



The Shell Collector: Stories

By Anthony Doerr

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The "perilously beautiful" (*Boston Globe*) first story collection by the author of the acclaimed Pulitzer Prize-winning #1 *New York Times* bestseller *All The Light We Cannot See*.

The exquisitely crafted stories in Anthony Doerr's debut collection take readers from the African Coast to the pine forests of Montana to the damp moors of Lapland, charting a vast physical and emotional landscape. Doerr explores the human condition in all its varieties—metamorphosis, grief, fractured relationships, and slowly mending hearts—conjuring nature in both its beautiful abundance and crushing power. Some of the characters in these stories contend with hardships; some discover unique gifts; all are united by their ultimate deference to the ravishing universe outside themselves.

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The Shell Collector: Stories By Anthony Doerr Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The whorls, chambers, and ribs of the seashell are an elegance unto themselves, but if man-made beauty can come anywhere close to this, Anthony Doerr's short stories would be perfect candidates. His debut collection, *The Shell Collector*, sets such high standards, sentence to sentence, that it is more like the private architecture of shells than like the random borrowings, sexual details, and flashes of insight that make up the bulk of contemporary fiction. The title story is about a blind man of 58, a scholar of shells (malacology), who retires to an isolated beach-side hut in Kenya, but then accidentally discovers a cure for a major illness in the often-deadly stings of the cone snail. "The Hunter's Wife," a second small masterpiece, describes the marriage of a Montana hunter and his much younger, psychically gifted wife. There are more conventional pieces here; well-written, resonating stories that do not attempt the sweep or descriptive wealth of "The Shell Collector," although they are still at the level of the best realistic fiction that is being published now in America. --*Regina Marler*

From Publishers Weekly

The natural world exerts a powerful, brooding presence in this first collection; it's almost as much a main character as any of the individuals the 26-year-old Doerr records. Nature, in these eight stories, is mysterious and deadly, a wonder of design and of nearly overwhelming power. This delicate balance is evidenced by the title story, about a blind man who spends his days collecting rare and beautiful shell specimens. Self-exiled to the coast of Kenya, he discovers that a certain poisonous snail has the power both to kill and to effect a rapid recovery from malaria. This discovery brings him much attention but little joy, disturbing the carefully ordered universe that he has constructed to manage both his blindness and his temperament. A naturalist's perspective also informs the other stories. In "The Hunter's Wife," Doerr catalogues winter in Montana as "a thousand ladybugs hibernating in an orange ball in a riverbank hollow; a pair of dormant frogs buried in frozen mud." But Doerr can play it funny, too: in "July Fourth," a group of American fishermen endure a hilarious litany of woes in a fishing contest across Scandinavia and Eastern Europe. Their troubles include much drinking, few fish and losing their shirts (and all their tackle) to a Belorussian basketball team. The title story could well appear in the next Best American or O. Henry anthologies, and the others make a fine supporting cast. Agent, Wendy Weil. (Jan. 14) Forecast: With blurbs from the likes of Rick Bass, this debut collection should do better than most, especially if reviewers take note.

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From Library Journal

Doerr's prose reveals an obsession with objects: characters are limned by the things around them. He shapes intricate worlds with syllables, rhythms, and carefully chosen words; these stories are a tour de force of letters. The words, in fact, take on lives of their own, as in "The Hunter's Wife," when the "breath that carried his words crystallized and blew away, as if the words themselves had taken on form but expired from the effort." Similarly, the characters swell and recede from the effort of living, creating their own stories. Subtle linguistic self-consciousness, fluid and eddying plots and characters, and brilliant description and simile mold these stories, each as individual and complex as seashells. The characters' exertions, internal and external, mesmerize despite the occasional stilted Hemingwayesque hiccup. A fascinating collection; recommended for all fiction collection. Lyle D. Rosdahl, San Antonio P.L.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Rick Maldonado:

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Cindi Russell:

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Leslie Mickle:

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