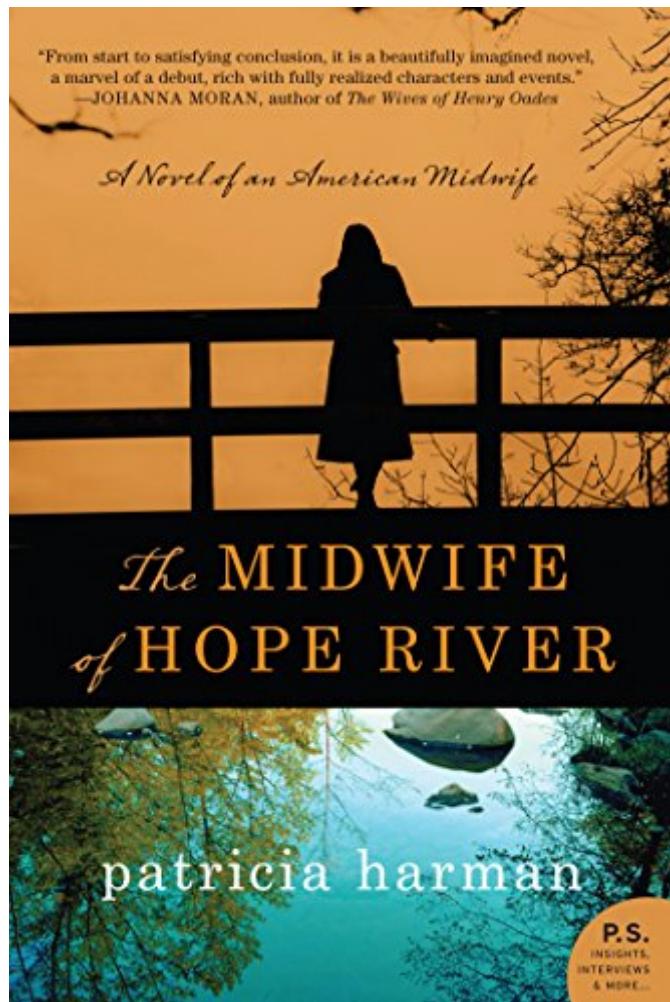


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The Midwife Of Hope River: A Novel Of An American Midwife



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Synopsis

A remarkable new voice in American fiction enchants readers with a moving and uplifting novel that celebrates the miracle of life. In *The Midwife of Hope River*, first-time novelist Patricia Harmon transports us to poverty stricken Appalachia during the Great Depression years of the 1930s and introduces us to a truly unforgettable heroine. Patience Murphy, a midwife struggling against disease, poverty, and prejudiceâ "and her own haunting pastâ "is a strong and endearing character that fans of the books of Ami McKay and Diane Chamberlain will take into their hearts, as she courageously attempts to bring new light, and life, into an otherwise cruel world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Patience Murphy is a midwife in Appalachia in the 1930's, but before this, she has lived a much different life, under the name Elizabeth Snyder. She was a showgirl, a mother to be, a wife, a rebel. Her path has led her to a small rural area of West Virginia, where she attends the births of families, rich and poor, struggling with the changes in the world and the economy. Through it all, Patience dreads the day when her life as Elizabeth will catch up to her. I thought this book was, in a word, stunning. I absolutely loved everything about this story. First of all, the setting was simply fascinating

to me, having lived in or near many of the places mentioned. I loved hearing about Pittsburgh in the 1920s and 1930s, truly fascinating stuff. And having grown up in the Appalachian foothills, the culture described in this book is so familiar to me, despite the setting being decades before I was ever born. And the story itself, the life and trials of a midwife in those times, it was simply fascinating. I loved Patience. I thought her character was so warmly and richly developed. We learn her back-story as we go, but it is done so seamlessly that you feel as if you have always known her. While she is far from perfect (and well aware of that fact), she is a very endearing character, and you really touched my heart. I love the wonder and awe she has about life and death, despite having seen so many births. She made me, as a reader, really consider the miracle of childbirth, particularly as it was decades ago. There is something so personal, and comforting, in the way this book was written, that I often forgot it was fiction, and not the diary of an actual historical person. The book really captivated me.

The Midwife of Hope River is an engaging and touching novel of human frailties and triumphs. Patience Murphy inherits the role of the midwife of Hope River, a small rural community in West Virginia, when her mentor and friend, Mrs Kelly dies. Patience is no stranger to loss, orphaned at a young age she has since buried a fiance, a husband and a child. Mrs Kelly was her last link to her secret past and without her support Patience is apprehensive about managing on her own. The Midwife of Hope River is told in the first person detailing Patience's experiences delivering babies in the community against the everyday challenges of life in Hope River. It opens with a harrowing delivery for one of the town's wealthy, white residents expecting a stillbirth, only for the child to be born alive. While Patience is relieved, she questions her own ability to be a midwife with such little training and experience. However with Dr Blum, the county's white doctor refusing to provide care for any one who cannot afford his services and the 'negro' midwife, Mrs Potts elderly and infirm, Patience is the only resource for the majority of the women. The birth stories Patience shares are surprisingly riveting, not only for the circumstances of the delivery, but also for what is revealed about the individuals, families and the community. Slowly Patience is drawn into the fabric of Hope River, befriending Bitsy, a young black woman, who becomes her lodger, assistant and friend, and sparking a romance with the new vet, Dr Daniel Hester. While the characters in The Midwife of Hope River are fascinating, Harman sets her novel against a time period of significant social angst in America.

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