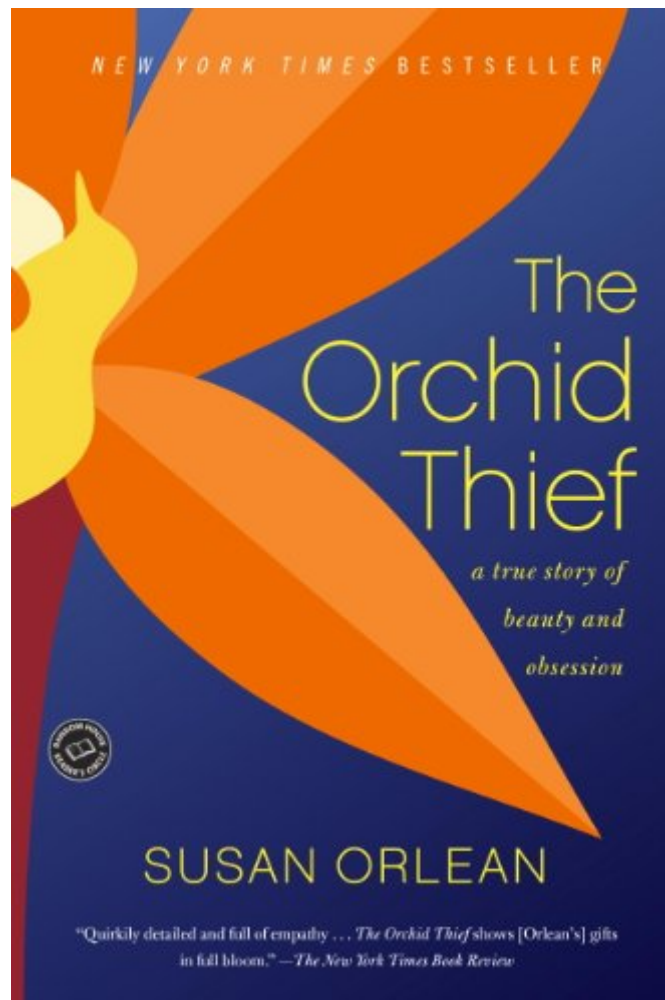




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# The Orchid Thief: A True Story Of Beauty And Obsession (Ballantine Reader's Circle)



## 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* From the Trade Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is an interesting book. It doesn't have a gripping story line, the reader is not on the edge of his/her seat waiting to see what happens, but the history of orchid hunting is engagingly told - and a horrific story it is. The characters don't add a lot, but do provide a connective thread. Yet another window into the European Great White Hunter attitude of ruthless greed - which is unfortunately our environment's inheritance.

Susan Orlean obviously did a lot of research, which is spewed back at the reader. Sadly, the book is a confused cross between local history and cultural analysis. Reads like an extended version of a lesser New Yorker piece. That said, I did learn how to transport orchids after primary bloom.

great read

If you really like reading about every facet of Orchids then you will really enjoy this book. The plant is beautiful but it's just not my DNA to know everything, and I mean everything, about the plant. The writer writes well...it's just the subject.

Interesting enough. Good writing but no real point to the whole story and didn't leave me saying, "wow that was interesting". This was essentially a diary of Susan's encounters and experiences in Florida while following up a story. Not sure why but I expected more compelling details or emotional connection. Just wasn't there for me.

This book is about a real event that happened in a Florida state park where we volunteer each winter. An absolutely amazing place and I am reading everything I can find about this park. I was more interested in the book for the information it contains and an understanding of a place, the writing style could be better but it is an interesting read and a good intro to a place to visit.

Kinda dull in places with pretty much a stream of consciousness flavor. Clearly the subject of the story should have gone to jail but he did not.

I just finished reading the book, and I thought it was a 7.8 on a scale of 10. It was an expanded (really padded) version of her New Yorker article. The expansion consisted mostly of chapters devoted to various aspects of orchid collecting and cultivating history (well told). The characterization of Florida is very nice, and she describes people well. On the other hand, the orchid information is pretty familiar stuff, and can get repetitious (how many times do I need to be told that it takes seven years from seed to flower -- a questionable generalization at that). The biology is specious (she has roots and shoots "evolving" from protocorms rather than developing from them). She also characterizes Charles Darwin and Alfred Wallace as colleagues -- an overstatement of the case I think, despite Darwin's gracious and much-deserved sharing of credit with Wallace in his presentations to the Royal Society. The book dust jacket has been bashed for its largely non-resupinate phalaenopsis flower, but it looks to me like a fallen bloom on fabric, so I think that's okay. Pretty good read and, hey, it's about our favorite plants!

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