

Tilt

by Emma Pattee



About the Book

Set over the course of one day, a heart-racing debut about a woman facing the unimaginable, determined to find safety.

Last night, you and I were safe. Last night, in another universe, your father and I stood fighting in the kitchen.

Annie is nine months pregnant and shopping for a crib at IKEA when a massive earthquake hits Portland, Oregon. With no way to reach her husband, no phone or money, and a city left in chaos, there's nothing to do but walk.

Making her way across the wreckage of Portland, Annie experiences human desperation and kindness: strangers offering help, a riot at a grocery store, and an unlikely friendship with a young mother. As she walks, Annie reflects on her struggling marriage, her disappointing career, and her anxiety about having a baby. If she can just make it home, she's determined to change her life.

A propulsive debut, TILT is a primal scream of a novel about the disappointments and desires we all carry, and what each of us will do for the people we love.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel's portrayal of a catastrophic earthquake is both gripping and eye-opening. How did it shape your perspective on disaster preparedness and survival? Have you ever experienced a natural disaster or other life-altering event? If so, how did it compare to what Annie faced?

2. Annie's pregnancy is central to her story. How do you think her emotions, decisions and challenges during the earthquake would have been different if she weren't pregnant? How might this change affect the story's impact on you

as a reader?

3. Resilience is a recurring theme throughout the novel. How do Annie's emotional and physical struggles reflect her inner strength? Can you recall a moment in your life when resilience played a key role in overcoming a challenge?

4. The imagery of Portland is vivid and deeply woven into the novel's atmosphere. How did the setting amplify the tension in the story? Did the descriptions of this familiar yet fractured city evoke any personal connections or memories of places you love?

5. Relationships are examined in different ways throughout Annie's story --- with her partner, her unborn child, and the people she encounters during the disaster. How did these relationships enhance the narrative? Did it prompt you to reflect on your own connections and how they might endure under pressure?

6. The novel blends vivid storytelling with scientific accuracy about the threat of a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. How did this combination affect your reading experience? Were you previously aware of this geologic risk, and has it changed how you think about the natural world?

7. Throughout the book, Annie's decisions under extraordinary pressure are crucial to her survival. Were there moments when you found yourself agreeing or disagreeing with her choices? What does this say about your own instincts in high-stress situations?

8. Dreams and ambitions linger in the novel as unspoken forces, even within the survival narrative. How did Annie's unfulfilled dreams resonate with you, and do they remind you of any aspirations in your own life that were redirected by unexpected events?

9. While the novel unfolds over the course of a single day, it also reflects on Annie's past, particularly her relationship with her mother and her husband. How did this structure of alternating timelines affect your connection to her story? Can you think of a time when reflecting on the past provided clarity during a crisis?

10. Annie encounters several strangers during the disaster, each revealing different shades of humanity --- for better and for worse. Which of these characters stood out to you the most? Did you see traits of yourself or people you know in any of their actions or decisions?

11. The novel subtly highlights the socioeconomic disparities that exist in both ordinary and catastrophic situations. How did these themes shape your understanding of survival? Have you witnessed or experienced ways in which resources and privilege play a role in navigating crises?

12. The moment when Annie gives birth alone in the park is raw and powerful. What emotions did this scene stir in you? What do you think it symbolizes about motherhood, bravery, and human endurance in the face of adversity?

13. The title TILT is evocative and layered with meaning. How do you interpret its connection to the events and themes of the novel? Were there moments in the story that stood out as pivotal ?tilts? or shifts in perspective or fate?

14. After reading TILT, what personal insights or takeaways resonate with you most, especially concerning resilience,

relationships or navigating crises? Did this story inspire you to view your own life --- or the challenges you have faced --- in a different light?

15. How would you describe the overarching emotional impact of TILT? Did it leave you feeling hopeful, contemplative or something else entirely? What conversations would you want to explore further with others after reading this novel?

Author Bio

Emma Pattee is a climate journalist and fiction writer. Her work has been published in *The Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Guardian* and elsewhere. She lives in Oregon.

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