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The  
SHADOW  
of the  
WIND

A NOVEL

"One gorgeous read."

—STEPHEN KING

CARLOS RUIZ ZAFÓN

Author of *THE ANGEL'S GAME*

I STILL REMEMBER THE DAY MY FATHER TOOK ME TO THE CEMETERY OF Forgotten Books for the first time. It was the early summer of 1945, and we walked through the streets of a Barcelona trapped beneath ashen skies as dawn poured over Rambla de Santa Mónica in a wreath of liquid copper.

"Daniel, you mustn't tell anyone what you're about to see today," my father warned. "Not even your friend Tomás. No one."

"Not even Mommy?"

My father sighed, hiding behind the sad smile that followed him like a shadow through life.

"Of course you can tell her," he answered, heavyhearted. "We keep no secrets from her. You can tell her everything."

Shortly after the Civil War, an outbreak of cholera had taken my mother away. We buried her in Montjuïc on my fourth birthday. I can only recall that it rained all day and all night, and that when I asked my father whether heaven was crying, he couldn't bring himself to reply. Six years later my mother's absence remained in the air around us, a deafening silence that I had not yet learned to stifle with words. My father and I lived in a modest apartment on Calle Santa Ana, a stone's throw from the church square. The apartment was directly above the bookshop, a legacy from my grandfather that specialized in rare collectors' editions and secondhand books—an en-

chanted bazaar, which my father hoped would one day be mine. I was raised among books, making invisible friends in pages that seemed cast from dust and whose smell I carry on my hands to this day. As a child I learned to fall asleep talking to my mother in the darkness of my bedroom, telling her about the day's events, my adventures at school, and the things I had been taught. I couldn't hear her voice or feel her touch, but her radiance and her warmth haunted every corner of our home, and I believed, with the innocence of those who can still count their age on their ten fingers, that if I closed my eyes and spoke to her, she would be able to hear me wherever she was. Sometimes my father would listen to me from the dining room, crying in silence.

On that June morning, I woke up screaming at first light. My heart was pounding in my chest as if it feared that my soul wanted to carve its way out and run off down the stairs. My father hurried into my room and held me in his arms, trying to calm me.

"I can't remember her face. I can't remember Mommy's face," I muttered, breathless.

My father held me tight.

"Don't worry, Daniel. I'll remember for both of us."

We looked at each other in the half-light, searching for words that didn't exist. For the first time, I realized my father was growing old. He stood up and drew the curtains to let in the pale glint of dawn.

"Come, Daniel, get dressed. I want to show you something," he said.

"Now? At five o'clock in the morning?"

"Some things can only be seen in the shadows," my father said, flashing a mysterious smile probably borrowed from the pages of one of his worn Alexandre Dumas romances.

Night watchmen still lingered in the misty streets when we stepped out of the front door. The lamps along the Ramblas sketched an avenue of vapor that faded as the city began to awake. When we reached Calle Arco del Teatro, we continued through its arch toward the Raval quarter, entering a vault of blue haze. I followed my father through that narrow lane, more of a scar than a street, until the gleam of the Ramblas faded behind us. The

brightness of dawn filtered down from balconies and cornices in streaks of slanting light that dissolved before touching the ground. At last my father stopped in front of a large door of carved wood, blackened by time and humidity. Before us loomed what to my eyes seemed the carcass of a palace, a place of echoes and shadows.

"Daniel, you mustn't tell anyone what you're about to see today. Not even your friend Tomás. No one."

A smallish man with vulturine features framed by thick gray hair opened the door. His impenetrable aquiline gaze rested on mine.


"Good morning, Isaac. This is my son, Daniel," my father announced. "Soon he'll be eleven, and one day the shop will be his. It's time he knew this place."

The man called Isaac nodded and invited us in. A blue-tinted gloom obscured the sinuous contours of a marble staircase and a gallery of frescoes peopled with angels and fabulous creatures. We followed our host through a palatial corridor and arrived at a sprawling round hall, a virtual basilica of shadows spiraling up under a high glass dome, its dimness pierced by shafts of light that stabbed from above. A labyrinth of passageways and crammed bookshelves rose from base to pinnacle like a beehive woven with tunnels, steps, platforms, and bridges that presaged an immense library of seemingly impossible geometry. I looked at my father, stunned. He smiled at me and winked.

"Welcome to the Cemetery of Forgotten Books, Daniel."

I could make out about a dozen human figures scattered among the library's corridors and platforms. Some of them turned to greet me from afar, and I recognized the faces of various colleagues of my father's, fellows of the secondhand-booksellers' guild. To my ten-year-old eyes, they looked like a brotherhood of alchemists in furtive study. My father knelt next to me and, with his eyes fixed on mine, addressed me in the hushed voice he reserved for promises and secrets.

"This is a place of mystery, Daniel, a sanctuary. Every book, every volume you see here, has a soul. The soul of the person who wrote it and of those who read it and lived and dreamed with it. Every time a book changes



"Anyone who enjoys novels that are scary, erotic, touching, tragic and thrilling should rush right out to the nearest bookstore and pick up *The Shadow of the Wind*. Really, you should."

—Michael Dirda, *The Washington Post*

Barcelona, 1945: A city slowly heals from its war wounds, and Daniel, an antiquarian book dealer's son who mourns the loss of his mother, finds solace in a mysterious book entitled *The Shadow of the Wind*, by one Julián Carax. But when he sets out to find the author's other works, he makes a shocking discovery: someone has been systematically destroying every copy of every book Carax has written. In fact, Daniel may have the last of Carax's books in existence. Soon Daniel's seemingly innocent quest opens a door into one of Barcelona's darkest secrets—an epic story of murder, madness, and doomed love.

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"Wondrous . . . masterful . . . *The Shadow of the Wind* is ultimately a love letter to literature, intended for readers as passionate about storytelling as its young hero."

—*Entertainment Weekly*, Editor's Choice

"Gabriel García Márquez meets Umberto Eco meets Jorge Luis Borges for a sprawling magic show."

—Richard Eder, *The New York Times Book Review*

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BARCELONA IN THE BACK OF THIS BOOK

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