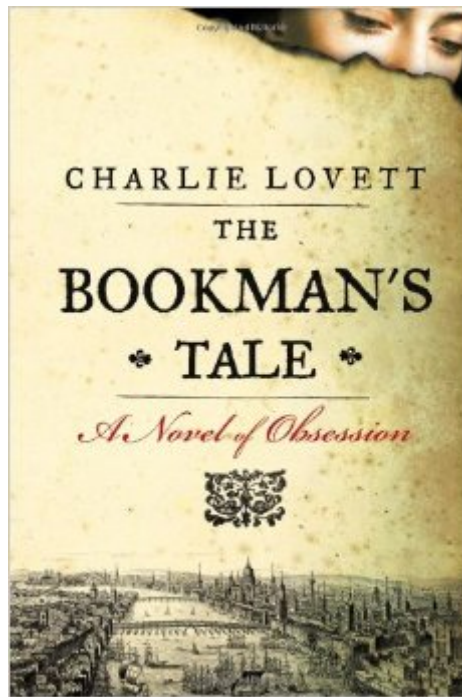


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The Bookman's Tale



Synopsis

A mysterious portrait ignites an antiquarian bookseller's search through time and the works of Shakespeare for his lost love. Guaranteed to capture the hearts of everyone who truly loves books, *The Bookman's Tale* is a former bookseller's sparkling novel and a delightful exploration of one of literature's most tantalizing mysteries with echoes of *Shadow of the Wind* and A.S. Byatt's *Possession*. Hay-on-Wye, 1995. Peter Byerly isn't sure what drew him into this particular bookshop. Nine months earlier, the death of his beloved wife, Amanda, had left him shattered. The young antiquarian bookseller relocated from North Carolina to the English countryside, hoping to rediscover the joy he once took in collecting and restoring rare books. But upon opening an eighteenth-century study of Shakespeare forgeries, Peter is shocked when a portrait of Amanda tumbles out of its pages. Of course, it isn't really her. The watercolor is clearly Victorian. Yet the resemblance is uncanny, and Peter becomes obsessed with learning the picture's origins. As he follows the trail back first to the Victorian era and then to Shakespeare's time, Peter communes with Amanda's spirit, learns the truth about his own past, and discovers a book that might definitively prove Shakespeare was, indeed, the author of all his plays.

Book Information

Hardcover: 353 pages

Publisher: Viking; 1st edition (May 28, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0670026476

ISBN-13: 978-0670026470

Product Dimensions: 6.4 x 1.2 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (413 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

The Bookman's Tale: A Novel of Obsession is a lot of things. It's a love story, mystery, thriller, all combined into one book. Peter Byerly, a socially awkward antiquarian book seller, is still reeling from the death of his beloved wife, Amanda. To escape, he goes to England, hoping to rejoin life by

immersing himself in his first love, books. He happens to come across a watercolor portrait of Amanda while browsing through an old book. The thing of it is, though, is that the painting was done a hundred years prior. Driven by obsession, he steals the picture and finds himself in pursuit of who BB (the artist) and the person in the painting are, while stumbling upon a manuscript that could very well prove that Shakespeare actually wrote his plays. This book had some pretty good selling points for me. Obsession? Bibliophilia? SOLD! I found it to be well written and really interesting. Lovett draws from his own personal experience in the antiquarian book business, and it is very clear that he knows his subject matter. The descriptions of how books are restored and about forgery are in depth and very comprehensible to someone that has no idea about any of that stuff. I really liked how he drew his inspiration from actual documents (such as Shakespeare's Pandosto) and people, yet do not forget that this is primarily fiction. The story shifts between three different stories: present day (or rather, the 1990s), the mid 1980s (Peter and Amanda's love story), and the early 1600s-late 1800s (the story of the Pandosto manuscript, the "Holy Grail" of English literature). The time periods are easily discernable as they are all labeled before it moves into that particular segment.

Our protagonist, Peter Byerly, is a young bookseller who caught the bibliophile bug at (the fictional) Ridgefield University in North Carolina. A scholarship boy with crippling shyness, his preferred work/study job was in the library, because he wouldn't have to interact with anyone. And yet that is where he meets the two great loves of his life: rare books and Amanda. The story actually begins with Peter recently widowed, Amanda having died suddenly after they'd been married only six years. Heartbroken, Peter has fled North Carolina for the cottage in Kingham, Oxfordshire, England that he and Amanda had bought the year before. Now, months later, Peter decides slowly to return to his antiquarian book hunter/seller work. In Hay-on-Wye, the renowned city of bookshops in Wales, he discovers a portrait of Amanda slipped inside an old volume. But it can't be Amanda, because this is a Victorian-era portrait. The discovery electrifies Peter. He must find out where this portrait came from. A request to evaluate a local Kingham resident's manor-house collection of antiquarian books leads Peter on a quest for what he calls the Holy Grail: proof that William Shakespeare really was the author of all those plays and sonnets, rather than Marlowe, de Vere, Bacon or one of the other better-educated writers often claimed to be the more likely source. Peter's two quests become a thrilling adventure, especially for readers fascinated by old books and their travels through time and the lives of their owners. Each chapter tells one of three stories: Peter's modern-day (1995) pursuits, his life with Amanda and the chequered past of the grail book.

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