



## All He Ever Wanted: A Novel

By Anita Shreve

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A man escaping from a hotel fire sees a woman standing beneath a tree. He approaches her and sets in motion a series of events that will change his life forever. Years later, traveling from New England to Florida by train, he reflects back on his obsession with this unknown and ultimately unknowable woman—his courtship of her, his marriage to her, and the unforgivable act that ripped their family apart. Spanning three decades from 1899 to 1933, *All He Ever Wanted* gives us a tale of marriage, betrayal, and the search for redemption. It has the unmatched attention to details of character, place, and emotion that have made Anita Shreve one of America's best-loved and bestselling novelists.

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## All He Ever Wanted: A Novel By Anita Shreve Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Amazon.com Review

Anita Shreve's *All He Ever Wanted* reads like Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* told from the perspective of the husband. The wife gains a measure of freedom, but how does the repressive, abandoned husband feel about that freedom? Set in the early 1900s in the fictional New England college town of Thrupp, and narrated by the pompous Nicholas Van Tassel, *All He Ever Wanted* is at once an academic satire, a period novel, and a tale of suspense. Shreve's ability to nimbly hop through genres brings a liveliness to this story of love gone depressingly wrong. Van Tassel is an undistinguished professor of rhetoric at Thrupp College and a confirmed bachelor when he meets--in no less flamy a scenario than a hotel fire--the arresting Miss Etna Bliss. Immediately smitten, he woos and wins her. At least, he persuades her to become his wife. But Van Tassel hasn't really won her. Etna keeps her secrets and her feelings to herself. The extent of her withholding only becomes clear after a couple of kids and a decade or so of marriage. Then we find out that she's been creating a secret haven for herself all along. Van Tassel is in turn revealed--through his own priggish, puffed-up sentences--as something of a monster. The book is cleverly done; watching Etna through Van Tassel's eyes is like looking at beautiful bird from a hungry cat's point of view. But Van Tassel's voice might be too well written; he's pedantic and dull and snarky all at once, and by the end we find that we, like Etna, can't bear his company a minute longer. --*Claire Dederer*

### From Publishers Weekly

In bestsellers such as *Fortune's Rocks*, Shreve has revealed an impeccably sharp eye and a generous emotional sensitivity in describing the moment when a man and a woman become infatuated with each. She is less successful this time out, perhaps because the epiphany is one-sided. Escaping from a New Hampshire hotel fire at the turn of the 20th century, Prof. Nicholas Van Tassel catches sight of Etna Bliss and is instantly smitten. She does not reciprocate his feeling, for she has her own unrequited lust, for freedom and independence. That they marry guarantees tragedy. Nicholas tells the story in retrospect, writing feverishly on a train trip in 1933 to his sister's funeral in Florida. His pedantic style is full of parenthetical asides, portentous foreshadowing and rhetorical throat. His erotic swoon commands sympathy, until it carries him past any definition of decency. He will do anything to bring down Philip Asher, his academic rival and the brother of Etna's true love, Samuel. He plays on prevailing anti-Semitism (the Ashers are Jewish), and he persuades his daughter, Clara, to claim that Philip touched her improperly, which besmirches not only Philip's reputation but Clara's as well. We see Etna herself only secondhand, except for some correspondence with Philip reproduced toward the end of the tale. Credit the author for making the point that Etna and her sisters had too little autonomy even to tell their own stories, but filtering Etna's experience through Nicholas's sensibility deprives the novel of intimacy and immediacy.  
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### From Library Journal

Set at the turn of the last century, like *Fortune's Rocks*, this work begins when a man fleeing a hotel fire encounters a mysterious woman who will ultimately become his wife.  
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## Users Review

### From reader reviews:

**Elizabeth Cao:**

Spent a free time to be fun activity to complete! A lot of people spent their leisure time with their family, or their friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, planning to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same every week. Do you feel it? Do you want to something different to fill your own personal free time/ holiday? Might be reading a book can be option to fill your cost-free time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of book that you should read. If you want to try look for book, may be the guide untitled All He Ever Wanted: A Novel can be very good book to read. May be it may be best activity to you.

**Robert Wilkerson:**

Playing with family within a park, coming to see the marine world or hanging out with pals is thing that usually you may have done when you have spare time, and then why you don't try point that really opposite from that. Just one activity that make you not experiencing tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you already been ride on and with addition details. Even you love All He Ever Wanted: A Novel, you are able to enjoy both. It is great combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hang-out type is it? Oh can happen its mind hangout men. What? Still don't get it, oh come on its called reading friends.

**Beverly McClendon:**

Beside that All He Ever Wanted: A Novel in your phone, it could possibly give you a way to get nearer to the new knowledge or facts. The information and the knowledge you will got here is fresh in the oven so don't always be worry if you feel like an aged people live in narrow community. It is good thing to have All He Ever Wanted: A Novel because this book offers to you readable information. Do you sometimes have book but you do not get what it's all about. Oh come on, that won't happen if you have this in the hand. The Enjoyable set up here cannot be questionable, like treasuring beautiful island. Use you still want to miss it? Find this book in addition to read it from at this point!

**Jacob Brown:**

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