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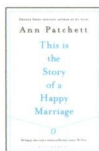
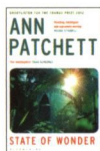
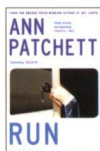
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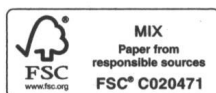
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Praise for *Commonwealth*

'Wonderful ... A compelling novel, full of characters who ring true'
Erica Wagner, *Financial Times*

'Modulating between amusement and poignancy, Patchett fills her pages with subtly depicted characters and vividly teeming social scenes'
Sunday Times Books of the Year

'The family drama explores not only the metafictional concerns of how writers wreak havoc on their subject matter but the ways that all of us use and abuse the people we love most' *Time* Ten Best Novels of 2016

'World events were gloomy when Ann Patchett's *Commonwealth* and Ali Smith's *Autumn* appeared ... Fantastic writing, big ideas and generosity of spirit. If I had been in charge of the Man Booker Prize this year, I would have given it to one of these' *Spectator* Books of the Year

'From the mesmerising first chapter to the final page, Ann Patchett's new novel is utterly brilliant' *Sunday Express*

'Rich and engrossing ... Her observations about people and life are insightful; and her underlying tone is one of compassion and amusement' Curtis Sittenfeld, *New York Times*

'A great novel about small moments ... Written with wisdom, concision and compassion: reading it leaves you understanding just that little bit more about what it is to be human' Elizabeth Day, *Irish Times*

'She is master of her art ... She lets readers reflect on what is involved in stealing from life: emotional copyright is, in this unpushy and brilliant novel, more powerful than anyone dared suppose' *Observer*

'An engaging novel that draws you in with sharp observation, a gin-fuelled plot written in beautiful prose and convincing dialogue. You miss the characters once it's over' *Evening Standard*

'Part of Patchett's design is to curve every type, bend every cliché, adulterate every formula ... Breathtaking' Sarah Churchwell, *Guardian*

'More expansive in its timeframe than we have come to expect from her, and more experimental ... Faultless' *The Times*

'Wins the reader over with her perceptive qualities, alluring characters and undertone of humour ... Patchett's nimble storytelling floats like a butterfly and stings like a bee' *Literary Review*

'Sharply observed, ripe with humour, laden with significance ... She pulls you into every one of her vibrantly drawn scenes with great ease' *Sunday Times*

'Ann Patchett is a sublime writer and this book a wonderful read' Sarah Jessica Parker

'Gorgeously evocative writing and complex characters ... Patchett is a writer of exceptional talent, and this is one of her best yet' *Good Housekeeping*

'A book plugged powerfully into the messy business of family life ... What emerges is the captivating music of life's random, relentless pulse' *Daily Mail*

'An absorbing, brilliantly observed novel' *Woman & Home*

'It's hard to imagine better execution ... None of the 322 pages lacks a prize-worthy revelation in Patchett's vibrant prose' *Time*

'Told with great sympathy and even greater wit – it should be said that *Commonwealth* is very funny indeed – this is a book to savour' *The Lady*

'Patchett consistently amazes me and remains true to form in *Commonwealth*' *Stylist*

'An outstanding, tender and honest novel about the complications of blended families' *Mail on Sunday Christmas Books*

'Reading *Commonwealth* is a transporting experience ... Without doubt one of her best' *Los Angeles Times*

'Patchett's storytelling has never seemed more effortlessly graceful. This is minimalism that magically speaks volumes' *Washington Post*

'Wonderfully executed' *Marie Claire*

'It is just so masterfully done. The sweep of it and the subtlety of the ideas' Esther Freud

'An absorbing, weighty and moving domestic chronicle ... Readers of Patchett's previous novels will be unsurprised by the complexity of her moral vision' *Times Literary Supplement*

'This mesmerising novel gripped me from the first page and held me until the last. It's one of those rare books that is so beautifully written, so cleverly constructed and with characters who never fail to intrigue, that when you finish it you feel bereaved' *Irish Examiner*

A NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

ANN PATCHETT is the author of seven novels and three non-fiction books. Both *The Magician's Assistant* and *State of Wonder* were shortlisted for the Orange Prize for Fiction, which she won with *Bel Canto* in 2002. She has won the PEN/Faulkner Award and been shortlisted for the Wellcome Book Prize, and her work has been translated into over thirty languages. She is the co-owner of Parnassus Books in Nashville, Tennessee.

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This Is the Story of a Happy Marriage

State of Wonder

What Now?

Run

Truth & Beauty

Bel Canto

The Magician's Assistant

Taft

The Patron Saint of Liars

to Mike Glasscock

Commonwealth

I

THE CHRISTENING PARTY took a turn when Albert Cousins arrived with gin. Fix was smiling when he opened the door and he kept smiling as he struggled to make the connection: it was Albert Cousins from the district attorney's office standing on the cement slab of his front porch. He'd opened the door twenty times in the last half hour—to neighbors and friends and people from church and Beverly's sister and all his brothers and their parents and practically an entire precinct worth of cops—but Cousins was the only surprise. Fix had asked his wife two weeks ago why she thought they had to invite every single person they knew in the world to a christening party and she'd asked him if he wanted to look over the guest list and tell her who to cut. He hadn't looked at the list, but if she were standing at the door now he would have pointed straight ahead and said, *Him*. Not that he disliked Albert Cousins, he didn't know him other than to put his name together with his face, but not knowing him was the reason not to invite him. Fix had the thought that maybe Cousins had come to his house to talk to him about a case: nothing like that had ever happened before but what else was the explanation? Guests were milling around in the front

yard, and whether they were coming late or leaving early or just taking refuge outside because the house was packed beyond what any fire marshal would allow, Fix couldn't say. What he was sure of was that Cousins was there uninvited, alone with a bottle in a bag.

"Fix," Albert Cousins said. The tall deputy DA in a suit and tie put out his hand.

"Al," Fix said. (Did people call him Al?) "Glad you made it." He gave his hand two hard pumps and let it go.

"I'm cutting it close," Cousins said, looking at the crowd inside as if there might not be room for him. The party was clearly past its midpoint—most of the small, triangular sandwiches were gone, half the cookies. The tablecloth beneath the punch bowl was pink and damp.

Fix stepped aside to let him in. "You're here now," he said.

"Wouldn't have missed it." Though of course he had missed it. He hadn't been at the christening.

Dick Spencer was the only one from the DA's office Fix had invited. Dick had been a cop himself, had gone to law school at night, pulled himself up without ever making any of the other guys feel like he was better for it. It didn't matter if Dick was driving a black-and-white or standing in front of the judge, there was no doubt where he came from. Cousins on the other hand was a lawyer like all the others—DAs, PDs, the hired guns—friendly enough when they needed something but unlikely to invite an officer along for a drink, and if they did it was only because they thought the cop was holding out on them. DAs were the guys who smoked your cigarettes because they were trying to quit. The cops, who filled up the living room and dining room and spilled out into the backyard beneath the clothesline and the two orange trees, they weren't trying to quit. They drank iced tea mixed with lemonade and smoked like stevedores.

Albert Cousins handed over the bag and Fix looked inside. It was a bottle of gin, a big one. Other people brought prayer cards or mother-of-pearl rosary beads or a pocket-sized Bible covered in white kid with gilt-edged pages. Five of the guys, or their five wives, had kicked in together and bought a blue enameled cross on a chain, a tiny pearl at the center, very pretty, something for the future.

"This makes a boy and a girl?"

"Two girls."

Cousins shrugged. "What can you do?"

"Not a thing," Fix said and closed the door. Beverly had told him to leave it open so they could get some air, which went to show how much she knew about man's inhumanity to man. It didn't matter how many people were in the house. You didn't leave the goddamn door open.

Beverly leaned out of the kitchen. There were easily thirty people standing between them—the entire Meloy clan, all the DeMatteos, a handful of altar boys plowing through what was left of the cookies—but there was no missing Beverly. That yellow dress.

"Fix?" she said, raising her voice over the din.

It was Cousins who turned his head first, and Cousins gave her a nod.

By reflex Fix stood straighter, but he let the moment pass. "Make yourself at home," he said to the deputy district attorney and pointed out a cluster of detectives by the sliding glass door, their jackets still on. "You know plenty of people here." Maybe that was true and maybe it wasn't. Cousins sure as hell didn't know the host. Fix turned to cut his way through the crowd and the crowd parted for him, touching his shoulder and shaking his hand, saying congratulations. He tried not to step on any of the kids, his

four-year-old daughter Caroline among them, who were playing some sort of game on the dining room floor, crouching and crawling like tigers between the feet of adults.

The kitchen was packed with wives, all of them laughing and talking too loud, none of them being helpful except for Lois from next door who was pulling bowls out of the refrigerator. Beverly's best friend, Wallis, was using the side of the bright chrome toaster to reapply her lipstick. Wallis was too thin and too tan and when she straightened up she was wearing too much lipstick. Beverly's mother was sitting at the breakfast table with the baby in her lap. They had changed her from her lacy christening gown into a starched white dress with yellow flowers embroidered around the neck, as if she were a bride who'd slipped into her going-away dress at the end of the reception. The women in the kitchen took turns making a fuss over the baby, acting like it was their job to keep her entertained until the Magi arrived. But the baby wasn't entertained. Her blue eyes were glazed over. She was staring into the middle distance, tired of everything. All this rush to make sandwiches and take in presents for a girl who was not yet a year old.

"Look how pretty she is," his mother-in-law said to no one, running the back of one finger across the baby's rounded cheek.

"Ice," Beverly said to her husband. "We're out of ice."

"That was your sister's assignment," Fix said.

"Then she failed. Can you ask one of the guys to go get some? It's too hot to have a party without ice." She had tied an apron behind her neck but not around her waist. She was trying not to wrinkle her dress. Strands of yellow hair had come loose from her French twist and were falling into her eyes.

"If she didn't bring the ice, then she might at least come in here and make some sandwiches." Fix was looking right at Wallis when he said this but Wallis capped her lipstick and ignored him. He had