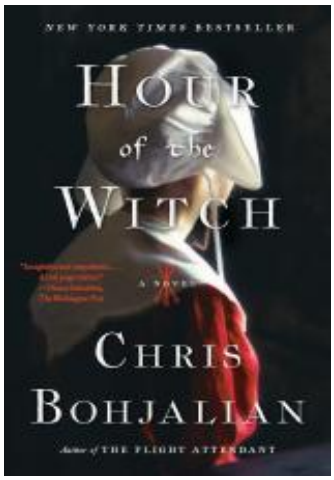
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Hour of the Witch

by Chris Bohjalian



About the Book

A young Puritan woman --- faithful and resourceful, but afraid of the demons that dog her soul --- plots her escape from a violent marriage in this riveting and propulsive novel of historical suspense from the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT.

Boston, 1662. Mary Deerfield is 24 years old. Her skin is porcelain, her eyes delft blue, and in England she might have had many suitors. But here in the New World, amid this community of saints, Mary is the second wife of Thomas Deerfield, a man as cruel as he is powerful. When Thomas, prone to drunken rage, drives a three-tined fork into the back of Mary's hand, she resolves that she must divorce him to save her life. But in a world where every neighbor is watching for signs of the devil, a woman like Mary --- a woman who harbors secret desires and finds it difficult to tolerate the brazen hypocrisy of so many men in the colony --- soon becomes herself the object of suspicion and rumor.

When tainted objects are discovered buried in Mary's garden, when a boy she has treated with herbs and simples dies, and when their servant girl runs screaming in fright from her home, Mary must fight to escape not only her marriage, but also the gallows.

A twisting, tightly plotted novel of historical suspense from one of our greatest storytellers, HOUR OF THE WITCH is a timely and terrifying story of socially sanctioned brutality and the original American witch hunt.

Discussion Guide

1. The Puritans believed that they were always in the presence of God or the Devil --- that they were never truly alone. How did the characters? behavior reflect or not reflect this belief? How would you behave differently if you felt there was always someone watching?

2. The Puritans used God and the Devil to explain the inexplicable events of everyday life. It is suggested that having this type of explanation is comforting. Do you agree?

3. Mary often wonders if she herself has been possessed by the Devil, or if, instead, it is God influencing her actions. How does this inner dialogue change your view of Mary?s motives?

4. Were you surprised by the way the Puritans in the novel lived? How did their lifestyle differ, or not, from any ideas about Puritans you may have had before reading this book?

5. Discuss Henry Simmons? actions throughout the novel from his first encounter with Mary, to the kiss in her parents? dining room. Do you approve of his behavior? What about Mary?s?

6. As you were reading, who did you think buried the objects in the ground outside Mary?s door? Were you surprised by the answer?

7. Was justice served at the end of the book? Did the characters get what they deserved?

8. In what ways does Mary?s story resonate today? Has society progressed in its treatment of women, it in its views on divorce and domestic violence?

Author Bio

Chris Bohjalian is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of 26 books, including THE AMATEUR, THE JACKAL'S MISTRESS, THE PRINCESS OF LAS VEGAS, THE LIONESS, HOUR OF THE WITCH, MIDWIVES and THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT, which has been made into a MAX limited series starring Kaley Cuoco. His other books include THE RED LOTUS; THE GUEST ROOM; CLOSE YOUR EYES, HOLD HANDS; THE SANDCASTLE GIRLS; SKELETONS AT THE FEAST; and THE DOUBLE BIND. His novels SECRETS OF EDEN, MIDWIVES and PAST THE BLEACHERS were made into movies, and his work has been translated into more than 35 languages. He is also a playwright (*Wingspan* and *Midwives*). He lives in Vermont.

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