



An Obvious Enchantment

Tucker Malarkey

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Perched above the Indian Ocean and surrounded by lush foliage that blocks out everything but the sea--sweet frangipani, jasmine, and wild orchid--the Hotel Salama is an unlikely place to conduct research. Proud, sharp-tongued, and solitary by disposition, Ingrid Holtz arrives at the hotel in search of her professor, Nick Templeton, to whom she is drawn by interests of a more than academic nature. Templeton is a maverick, as much reviled for his unconventional methods as he is envied for his results. His latest theory has driven him to the island of Pelat, to unravel a legend about an ancient African king said to have brought Islam to the Swahili coast. No one has heard from him in months.

Tangled in a mystery whose clues lurk in the pages of the Koran, and transported into a world where women are possessed by spirit husbands and fresh curses are whispered over tea, Ingrid is forced to realize that there are many things she does not know about this man who inhabits her dreams and haunts her mind. With the help and hindrance of Finn Bergmann, the enigmatic son of the founder of Salama, she begins to uncover a web of alarming incidents. Templeton's research has carried him to the hot core of the island's darkest confrontation. How far will he go in his passion for the truth? What is he willing to do to protect his newfound faith--and where has he gone? Ingrid embarks on a quest that opens her heart and threatens to unravel her mind.

An epic tale of love and faith, *An Obvious Enchantment* marks the debut of a stunning new literary talent. It is a story about desire--for love, for knowledge, and for God--and about our capacity to ensnare ourselves in the deceptive architecture of our own dreams. Like *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, it plunges you from the first page into a sensuous world of seductive characters and duplicitous charm, a world alive with color and atmosphere from which it is hard to emerge without wanting to return.

An Obvious Enchantment Details

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Dgoll says

I really enjoyed this book. It is much better than her other novel Resurrection. I was totally transported to this x-pat community on a small island off of Africa and really felt what the heroine was feeling. What a great trip!

Ellen says

Very different,her first book, takes place on an island off the African coast on the Indian Ocean. The main character is a college teacher trying to track down her professor adviser Nick Templeton, and follow his research & clues trying to unravel a legend about an ancient African king said to have brought Islam to the Swahili coast. She stays in a Muslim family compound. Lots about Muslim values vs. a luxury hotel (where the ex-pats drink too much)vs. appreciating the land and its finite resources. But a suspenseful mystery plot.

Mabeo says

I really enjoyed this one from Tucker Malarkey. After reading her novel Ressurrection I had to try this one and it was an extremely enjoyable read. She tends to blend in a lot of the exPat community in her novels and this is a great description of Africa and the tenuous relationship between Whites and Blacks in modern day africa. It reads like a 1940s setting but really this is what Africa is like today. Her sense of place reminds me of an Anthropologist writing a great fictional story. Her characters are always a little hard to understand at first, but she writes about real interactions, not a simplified version of relationships. Great read.

Michael Armijo says

Patience is required in getting through this one...

I give this book a C+. I saw this book advertised in the NY Times Book Review one Sunday. Random House was apparently banking on this first time novelist by spending their marketing dollars. I think I was most attracted by the choice words given the title of the book. I was disappointed in the novel because it seemed to ramble on at times without substantial storyline. I found many philosophical lines that I did learn from. I wish the book had focused more on the character named Templeton who seemed to be the most intellectually stimulating of all of the characters. It was nice to imagine scenes in Africa from what the author had to offer, having lived there for a couple years. I wouldn't totally knock this first novel effort as these lines in the book significantly attracted my attention:

WE MUST PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT OUR HEART PREFERS--FOR OURSELVES AS MUCH AS OUR WORK. MAYBE IT'S TWILIGHT THAT MAKES WESTERNERS SO SENTIMENTAL.

THEY CAN SIT ON THEIR PORCHES AND WATCH DAY RECEDE AS NIGHT APPROACHES. IT GIVES THEM TIME TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY'RE GOING TO LOSE.

IT'S LIKE DYING SLOWLY VERSUS BEING SHOT. FREEDOM IS KNOWING YOU ARE A SLAVE AND HAVING THE RESOURCES TO CHOOSE YOUR SERVITUDE.

THE PROBLEM WITH ENGLAND IS THAT NO ONE REALLY CONVERSES ANYMORE...THEY ARE MAGNIFICENT AT CHITCHAT. TRUE DIALOGUE TRANSFORMS. WE MUST WORK AT IT.

DO YOU KNOW THE ORIGINS OF THE TERM GOOD BYE? IT MEANS 'GOD BE WITH YOU'. SO, YOU SEE, GOD'S BEEN THERE ALL ALONG.

IT WAS A PHOTOGRAPH OF THE TWO OF THEM TAKEN BY SOME WAITER AT A RESTAURANT. HARD EVIDENCE OF HAPPINESS.

WELL, IT'S TIME YOU LEARNED TO SURVIVE ALONE. NOTHING WORSE THAN DEPENDING ON SOMETHING OR SOMEONE FOR DIRECTION.

THINGS AND PEOPLE CAN DISAPPEAR OVERNIGHT. RELAXATION AND PHYSICAL MANIPULATION THROUGH TOUCH IS THE BEST, MOST NATURAL WAY TO HEAL.

DO YOU EVER LET YOUR MIND WANDER, OR DO YOU ALWAYS STEER IT?

HER THOUGHT PROCESS HAD BECOME AS UNPREDICTABLE AS CLOUD FORMATION.

LIVE LIFE AS IT WILL ALWAYS END TOO SOON.

Becca says

Didn't like it, didn't finish it, no one in our book group liked it. Boring, pretentious story, poorly written, with characters I didn't care about or like. Ingrid, graduate student traveling to Africa, Finn, who lives there, the elusive professor, unrealistic grants, . . . Malarkey"!

Jacque says

I enjoyed this book. I will be keeping it in my library. I loved the descriptions of the island and the people that live there. I found it very deep, with a people fighting to keep their culture alive. There was a lot of metaphor, especially dealing with the Koran. I appreciated Muslim characters just trying to live a normal life within their beliefs. I found the anthropologist a weak point in the story.

Karen says

A tale taking place in Africa about a search for a professor by his intrepid student. The professor went in search of the origins of Islam. The lead character was a bit hard to believe but it's a good vacation read.

Kila says

So conflicted about how to rate this book. I feel like I struggled along with main character trying to figure out what she wants (and by extension the plot). Turned out to be kind of a weird journey - liked the book but didn't love it.

Amanda says

I read this book looking for some easy-read entertainment. It's what I got. The plot wasn't too complicated but it was a fun read. It was a story of a woman who's nearing her 30th birthday and trying to "find herself." The main story was really that of fruitless searches that lead nowhere or to disappointing ends. In the process, the characters find that what they're looking for usually isn't what they think it is. If they can step back and "lose their bearings" for a moment they can find their new ones. This book had some mystery that was uneventfully unveiled at the end. This was a little disappointing but I had to remember what the story was really about and then I was o.k. with it. Another theme of the book was this concept of bringing two worlds or cultures together (represented in one of the main characters as well). The thing is though, I didn't really get a good feel of the African culture that was trying to be mixed. The author gave us some information but she didn't sell it to me. I didn't feel like I was in Africa and I didn't feel the culture clash that I should have. Overall, I liked the book... but think it has room to grow.

Erin says

Though it was an enjoyable read, it was not near the quality of story or writing as that of her second book, RESURRECTION. Ms. Malarkey's craft definitely improved between publications. I did read her second book first (they are independent stories) and that probably was what contributed to the lower rating on this book.

This was an entertaining well developed story...a fine read.

Karen Hemmerle says

I have recommended this wonderful book to everyone I know, and can't get anyone to read it. It's an enticing story about love, faith, anthropology, and how Islam made its way to Africa. Maybe people resist anything that mentions Islam, but it's not political or controversial. Someone read this book!

Bonnie says

I really liked this book, though I can imagine not everyone would. There is a lot of mystery and suspense in it, but the psychological aspect, which I enjoy, isn't for everyone. It's hard to describe the author's technique,

which encompassed religious sentiment and effective emotional and physical description, while leaving an impression of being said with few words.

The back flap likened the book to *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, which seems apt to me.

Julia says

This book was recommended to me. I have never heard of this author before. I really did like the story, but didn't love it. The setting is Africa. An anthropology student goes to this Island in search of her beloved, elderly mentor/professor. The characters were all a bit odd, or self absorbed, or obsessed, or something? The student tries to gain the attention of a young man, Finn who has lots of sex appeal, but no commitment or apparent interest. So that was what kept me reading, to see if and how they ended up. It is an entertaining read.

Beth says

Not a fan. The story didn't seem to really go anywhere. There were pieces but they didn't all come together. I was also disappointed because Islam seemed like an after-thought addition more than a well-woven in thread (as the summary suggested it would be). [Which I guess is more of a complaint for the jacket-writer :)] Also fair warning, there were some rather vulgar bits. The author did create atmosphere well, I'll say that.

Kim Fay says

Another book read at the suggestion that it might help me as I finish my novel (with techniques for how to pull off various literary feats!). In fact it did help, and it was interesting, but I wish it was about 100 pages shorter. I felt that the story (the search for an African king who could have brought Islam to the Middle East) got lost ... or rather what I mean is that I got lost at times. Still worth a read if you need something for the beach.
