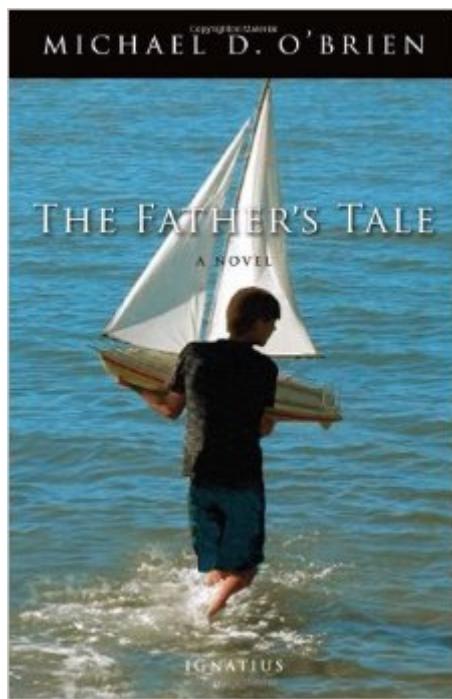


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The Father's Tale: A Novel



Synopsis

"A modern retelling of the parables The Good Shepherd and The Prodigal Son." - Michael O'Brien

Canadian bookseller Alex Graham is a middle-age widower whose quiet life is turned upside down when his college-age son disappears without any explanation or trace of where he has gone. With minimal resources, the father begins a long journey that takes him for the first time away from his safe and orderly world. As he stumbles across the merest thread of a trail, he follows it in blind desperation, and is led step by step on an odyssey that takes him to fascinating places and sometimes to frightening people and perils. Through the uncertainty and the anguish, the loss and the longing, Graham is pulled into conflicts between nations, as well as the eternal conflict between good and evil. Stretched nearly to the breaking point by the inexplicable suffering he witnesses and experiences, he discovers unexpected sources of strength as he presses onward in the hope of recovering his son--and himself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Father's Tale, by Michael O'Brien, is an impressive book to look at. It clocks in over 1000 pages and is not for the faint of heart. It's a LOT of reading. But wow! WHAT reading! Here's literature in the modern day, a little slice of what Dickens might look like if he were writing now. These characters are richly written and real people. I've never been to Russia, and before I read this, I would have thought it unlikely that I would ever go. O'Brien makes his story a journey, and while you may not feel that you need to know how everything looks, I didn't find it overwhelming or to be too much. In

other words, I loved the book. On the surface, it's a good story. Dad finds out that son disappears, takes off for the first time ever from his small town and travels around the world. During his journey, he runs into all sorts of interesting folks and crazy adventures. If you go a little deeper—which, really, you should, after investing all that time in reading it—there's more to be considered. First, what is fatherhood? And when we consider ideal fatherhood—not what we have experienced in life, but what God intends—how do we get a clearer picture of God himself, God as our father? While O'Brien has you wondering just what in the world is going to happen (and there was a point, near the end, when I was convinced I did have it figured out...and I didn't. Not at all.), he also forces you to do a bit of self-examination. What does it look like to give it all to God? What does trust in God really entail? Can I do that? Or, if you're me: Are you serious? If his characters were any less authentic, the story wouldn't work.

This year of Our Lord 2011 has been a very challenging to our family. Among the many challenges we've faced was one very trying one, one which brought my dignity and my self-identity as a father into question. To make the story short, the series of events left me thinking that I have failed as a father to one of my sons, that I was unsuccessful in handing down the faith, the way to live a Christian life, to hold on to a holy marriage, to respect the sacraments and the life of grace. Surely it was my fault that he had to look elsewhere for what I failed to give him. Michael O'Brien's book, *A Father's Tale*, was brought to me as a healing balm, as just the medicine that the doctor ordered. *The Father's Tale: A Novel* is the story of a man about my age, father of two sons like I am, and one of them went astray. The father, Alexander Graham by name, a reclusive widower and bookstore keeper, resigned to die. He left everything behind, his bucolic Canadian town, his shop, his friends, and his eldest, starting a desperate race against time and distance to bring his son, his stray lamb, back into the fold. Spanning Great Britain, Finland, the entire length of Russia and beyond, Mr. O'Brien gives us a tour de force that includes music, poetry, revolution; as well as deepest darkness and incredible light. We see Alex Graham's heart expand, then break, and then expand into greater love. Two takeaways from this book, the first one a lesson taught also in several other books by Mr. O'Brien which I have read, and that is that the battle against evil is not going to be won by any human means at our disposal. No one knows can begin to image how the battle will be won, but it will be won. In fact, it has been won already.

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