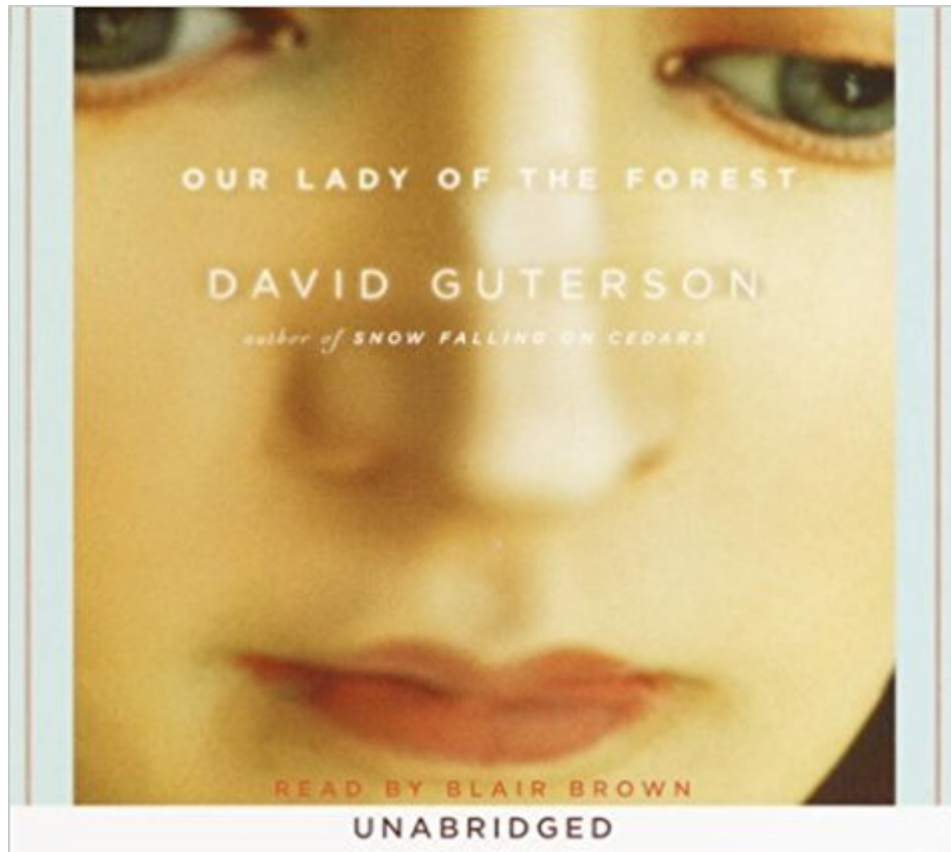




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Our Lady Of The Forest



Synopsis

From the best-selling author of *Snow Falling on Cedars* "an emotionally charged, provocative new novel about a teenage girl who claims to see the Virgin Mary. Ann Holmes seems an unlikely candidate for revelation. A sixteen-year-old runaway, she is an itinerant mushroom picker who lives in a tent. But on a November afternoon, in the foggy woods of North Fork, Washington, the Virgin comes to her, clear as day. Father Collins "a young priest new to North Fork" finds Ann disturbingly alluring. But it is up to him to evaluate "impartially" the veracity of Ann's sightings: Are they delusions, or a true calling to God? As word spreads and thousands, including the press, converge upon the town, Carolyn Greer, a smart-talking fellow mushroomer, becomes Ann's disciple of sorts, as well as her impromptu publicity manager. And Tom Cross, an embittered logger who's been out of work since his son was paralyzed in a terrible accident, finds in Ann's visions a last chance for redemption for both himself and his son. As Father Collins searches his own soul and Ann's, as Carolyn struggles with her less than admirable intentions, as Tom alternates between despair and hope, *Our Lady of the Forest* tells a suspenseful, often wryly humorous, and deeply involving story of faith at a contemporary crossroads. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

David Guterson's *Our Lady of the Forest* navigates between the mystical and the cynical in its slowly paced telling of a Marian encounter in North Fork, Washington. The story opens in the North Fork campground among homeless mushroom pickers. The town is reeling from the loss of its

logging industry, and its residents make their way by scavenging odd jobs and selling the produce of the forest. Living in the campground, 16-year-old Anne Holmes is a runaway asthmatic whose recent interest in Catholicism follows a period of petty thievery, drug use, and frequent masturbation (an interest that Guterson notes is shared by the town priest, Father Don Collins). While off on her rounds of mushrooming one morning, she encounters a bright light--the Virgin Mary, she believes. Soon, she has drawn a band of thousands as people flock to North Fork to witness the vision and be healed. But, through Carolyn Greer, a world-weary fellow-mushroom-picker who longs for nothing more than an extended vacation to "Cabo"-- readers learn that Anne actually sees nothing, or at least no one else shares the Marian apparition that gives Anne lofty commands each day. At times Guterson lets his characters' pettiness, opportunism, and cynicism overrun the delicacy of Anne's world. Carolyn's vehement atheism and materialistic languor undermine what could have been a stronger counter-point to her spiritual friend. Even Father Collins, who struggles between fatherly compassion and sexual longing for the young visionary, is too full of self-loathing for readers to embrace him. Yet, the novel's exploration of Anne's abrupt and intense faith pierces the narrative and brings light to it. And as Anne's visions grow in intensity and her health begins to fail, one can't help but long for divine intervention on her behalf. --Patrick O'Kelley --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

When Ann Holmes starts having visions of the Virgin Mary, the bedraggled teen runaway becomes the last hope for the inhabitants of a dank, economically depressed logging town and the hordes of miracle-seekers who descend on it. In this panoramic, psychologically dense novel, she also becomes a symbol of the intimate intertwining of the sacred and the profane in American life. Guterson (*Snow Falling on Cedars*; *East of the Mountains*), tells the story from the viewpoint of four lost souls groping for redemption: Ann; Carolyn, an aging, overeducated, cynical drifter who takes Ann under her wing to profit from her growing fame; a local priest wrestling with his doubts about, and lust for, the visionary; and a tormented ex-logger trying to atone for the accident that paralyzed his son. Guterson's evocative prose, pithy dialogue and piercing insights cut through the fog of sin and guilt that shadows these wounded characters like the overcast sky of the Pacific Northwest. And as Ann's visions stimulate a tourism boom and draw the attention of media vultures and a skeptical Catholic Church, Guterson explores larger social themes--the demise of blue-collar America; the ironic symbiosis of religious devotion and commercial exploitation; the replacement of faith in God by faith in psychopharmacology; and the link between the exaltation of women's saintliness and the reality of women's degradation. Searching for the miraculous in the mundane,

this ambitious and satisfying work builds vivid characters and trenchant storytelling into a serious and compassionate look at the moral quandaries of modern life. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an alternate Audio CD edition.

A well written, at times almost seductive, novel. A pleasure to read. This book is not for everyone. Characterizations are real and at time slightly raw. And although this book should not be offensive to Christians, it deals in a very honest way with religion. The rich language also won't be to everybody's taste, but works extremely well in the context of the story and for me is one of the reasons I enjoyed reading this novel so much. The rhythm and the verbosity of the internal dialogue evoked an almost dreamlike trance. In fact, I was tempted to give this book a five star rating, but I'll have to read it again in a few years' time to judge it against other novels. Should you read it? If you like the unusual, if you love language and are accepting of novels that don't give complete closure in the last chapter, than you should.

A story that is at once tragic, hopeless, skeptical, sick, drugged, angry, mobbed with religious folks of all sorts, all very human people you might not want to know and with the whole lot seeking something beyond themselves. All of this involves with an ill young woman who has seen a vision of the Virgin Mary and becomes "The lady of the forest." to individuals and the multitudes. The end seems like the end and yet sort of a beginning for reasons which are not ideal. Wear your rain boots, brothers and sisters!

Anything David Guterson writes is above the usual. The man has an incredible gift with words, expressions. Though this book did not meet the plane that his SNOW FALLING ON CEDARS did, anything Guterson writes, even if it were instructions as to how to assemble a garden tiller, no doubt would result in eloquence. I BELIEVE he has stated that he wants his writings to make the reader THINK. This book does indeed do that . . .

Author takes on the difficult subject of miracles. People are hungry for answers but this search often leads to the destruction of the visionary. I thought that the story was a compassionate view of the new "saint". The book is interesting and leaves the reader asking a lot of questions.

Maybe I was hoping for more. But the author teases..builds characters..to a very unsatisfactory climax. The character of Father Collins..Tommy, the paralyzed boy..Where and how did the holy

water appear? Carolyn, the visionary's "friend". Tom, the guilt-ridden father..all left dangling. Too many unanswered questions. Even the visionary herself, Ann. Her church was eventually built, as was her central message. But there remained a mystery about Ann and her apparitions- which the story didn't completely satisfy, at least not to me. A fake or a true visionary? A disappointment. To waste over 300 pages developing characters, yet still the mystery remains. What happens to these characters, after the book ends?? Wait for the paperback, if you're interested. And if you're looking for more info on apparitions, or just into a good mystery this is NOT the book for you. It's more a soap-box, social commentary piece, one which tries-again, unsuccessfully- to combine sarcasm with humor and piety with tenderness and sadness. So much more could've been done with this story, this concept. In the end, it is as hollow and empty as most of the characters which are portrayed.

Our Lady of the Forrest features Anne, a homeless mushroom picker who has a Marian vision while out in the woods one day. Or does she? This is the central question. Anne has her own problems, including some pot smoking and a checkered history. Along comes her enabler who knows how to stick her fingers in the plate when the time is right. There's also a local priest with some of his own questions about his faith and the validity of Anne's visions. Guterson writes very well. His descriptions of the Pacific Northwest are wondrous and put you in the middle of it all. The plot here keeps you asking what's real and what isn't. This book is definitely worth a sport on the shelf.

Yuk! I am having trouble finishing this book. I had to take a break to see if I was the only one who felt this way. No, I am not, but there are also some who claim to actually enjoy this mishmash of a story. Having loved Guterson's "Snow Falling on Cedars," I couldn't wait to read "Our Lady of the Forest." If the author's name were not on the cover, I would not believe it is by the same author. I think Mr. Guterson must have been eating those magic mushrooms he talks about in the book too. His story rambles on. The lack of quotation marks makes it difficult to follow. There is not one redeeming character in the story. Although I am not quite finished, I do intend to even though it makes me feel as though I have been "slumming."

This was an interesting book that I would like to re-read at some point.

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The Mind-Gut Connection: How the Hidden Conversation Within Our Bodies Impacts Our

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