



The Magician's Assistant

By Ann Patchett

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"A secretive magician's death becomes the catalyst for his partner's journey self-discovery in this "enchanting" book (*San Francisco Chronicle*) "that is something of a magic trick in itself" (*Newsweek*)."

When Parsifal, a handsome and charming magician, dies suddenly, his widow Sabine—who was also his faithful assistant for twenty years—learns that the family he claimed to have lost in a tragic accident is very much alive and well. Sabine is left to unravel his secrets, and the journey she takes, from sunny Los Angeles to the bitter windswept plains of Nebraska, will work its own magic on her. Sabine's extraordinary tale, “with its big dreams, vast spaces, and disparate realities lying side by side” captures the hearts of its readers and “proves to be the perfect place for miraculous transformations” (*The New Yorker*). ”

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The Magician's Assistant sustains author Ann Patchett's proven penchant for crafting colorful characters and marrying the ordinary with the fantastic. When Parsifal, Sabine's husband of more than 20 years and the magician of the title, suddenly dies, she begins to discover how she's glimpsed him only through smoke and mirrors. He has managed to keep hidden the existence of a family in Nebraska--his mother, two sisters, and two nephews. Sabine approaches them hungrily, as if they are a bridge to her beloved husband and a key to the mysteries he left behind.

From Publishers Weekly

After working as his assistant for more than 20 years, Sabine marries her beloved boss, Parcifal, knowing that he's gay and has just lost his lover. What she doesn't find out until after his death from AIDS is that Parcifal was actually Guy Fettera from Alliance, Neb., and had a family he never spoke about. Karen Ziembra creates an appropriately light tone for the narrator, despite some dark events that Sabine discovers when she visits Parcifal's sweet, dysfunctional family. She crafts clear, flat Midwest accents for the magician's mother and sisters and her pace and annunciation are excellent. Ziembra's men all sound alike, but they play minimal roles. She is an experienced and professional reader with just the right stuff for Patchett's 1997 novel, which probes the complex motives of Parcifal and his assistant. A Harcourt paperback (Reviews, July 14, 1997)

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From Library Journal

For two decades, Sabine has loved the magician Parsifal and served as his assistant. Theirs is an unorthodox relationship, however, for Parsifal loves men. When Parsifal's lover dies of AIDS, he marries Sabine so that she will be his widow. When Parsifal dies, Sabine receives some surprising news about his will. Believing her husband to have no living relatives, she is shocked to learn of a trust fund established for a mother and two sisters in Nebraska. When his family contacts her, she introduces them to the Los Angeles Parsifal. She then visits them in Nebraska to discover the truth about the man she loved and thought she knew, gaining insight into herself as well. Well written and full of interesting twists, this is recommended for larger collections. Kimberly G. Allen, networkMCI Lib., Washington, D.C.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Stacey Eades:

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