



# The Garden of Last Days: A Novel

By Andre Dubus III

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## The Garden of Last Days: A Novel By Andre Dubus III

**From the author of the *New York Times* bestseller and Oprah's Book Club selection *House of Sand and Fog*--a new big-hearted, painful, page-turning novel.**

One early September night in Florida, a stripper brings her daughter to work. April's usual babysitter is in the hospital, so she decides it's best to have her three-year-old daughter close by, watching children's videos in the office, while she works.

Except that April works at the Puma Club for Men. And tonight she has an unusual client, a foreigner both remote and too personal, and free with his money. Lots of it, all cash. His name is Bassam. Meanwhile, another man, AJ, has been thrown out of the club for holding hands with his favorite stripper, and he's drunk and angry and lonely.

From these explosive elements comes a relentless, raw, searing, passionate, page-turning narrative, a big-hearted and painful novel about sex and parenthood and honor and masculinity. Set in the seamy underside of American life at the moment before the world changed, it juxtaposes lust for domination with hunger for connection, sexual violence with family love. It seizes the reader by the throat with the same psychological tension, depth, and realism that characterized Andre Dubus's #1 bestseller, *House of Sand and Fog*--and an even greater sense of the dark and anguished places in the human heart.

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## **The Garden of Last Days: A Novel** By Andre Dubus III Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #373278 in Books
- Published on: 2008-05-17
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.60" h x 1.60" w x 6.70" l, 1.95 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 544 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Dubus's ambitious if uneven follow-up to *House of Sand and Fog* begins shortly before 9/11 with stripper April taking her three-year-old daughter, Franny, to work after the babysitter flakes at the last minute. Though she leaves Franny with the club's house mother and intends to keep tabs on her, April's distracted on the floor by Bassam, a Muslim who's in Florida to take flying lessons and (like one of the real 9/11 hijackers) spends early September 2001 throwing around money and living lasciviously. Meanwhile, AJ, a down-on-his-luck local, lingers in the parking lot after getting thrown out for touching a dancer. The slow-starting plot splinters once Franny wanders outside and disappears. Soon, AJ's wanted for kidnapping, April's run through the social service wringers as an unfit parent, and the murky particulars of Bassam's mission come into sharp focus as he struggles with his religious convictions. Dubus gives the breath of life to most of his characters (Bassam—not so much), though the narrative has a mechanical feeling, partially owing to the narrow emotional register Dubus works in: doom and desperation are in plentiful supply from page one, and as the novel fades to black, the reader's left with a roster of sadder-but-wiser Americans to contemplate. (*June*) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

From [The New Yorker](#)

Dubus's follow-up to "House of Sand and Fog" is inspired by the rumored visit of 9/11 hijackers to a strip club shortly before their attacks. In the fictional Puma Club, in Sarasota, Florida, a twenty-six-year-old named Bassam al-Jizani watches Spring, a stripper, undress, and finds his "hatred for these kufar rising with the knowledge of his own weakness." We know he is entranced, because he does not imagine slitting her throat, as he does with most people he encounters. Bassam recoils from the hedonistic pursuits of the West, yet finds himself drawn to them; losing his virginity to a prostitute, he wonders, "How many years will she be given by the Creator before she will burn?" Imagining the mind of a terrorist, Dubus runs into a familiar problem: Bassam's thoughts are a case study in the banality of evil. "Hatred gives him strength," he writes. But it doesn't make him interesting.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Despite critics' high hopes, *The Garden of Last Days* proves to be a big, uneven novel with aspirations it can't quite fulfill. (*Los Angeles Times*). Andre Dubus III nimbly navigates the chasm between cultures "between the world of the intolerant extremist and that of the decadent Westerner" and draws his characters with compassion. Unfortunately, though Dubus's research is evident, Bassam emerges as little more than a stereotype, his stilted English, peppered with Arabic phrases, awkward and forced. Dubus slows the plot's pace to allow his characters to fully develop, but this choice drains the narrative of tension and robs the climax of its punch. Dubus's considerable talent notwithstanding, the daring *Garden* does not rise to the level of its best-selling predecessor.

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