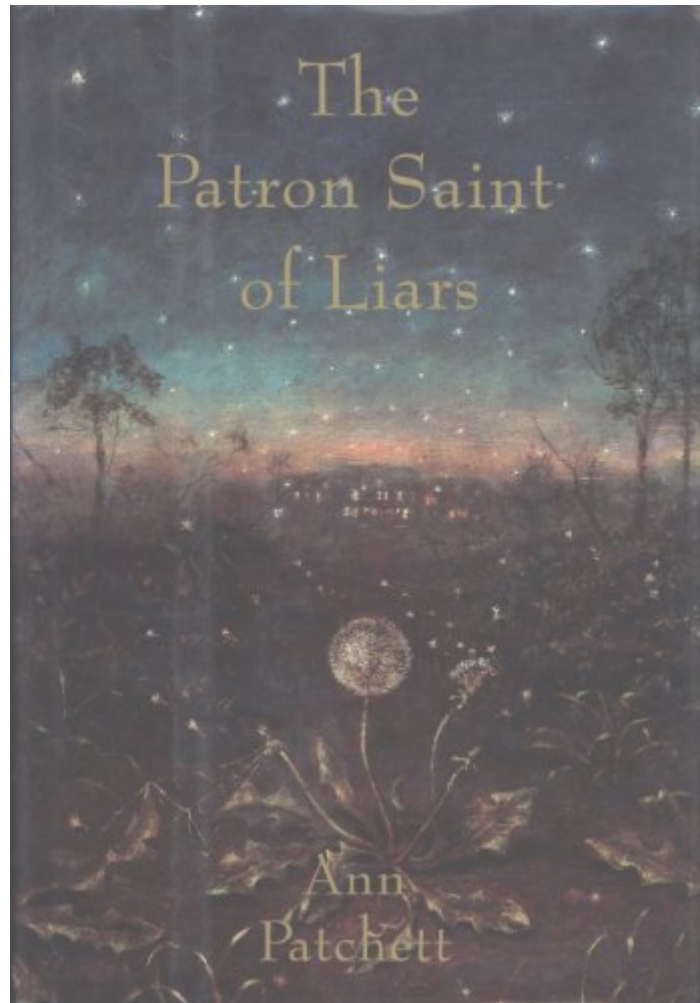




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The Patron Saint Of Liars



Synopsis

Since her first publication in 1992, celebrated novelist Ann Patchett has crafted a number of elegant novels, garnering accolades and awards along the way. Now comes a beautiful reissue of the best-selling debut novel that launched her remarkable career. St. Elizabeth's, a home for unwed mothers in Habit, Kentucky, usually harbors its residents for only a little while. Not so Rose Clinton, a beautiful, mysterious woman who comes to the home pregnant but not unwed, and stays. She plans to give up her child, thinking she cannot be the mother it needs. But when Cecilia is born, Rose makes a place for herself and her daughter amid St. Elizabeth's extended family of nuns and an ever-changing collection of pregnant teenage girls. Rose's past won't be kept away, though, even by St. Elizabeth's; she cannot remain untouched by what she has left behind, even as she cannot change who she has become in the leaving.

Book Information

File Size: 1161 KB

Print Length: 402 pages

Publisher: Mariner Books; Reprint edition (April 19, 2011)

Publication Date: April 4, 2011

Sold by: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Language: English

ASIN: B004S7FB4G

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #11,671 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #25 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Women's Fiction > Mothers & Children #107 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary Fiction > American #190 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Literary Fiction > Women's Fiction

Customer Reviews

"The Patron Saint of Liars" is the debut novel of author Ann Patchett. Patchett has also written the extraordinary "Bel Canto." This novel, originally published in 1992 was the announcement of a major new talent in literature. The story she tells is a simple one, but filled with grace and written with skill.

In the 1960's, pregnant, Rose Clinton leaves her husband in California with nothing but a note saying that she is unhappy and that he should not try to find her. She has no intention of coming home. Her destination is in Kentucky: St. Elizabeth's home for unwed mothers. It is where women from all over go to give birth and give up their children. It is a Catholic home in a Baptist town. Rose does not believe that she can be a good mother to her child and that she shouldn't be a mother. Not now. Perhaps not ever. The novel is told in three sections. The first section is told from the perspective of Rose. Through her eyes and with her words we learn about why she left California, how she ended up at St. Elizabeth's and what that experience was like. Patchett writes Rose so well that when her section ended I couldn't imagine that the next section of the novel could possibly be as good as what it was that I just read. Section two is told by Rose's husband. The final section of the novel is given to Rose's daughter. "The Patron Saint of Liars" is a remarkable novel. It is filled with insight into the characters and it seems at times also into our own lives. This isn't a story of faith, but it is also filled with a sense of grace and healing at all turns, even when the characters are facing personal difficulties. With "Bel Canto" I knew that Ann Patchett was a talented author and I wanted to experience her other novels.

First, Patchett can write very well--she carries you right along on a beautiful stream of words--so she is a joy to read no matter what else you might say about her. What I would say however is that while this is a really good book, she gets better in later books. It is probably not fair to judge this book by what she accomplishes later--but ah, we are human - and so we do unfair things. Just like Patchett's characters. I like her characters...not personally but as literary devices. They are complex. They are not presented in neat little packages so that we, the readers, are given a complete overview of who they are and why they do what they do. They are often contradictory and we have to keep asking why are they doing this -or that. I think we look for characters that are easy to understand because we are so desperate to try and make sense out of the world-and we are hoping that literature will help us do that. But I think good literature helps us see how complicated it really is and that there are no simple answers about why people do what they do. So Patchett gives us characters that make us crazy based on the decisions they are making-but who are good people, regardless of their decisions. We realize in the process that people do not have to do specific things to be good people-and that we don't really know -and don't have to know why a person makes the decisions they do- you can still care about them. Why, for instance, would a married woman, with a husband who adores her abandon him and go to a home for unwed mothers. Why would a woman who adores her mother decide to never communicate with her mother again? You read along saying to

yourself-no! Don't do that.

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