

The Shadow of the Wind

Carlos Ruiz Zafón, translated by Lucia Graves



About the Book

The Shadow of the Wind is a coming-of-age tale of a young boy who, through the magic of a single book, finds a purpose greater than himself and a hero in a man he's never met. With the passion of García Márquez, the irony of Dickens, and the necromancy of Poe, Carlos Ruiz Zafón spins a web of intrigue so thick that it ensnares the reader from the very first line. **The Shadow of the Wind** is an ode to the art of reading, but it is also the perfect example of the all-encompassing power of a well-told story.

At the first light of dawn in postwar Barcelona, a bookseller leads his motherless son to a mysterious crypt called the Cemetery of Forgotten Books. This labyrinthine sanctuary houses the books that have lost their owners, books that are no longer remembered by anyone. It is here that ten-year-old Daniel Sempere pulls a single book—**The Shadow of the Wind**—off of the dusty shelves to adopt as his own. With one fateful turn of a page, he begins an adventure that will unravel another man's tragedy and solve a mystery that has already taken many lives and will shape his entire future.

When Daniel speaks with Gustavo Barceló, a local booktrader, to find out more about his new treasure, word begins to spread that he has uncovered a long-sought rarity, perhaps the only copy of any of Julián Carax's works in existence. Soon after, a mysterious stranger whom Daniel recognizes as Laín Coubert, the leather-masked, cigarette-smoking devil from Carax's novel, propositions Daniel, offering to buy the book from him for an astronomical price. Daniel refuses, in spite of the man's thinly veiled threats. With the help of his bookselling friends, Daniel discovers that Laín Coubert has cut a swath of destruction through two countries, methodically searching for and destroying all of Carax's books while erasing every trace of Carax's life.

Daniel and his best friend Fermín Romero de Torres search through Barcelona, tracking down the people who knew the Shadow's elusive author best, hoping to understand Coubert's ruthless pursuit and why Carax's life came to a bitter end so quickly. Each clue reveals a little more about the tragedy of Julián and Penélope, star-crossed lovers who met their doom in a cursed mansion called "The Angel of the Mist." Daniel is swept up in unraveling the great mystery of the

author's short but wretched life, an epic of two Barcelona families devastated by a secret no one could have guessed. Only when a woman is brutally murdered for trying to reveal the truth, and Fermín is framed for the crime, does Daniel begin to understand that the threat to his life is very real. And what begins as a young bibliophile's hobby turns into a diabolical murder mystery that, if Daniel is not careful, may write his own tragic ending.

Discussion Guide

1. Julián Carax's and Daniel's lives follow very similar trajectories. Yet one ends in tragedy, the other in happiness. What similarities are there between the paths they take? What are the differences that allow Daniel to avoid tragedy?
2. Nuria Monfort tells Daniel, "Julián once wrote that coincidences are the scars of fate. There are no coincidences, Daniel. We are the puppets of our unconscious." What does that mean? What does she refer to in her own experience and in Julián's life?
3. Nuria Monfort's dying words, meant for Julián, are, "There are worse prisons than words." What does she mean by this? What is she referring to?
4. There are many devil figures in the story --- Carax's Laín Coubert, Jacinta's Zacarias, Fermín's Fumero. How does evil manifest itself in each devil figure? What are the characteristics of the villains/devils?
5. Discuss the title of the novel. What is "**The Shadow of the Wind**"? Where does Zafón refer to it and what does he use the image to illustrate?
6. Zafón's female characters are often enigmatic, otherworldly angels full of power and mystery. Clara the blind white goddess ultimately becomes a fallen angel; Carax credits sweet Bea with saving his and Daniel's lives; Daniel's mother is actually an angel whose death renders her so ephemeral that Daniel can't even remember her face. Do you think Zafón paints his female characters differently than his male characters? What do the women represent in Daniel's life? What might the Freud loving Miquel Moliner say about Daniel's relationships with women?
7. Daniel says of **The Shadow of the Wind**, "As it unfolded, the structure of the story began to remind me of one of those Russian dolls that contain innumerable ever-smaller dolls within" (p. 7). Zafón's **The Shadow of the Wind** unfolds much the same way, with many characters contributing fragments of their own stories in the first person point of view. What does Zafón illustrate with this method of storytelling? What do the individual mini-autobiographies contribute to the tale?
8. The evil Fumero is the only son of a ridiculed father and a superficial, status-seeking mother. The troubled Julián is the bastard son of a love-starved musical mother and an amorous, amoral businessman, though he was raised by a cuckolded hatmaker. Do you think their personalities are products of nature or nurture? How are the sins of the fathers and mothers visited upon each of the characters?

Author Bio

Carlos Ruiz Zafón eight novels include the internationally bestselling and critically acclaimed *Cemetery of Forgotten Books* series: THE SHADOW OF THE WIND, THE ANGEL'S GAME, THE PRISONER OF HEAVEN and THE LABYRINTH OF THE SPIRITS. His work, which also includes prize-winning young adult novels, has been translated into more than 50 languages and is published around the world. It has won numerous awards and millions of readers. THE CITY OF MIST is his final book --- a collection of stories he prepared before his death in June 2020, meant to be published posthumously.

Critical Praise

"...[T]here is no question that Wind is wondrous.... [M]asterful, meticulous plotting and extraordinary control over language.... **TheShadow of the Wind** is ultimately a love letter to literature, intended for readers as passionate about storytelling as its young hero."

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Publication Date: January 25, 2005

Genres: Fiction

Paperback: 487 pages

Publisher: Penguin (Non-Classics)

ISBN-10: 0143034901

ISBN-13: 9780143034902