

Oxygen: A Novel

By Carol Cassella

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Oxygen: A Novel By Carol Cassella

With the compassion of Jodi Picoult and the medical realism of Atul Gawande, real-life anesthesiologist Carol Cassella's riveting national bestseller seamlessly melds compelling women's fiction and medical drama to create an "involving debut that's just what the doctor ordered" (*People*).

Dr. Marie Heaton is an anesthesiologist at the height of her profession. She has worked, lived, and breathed her career since medical school, and she now practices at a top Seattle hospital. Marie has carefully constructed and constricted her life according to empirical truths, to the science and art of medicine. But when her tried-and-true formula suddenly deserts her during a routine surgery, she must explain the nightmarish operating room disaster and face the resulting malpractice suit. Marie's best friend, colleague, and former lover, Dr. Joe Hillary, becomes her closest confidante as she twists through depositions, accusations and a remorseful preoccupation with the mother of the patient in question. As she struggles to salvage her career and reputation, Marie must face hard truths about the path she's chosen, the bridges she's burned, and the colleagues and superiors she's mistaken for friends.

A quieter crisis is simultaneously unfolding within Marie's family. Her aging father is losing his sight and approaching an awkward dependency on Marie and her sister, Lori. But Lori has taken a more traditional path than Marie and is busy raising a family. Although Marie has been estranged from her Texas roots for decades, the ultimate responsibility for their father's care is falling on her.

As her carefully structured life begins to collapse, Marie confronts questions of love and betrayal, family bonds and the price of her own choices. Set against the natural splendor of Seattle, and inside the closed vaults of hospital operating rooms, *Oxygen* climaxes in a final twist that is as heartrending as it is redeeming.

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Editorial Review

Review
"In Oxygen, Carol Cassella's taut novel, Dr. Marie Heaton, an assured anesthesiologist at the top of her game, is forced to face the personal and professional fallout from an operating room disaster. Marie finds herself on the losing end of dollars-and-cents medicine in a malpractice suit, questioning herself, her skills, her colleagues, and her life choices. I couldn't wait to race to the end to see how her story played out, and I wasn't disappointed." -- Lalita Tademy, author of Cane River

"A subtle, compelling plot that twists and twists again. This quickly becomes a book you cannot put down." -- *The Dallas Morning News*

"A finely crafted mystery, as well as a sparkling literary work." -- *THE DENVER POST*

"Like her protagonist, Carol Cassella has the heart of a poet and the mind of a physician; the result is a striking meditation on the complexities of love, the fragile miracle that is the human body and the burdens and blessings of being a healer." -- Stephanie Kallos, author of *Broken for You*

"More than just an assured debut novel, this book is a tour de force, as emotionally involving as it is intelligent. Carol Cassella writes with the clarity and precision that are the hallmarks of her other profession....The fine, sharp details of her portrait of a gifted doctor facing a devastating crisis will stay with you long after the book is closed." -- Susan Wiggs, author of *Fireside* and *Just Breathe*

" A startling plot twist, combined with Cassella's first-hand understanding of our ailing healthcare system, makes this involving debut just what the doctor ordered." -- *PEOPLE*

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About the Author
Carol Cassella majored in English Literature at Duke University and is a graduate from Baylor College of Medicine. She currently practices anesthesiology in Seattle and is a freelance writer specializing in global public health advocacy for the developing world. She is the mother of four children, and is working on her third novel. Visit the author at www.carolcassella.com.

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