

Fever

BY JANET GILSDORF



PRESS KIT

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From acclaimed author and Professor Emerita of Epidemiology Janet Gilsdorf comes a captivating and timely novel about a young doctor's quest to uncover the cause of a mysterious disease killing young children, and the race to find a cure.

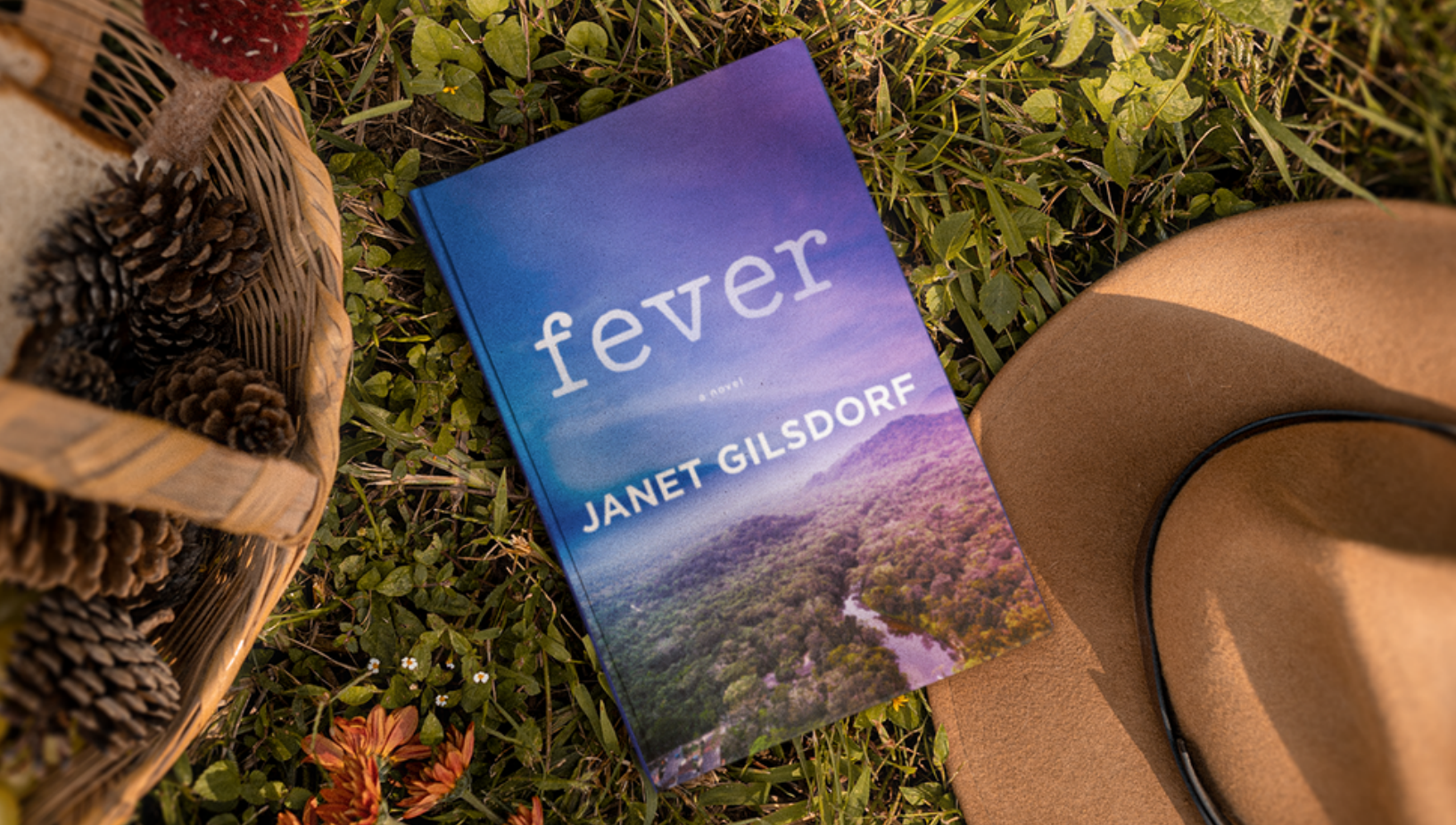
In 1984, in the small Brazilian village of Promissão, a young child begins to fuss, her eyes turning pink and her skin flushed with heat. Four days later, she's dead.

Sidonie Royal, an accomplished physician and scientist, arrives in the small Brazilian village of Promissão to investigate and hopefully cure this insidious new disease. With several young children already dead, and more getting sick by the day, the stakes cannot get any higher. But Sid's personal life is also in flux, as she struggles to balance a complicated relationship with her boyfriend, Paul, pressure to start a family from her well-meaning mother, conflict with her surly but brilliant coworker named Eliot, and a budding romantic attraction to her doctoral student's twin brother. As Sid relentlessly pursues an explanation for the disease, the village's physician calls in the Global Health Agency, triggering a scientific race that spans two continents and becomes increasingly defined by personal stakes.

In a desperate attempt to determine a diagnosis for the disease, Sid sneaks a vial of an infected child's blood back to her lab in Michigan. As her personal life and romantic relationships fall apart, she becomes consumed by her desire to win the medical race against the GHA. However, her volatile (and sometimes emotional) relationship with Eliot will hinder her as much as it will help her on her journey for discovery.

Set against the backdrop of the early days of the AIDS epidemic, FEVER is about finding courage in the face of the unknown, the lasting power of community, and one woman's challenge to prove herself as she aims to make a life-saving—and career-defining—discovery.





Quick Facts

Full Title: Fever

Page Count: 310 pages

Genre: Historical fiction

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Distributor: Independent Publishers Group

Rights: World



Excerpt

Prologue

Dona raised her hand, shading her eyes from the piercing sun, and stared at the rows of corn straight ahead. Marcelo had told her he wouldn't go to the far field today, so he must be in the closer one, beyond the fence line, beyond the lonely cow that swished her tail as she slowly chewed the tangled weeds. The wind, those dry summer gusts that kicked up the dirt and provoked the leaves overhead, blew her hair away from her face.

Mariana, the usually sunny girl, the child whose smile could melt any heart, called from inside the house. She sounded hoarse. Or mad. "Mama's out here," Dona called back. Her daughter began to cry. She was cranky today. "I'm on the porch," Dona said over her shoulder.

The sun had worked its way down to the tops of the mimosa trees along the road. The shafts of early evening light glittered through their branches, then shot like darts between the roof slats over the porch.

The screen door squealed open and then slammed shut. Mariana, her hair the darkest mahogany, dragged a ragged green blanket across the concrete and grabbed her mother's leg. Her diaper drooped to her knees, her tummy was bare. When she released the blanket, it puddled over her feet. She stretched her fingers toward the sky and cried, "Mama."

The sun had worked its way down to the tops of the mimosa trees along the road. The shafts of early evening light glittered through their branches, then shot like darts between the roof slats over the porch. Dona let out a faint groan as she lifted her daughter to her hip. She combed her fingers through Mariana's snarled hair and kissed her cheek. It was flushed and warm. Her eyes were still a little gooey, and the white parts still poppy pink.

They were better, though, than yesterday. Or the day before that.



■ **Barbara Alexander, MD, MHS**

PROFESSOR OF MEDICINE AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES,
DUKE UNIVERSITY

"Compelling! Janet Gilsdorf provides a rare, insider's glance into the life of an infectious diseases physician-scientist dedicated to unlocking the mystery of a feral germ that rapidly emerges and causes the tragic deaths of innocent victims. A moving, timely tale of a woman on the brink of a career-changing medical discovery."

■ **Roberta Gately**

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF LIPSTICK IN AFGHANISTAN

"A riveting medical mystery, *Fever* offers an exciting glimpse into the life of one determined disease tracker. Set in a time before the current Covid pandemic, the theme—to identify and halt a deadly disease—makes this an intriguing, hard to put down story. "



Biography

Janet Gilsdorf is the Robert P. Kelch Research Professor Emerita at the University of Michigan, where she participates in the care of children with complex infectious diseases. She is the author of the novel *Ten Days*, published in 2012 by Kensington Books. Her non-fiction books include the memoir *Inside/Outside: A Physician's Journey with Breast Cancer*, published in 2006 by the University of Michigan Press, and *Continual Raving: The Story of Meningitis and The People Who Conquered It*, published by Oxford University Press in 2019. She has two adult sons and lives in Ann Arbor with her husband.

Janet Gilsdorf is the Robert P. Kelch Research Professor Emerita at the University of Michigan, where she participates in the care of children with complex infectious diseases.

Janet Gilsdorf's work as a scientist reveals the secrets of nature; in her field of microbiology, those secrets are microscopic in size yet powerful in impact. In her work as a physician she guides patients and their families through their medical challenges and counsels them during their finest, as well as their worst, moments. As a writer, she integrates the scientific, medical, and personal truths she witnesses, makes emotional sense of their meaning, and finds the most effective ways to communicate these truths through concepts and images built from words.



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Previous Works

Continual Raving: A History of Meningitis and the People Who Conquered It

Published by: Oxford University Press
Genre: Medical History
ISBN13: 9780190677312

Ten Days

Published by: Kensington
Release Date: September 25, 2012
Genre: Contemporary Fiction
ISBN13: 9780758269447

Inside/Outside

Published by: University of Michigan Press
Release Date: September 11, 2006
Genre: Autobiography
ISBN13: 9780472115792

Press Release

Forthcoming Historical Novel Highlights the Strengths and Struggles Faced by Female Scientists

The study of a mysterious, infectious disease plays a key role in this timely and captivating novel

NEW YORK, NY - Fever, Janet Gilsdorf's new historical novel that tells the timely story of one woman's race to cure children of an insidious infectious disease, will be published by Beaufort Books on June 21, 2022.

In 1984, in the small Brazilian village of Promissão, a young child begins to fuss, her eyes turning pink and her skin flushed with heat. Four days later, she's dead. Sidonie Royal, an accomplished physician and scientist, arrives in the small Brazilian village of Promissão to investigate and hopefully cure this insidious new disease. With several young children already dead, and more getting sick by the day, the stakes cannot get any higher. But Sid's personal life is also in flux, as she struggles to balance a complicated relationship with her boyfriend, Paul; pressure to start a family from her well-meaning mother; and conflict with her surly but brilliant coworker named Eliot. As Sid relentlessly pursues an explanation for the disease, the village's physician calls in the Global Health Agency, triggering a scientific race that spans two continents and becomes increasingly defined by personal stakes. Set against the backdrop of the early days of the AIDS epidemic, Fever is about finding courage in the face of the unknown, the lasting power of community, and one woman's challenge to prove herself.

Barbara Alexander, Professor of Medicine and Infectious Diseases at Duke University says of Fever: "Compelling! Janet Gilsdorf provides a rare, insider's glance into the life of an infectious diseases physician-scientist dedicated to unlocking the mystery of a feral germ that rapidly emerges and causes the tragic deaths of innocent victims. A moving, timely tale of a woman on the brink of a career-changing medical discovery."

Janet Gilsdorf is the Robert P. Kelch Research Professor Emerita of Epidemiology and Pediatric Infectious Diseases at the University of Michigan. She has published four books. Fever is her second novel.

Beaufort Books is an independent publisher based in New York City. Beaufort publishes a mix of non-fiction and fiction titles, with about 15–20 new titles each year. Since 2007, we've published four New York Times bestsellers.

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For more information, to receive a review copy, or to arrange an interview with Janet Gilsdorf, please contact Emma St. John at emma@beaufortbooks.com.

Interview Questions

1. How do Sidonie's medical background/experiences mirror your own?
2. Was it emotionally/mentally difficult writing about a deadly disease in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic?
3. *Fever* centers around the importance of community in the face of tragedy. How have you felt your own community come together throughout the pandemic?
4. Which authors or books have influenced your writing style?
5. Has it been difficult carving a space for yourself as a woman in STEM?
6. Do you have any advice for aspiring scientists, writers, or both?
7. Your main character struggles with balancing her incredibly demanding profession with her personal life. Do you feel like you've faced these same challenges in your own career?
8. What's the biggest misconception about the study of epidemiology?
9. In your book, Sidonie is in a heated race with the Global Health Agency to find a cure for the mysterious illness. In your experience, is it common for individual scientists and larger organizations to view one another as competition rather than a resource?
10. What do you feel is the biggest takeaway from your book? What do you want your readers to think about after they finish the last page?