



The Forger

Paul Watkins

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An exciting new novel, by the author of *The Story of My Disappearance* and *Archangel*.

At the turn of World War II, David Halifax is a young American painter who receives a scholarship to come to Paris and work under the tutelage of the mysterious and brilliant Russian painter, Alexander Pankratov. Getting more than he bargained for, Halifax is quickly subjected to Pankratov's rigid will, and beguiled by the quiet, nude model who poses before them.

But Paris is also a city that is holding its breath. The Nazi forces are slowly penetrating the Maginot Line, and the once-indomitable city is now expecting the worst. Beneath Paris' blanket of fear and eerie calm, David Halifax realizes the true purpose of his visit: Pankratov is to train him in duplicating the masterworks of the Paris museums, and with the aid of a wily art dealer, barter the fakes to Hitler's legion of art dealers. What develops is cat and mouse game through Paris' silent streets, in the tunnels beneath its museums, and eventually into the scorched countryside of Normandy.

In David and Pankratov's frantic race to complete the uncompletable, both are forced to confront the terrible sacrifices one must finally make for art; a sacrifice of identity, and perhaps of the soul.

The Forger Details

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Author : Paul Watkins

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From Reader Review The Forger for online ebook

Erika says

A librarian recommended this book to me saying that the story was compelling and that the prose was "spare". I was intrigued by the description, but even more intrigued by the concept: an unassuming American artist enlisted to make forgeries of famous paintings to give the Nazis in order to save some of France's cultural history. As an art history major, I gobbled this up, but that is where the "spare prose" left me wanting. I wanted to "see" the art and the techniques in the writing, but Watkins' minimalist writing left me feeling like I was reading about sketches rather than masterpieces. If Watkins' writing were a painting, it would definitely be more of a Mondrian than a Manet. And that is absolutely okay (and even refreshing at times) except that my art-loving self just wanted more detail throughout. That being said, I would easily recommend this book to any art and/or history lover. It is "safe" and interesting enough for almost any crowd. 3 stars, but really a 3.5.

Tania says

quotes#612731 The Forger

"You were a painter. A great one, from all I hear."

"All right," he said. "Maybe I was good. But I exhausted myself. I got so tired in here" - he bounced the heel of his palm off his forehead. "Some days, I would set up the canvas and stare at it for an hour and then be so exhausted I'd have to go back to bed. But with restoration, it's different" - he drew his fingers close together, like a man learning to pray. "It's about the creation of the paint itself. Using only those materials available at the time. Then the lacquer. Then the ageing process. The precision of it. The cheating of time! Do you know that my finest work in that Gericault is the part Gericault got wrong." p71

The next morning I woke, as usual, to the sound of muttering voices in the Rue Descalzi. I could smell the particularly sour, perfumy reek of Matelot tobacco, which was the cheapest brand. p53
[ah ... trivia]

quotes#392511 The Forger

They would not quit, if only to avoid the shame of quitting. p269
[cliche: but it struck my eyes]

And suddenly, set free from the seemingly endless training, I knew I could do it. The complexity was all there in my head, too much to grasp in any single thought, but all there, bunched up and tangled; and the only way to untangle it was simply to work and not think about working, but just work. p207
[painter]

Val says

On occasion you encounter a book so lyrical you want to linger on every word. "The Forger" is such a book. Usually I skim through all the endless descriptions by writers of buildings or locations, even bit characters who I know won't figure into the narrative later. But Paul Watkins does with words what Beethoven did with notes on a scale. He has composed such an eloquent symphony of phrases I found myself drawn toward each paragraph, sure that the next would be even better than the last. And so it was. This story is more about the actors than it is about the action. The characters are so three-dimensional you feel almost as if you have met them in person, and not just on paper. The intricate yet flawed relationships between the heroes and anti-heroes is so masterfully woven that the tapestry of emotions it elicits is palpable. Paul Watkins is truly a master story teller.

Jennifer says

Set in Paris in 1938. A young artist wins a trip to Paris to study art. He ends up helping his Russian teacher forge copies of great paintings to sell or trade to the Germans. Very exciting and believable likable characters.

Julie Dolan says

Over the last few years I've read a number of novels set in and around Paris during WWII. Having lived in Paris in the late 1980s, books placed in city draw my in. With this book I was often wanting to pull out my street guide and walk along with David to see what he did. It is a book very much of it's setting.

The book is a fascinating look at another aspect of the war. These weren't soldiers, victims, or people in the resistance involved in espionage or destruction. It was a whole different duplicitous activity that I hadn't considered before and found really interesting. How were all these masterworks kept safe?

This book also gave me a view of living through the war that I hadn't had before. The author gave voice to living in fear in war that gave me a new way to understand ever so little what people in current war torn countries might be experiencing.

This was my first experience with Paul Watkins, I had not heard of him, but found this book at Goodwill and thought it sounded interesting. I will definitely search out other books by Mr. Watkins.

Amanda says

So much build up for a main plot that was almost entirely glossed over in flash forwards...

Olivia says

A very interesting book!!!

This story was about two topics I find most interesting- World War II and art forgery. I do not know why I find art forgery so interesting, but I love reading about it and learning more about the artists and their

techniques. It was enlightening to read about France during World War II. Mr. Watkins has written other books, and I would be curious to read them if I can get my hands on a few.

Tim says

David Halifax is an American art student who wins a mysterious scholarship to study in a Parisian atelier under an “enigmatic” white Russian teacher in 1940. Pankratov, the teacher, has inexplicably destroyed all his own paintings and is now engaged in making forgeries of old master paintings. It’s never really explained why he has destroyed his own work. Pankratov also has a daughter who models at the atelier and who hates him. Again we don’t understand why she hates him. When war breaks out Halifax decides to stay on in Paris and he and Pankratov begin forging paintings to pass on to the Nazis as the genuine article.

Halifax himself narrates the story. The ironic thing about this novel is it’s a bit like a forgery itself. It’s well written, professionally crafted and, apart from a couple of high profile errors (most notably the Musee d’Orsee making an appearance in 1940) it’s decently researched and yet it never quite comes alive, never benefits from the charge of inspiration. It reads like a commissioned novel rather than a labour of love. Halifax himself is the prime problem. He’s essentially a hollow character. He has no friends, no loves and fails to convince as anything but a plot device. There’s little character development at all in this novel. We watch the characters rather than feel for them.

There’s a faintly ridiculous back story involving an Uncle Charlie and the mysterious scholarship which is dropped early on. And the story of Pankratov’s daughter is equally lacking in meaning. I did quite enjoy *The Forger* but it’s not a novel I would feel confident to recommend.

Ian says

Knocking out forgeries in occupied Paris...so simple, so far fetched.

Chelsea Fleming says

I LOVE this book! It is an adult book vs. young adult- so it may be a difficult read for some, but I think it is worth the challenge. Action and suspense right along with art history, Parisian culture, and WWII. Good historical fiction!

Jennie Rosenblum says

Set in Paris at the beginning of World War II, this book had all the elements of a great Historical Fiction. Throw in an American artist on a mysterious scholarship, a grumpy Russian painter and the world of art forgeries and it should have been a winner. While the book starts in a lyrical tempo that pulled me in (I love

when the words make you just float along with a story) it did not continue. Don't get me wrong, this is a good story just not as great as I had hoped. I needed more details, more background, more something.

Christine says

An intriguing story of a young painter in Paris during WWII. Instead of just learning to paint, he's recruited to forge great works of art to help hide them from the Nazis. A story that combines art and suspense.

Peter says

David Halifax a young American art student accepts a scholarship that he hadn't applied for from a group that he had never heard of to study painting in Paris in 1939 just as Europe is about to plunge into war. Once in Paris David is taken under the wing of a once famous Russian artist Pankratov and his enigmatic daughter Vanya. However, he also falls under the malign influence of an unscrupulous art dealer called Fleury who sells some of David's sketches of Old Masters as originals initially without David's knowledge but later with it in a way to fund his extended stay. When war begins David decides to stay in Paris rather than return to his native America only to be coerced by the Resistance into forging some Old Masters when the Germans occupy Paris thus preventing the invaders getting their hands on the originals. These paintings are to be used as bargaining chips with the Nazis in return for originals that the Germans find unappealing. So begins a very dangerous commission.

This book gives a very different viewpoint on life under German occupation in Paris during WWII. David and his cohorts are not soldiers or members of the Resistance shooting and bombing the invaders but talented people who are just trying to find a way to survive the war and prevent the destruction or at least appropriation of great works of art. They are seen as collaborators by the local populace and of course discovery by the Germans will mean instant death or deportation to the concentration camps.

Watkins paints a very evocative depiction of life in Paris under occupation even if in many ways theirs is a pampered existence but it is still a very precarious one. His character descriptions were also very good and I found myself liking more and more about the main protagonists as the book went on in particular the bluff Pankratov. The book runs along at a good pace until its climax which I must admit did seem rather implausible.

This is the first book that I've read by this author and a very enjoyable one it was too. I will certainly be looking out for some of his other works if this is what I can expect.

Breeann Kaczmarczyk says

This book follows a young man in an art class in Europe during World War II. As the war picks up, it turns out that his art teacher is forging very valuable paintings to sell to the Nazis. The young painter learns to do the same thing. It is such a fast-paced book. I couldn't put it down! I've read it over and over again!

The Frahorus says

Pregevole romanzo storico ambientato totalmente a Parigi ai tempi dell'occupazione nazista e narrato in prima persona dall'artista americano David Halifax. Lo studente d'arte si ritroverà a dover dipingere dei falsi quadri (poi invecchiati dal geniale amico e maestro russo Alexander Pankratov) il tutto nato da un equivoco. Storia ironica e ben scritta che vi consiglio.
