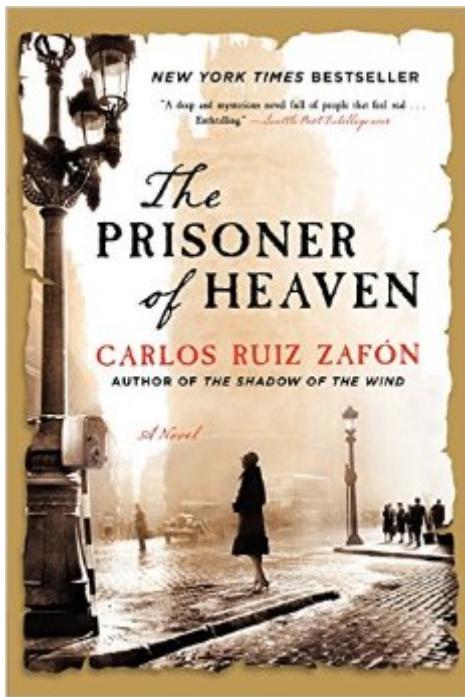


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The Prisoner Of Heaven: A Novel



Synopsis

Once again, internationally acclaimed, New York Times bestselling author Carlos Ruiz Zafón creates a rich, labyrinthine tale of love, literature, passion, and revenge, set in a dark, gothic Barcelona, in which the heroes of *The Shadow of the Wind* and *The Angel's Game* must contend with a nemesis that threatens to destroy them. "Gabriel García Márquez meets Umberto Eco meets Jorge Luis Borges for a sprawling magic show." —"New York Times Book Review on *Shadow of the Wind*

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I suspect my review will be unpopular here on , so let me start my review by stating that I have read both *The Shadow of the Wind* and *The Angel's Game* multiple times, and love them both. Perhaps because I enjoyed the previous two novels so much, I found Zafon's effort in *The Prisoner of Heaven* utterly disappointing. Zafon always stated that he intended the novels commencing with *The Shadow of the Wind* to be stand-alone works, interconnected by various characters and, most importantly, the Cemetery of Forgotten Books. Thus, a reader could start with any one of the novels and jump into an intriguing mystery story -- chronology is not important. Zafon previously stated the following: "I never meant to write a sequential saga, or a series of sequels of sorts. The idea is to write stories around this literary universe centered around the cemetery of forgotten books, exploring this gothic, mysterious universe through different characters and storylines. As you say, perhaps it would have been more commercialy advisable to do that, to write a straight sequel and

pick up the story where we left it, but it was never my idea to do so and I think it is more interesting to play around with the narrative spaces and lines to pull the reader into a fictional universe that plays by its own rules."Zafon has, apparently, now scrapped this idea. Where the first two novels are marvelous mysteries in their own right (who is Julian Carax; who is the "boss"?) -- The Prisoner of Heaven is merely filler, nothing more than an explanation of elements of the first two novels and a set-up for the final novel.

And here's the awesome thing... Within mere pages I was immersed in Ruiz Zafán's Barcelona. I love authors whose use of language is as idiosyncratic as a fingerprint, and Ruiz Zafán is one. I'd recognize his style immediately, whether his name was on the cover or not. He has stated in the past that the four books that make up this tetralogy can be read in any order, and that was true enough for the first two books, but not, perhaps, for this one. Here's why: Bookseller and bibliophile Daniel Sempere was at the heart of *The Shadow of the Wind*. And while there was plenty of intriguing overlap, *The Angel's Game* told the story of writer David Martín in an earlier timeline. *The Prisoner of Heaven* is the perfect bridge between these two books. It's told in two different times, and it picks up on the stories of both Daniel and David after the ends of their prior novels. And while there are many, many connections between these two men, the one at the heart of this novel is Daniel's best friend and bookstore employee, Fermán Romero de Torres. In the present day of the novel (1958), a visit to Sempere & Sons by a disquieting stranger who leaves a gift for Fermán is the catalyst for the older man to at last come clean about his past. Flashing back to 1939, Fermán tells Daniel about his imprisonment during the war. That was where Fermán met David Martín, and the man had a significant impact on his life. There's more to the tale, of course, but that's all I'm telling you. If this novel has a flaw, it's that it's a super-quick read. And it's just so completely enjoyable that it will leave you aching for book four. As for this book, aside from its shortness, it is notably less complex than the prior offerings.

At once a sequel to *The Angel's Game* and both a sequel and prequel to *The Shadow of the Wind*, *The Prisoner of Heaven* continues to tie together the twisting and melancholy narratives of David Martín and Daniel Sempere. This time, Zafán uses the unlikeliest of sources to accomplish this intertwining of narratives: at the heart of *The Prisoner of Heaven*, though not the titular prisoner itself, is Fermán Romero de Torres, and his story, from his first steps through the gates at Castle Montjuïc, to his eventual meeting with Daniel Sempere, is surprisingly heartbreakingly important to the overall narrative of the series' overall story. In *The Shadow of the Wind*, Fermán's

role as sidekick often fell into the role of comedic relief, allowing Zafán to break the tension with a well-timed joke about flatulence or an off-beat observation about the world, or those who people it. His place in the novel is important for helping to maintain tone, and showcasing Zafán's sly humour, but the reader always had the sense the Fermán's past held secrets as dark and interesting as anyone else in the novel. The Prisoner of Heaven explores some of those secrets, but not all. In response to Fermán's upcoming nuptials, Daniel sets out to ensure that his friend can be legally wed under his nom de plume, Fermán Romero de Torres, and in doing so discovers secrets about his own past and his connection with David Martán, lightly touched upon in The Angel's Game. It's a thrilling ride for anyone who has closely followed the labyrinth of relationships that Zafán has woven through his novels.

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