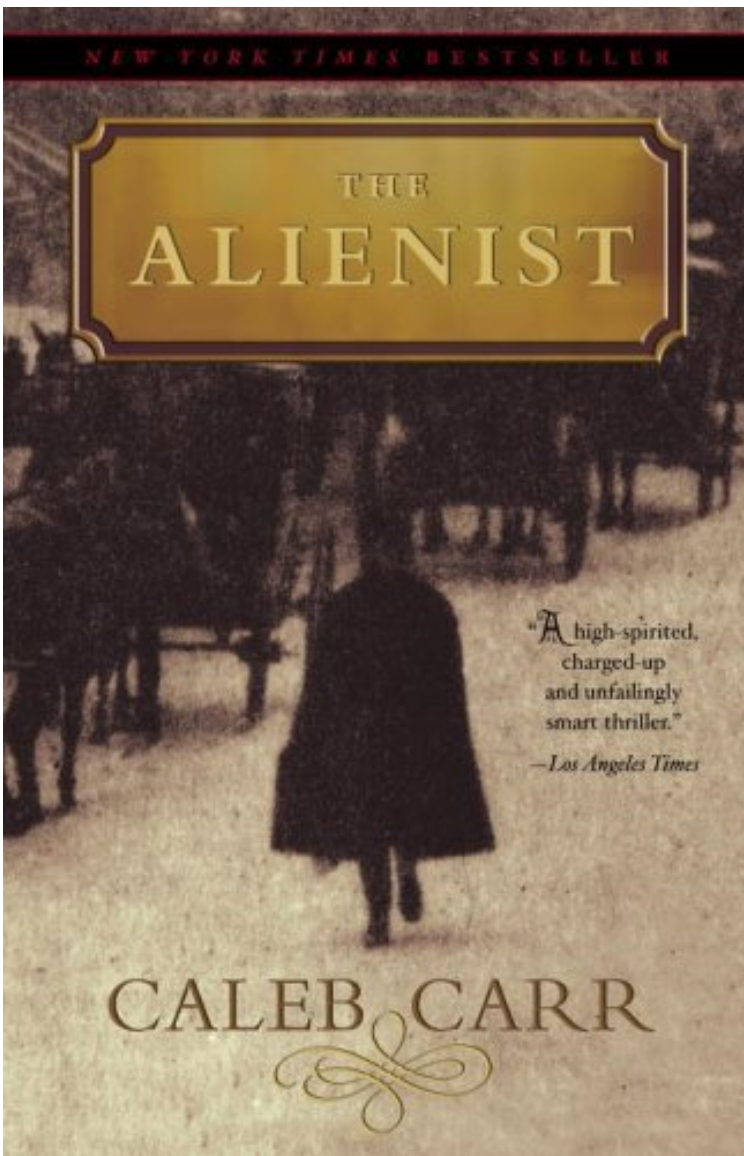


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The Alienist: A Novel



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurNEW YORK TIMESBESTSELLER SOON TO BE A TNT ORIGINAL SERIESA first-rate tale of crime and punishment that will keep readers guessing until the final pages.Entertainment Weekly Caleb Carrs rich period thriller takes us back to the moment in history when the modern idea of the serial killer became available to us.The Detroit NewsWhen The Alienist was first published in 1994, it was a major phenomenon, spending six months on the New York Times bestseller list, receiving critical acclaim, and selling millions of copies. This modern classic continues to be a touchstone of historical suspense fiction for readers everywhere.The year is 1896. The city is New York. Newspaper reporter John Schuyler Moore is summoned by his friend Dr. Laszlo Kreizlera psychologist, or alienisto view the horribly mutilated body of

an adolescent boy abandoned on the unfinished Williamsburg Bridge. From there the two embark on a revolutionary effort in criminology: creating a psychological profile of the perpetrator based on the details of his crimes. Their dangerous quest takes them into the tortured past and twisted mind of a murderer who will kill again before their hunt is over. Fast-paced and riveting, infused with historical detail, *The Alienist* conjures up Gilded Age New York, with its tenements and mansions, corrupt cops and flamboyant gangsters, shining opera houses and seamy gin mills. It is an age in which questioning society's belief that all killers are born, not made, could have unexpected and fatal consequences. Praise for *The Alienist* [A] delicious premise . . . Its settings and characterizations are much more sophisticated than the run-of-the-mill thrillers that line the shelves in bookstores. *The Washington Post Book World* Mesmerizing. *Detroit Free Press* The method of the hunt and the disparate team of hunters lift the tale beyond the level of a good thriller way beyond. . . . A remarkable combination of historical novel and psychological thriller. *The Buffalo News* Engrossing. *Newsweek* A rip-snorter of a plot . . . a fine dark ride. *The Arizona Daily Star* Remarkable . . . The reader is taken on a whirlwind tour of the Gilded Age metropolis, climbing up tenement stairs, scrambling across rooftops, and witnessing midnight autopsies. . . . A breathtaking, finely crafted mystery. *Richmond Times-Dispatch* Gripping, atmospheric . . . intelligent and entertaining. *USA Today* A high-spirited, charged-up and unfailingly smart thriller. *Los Angeles Times* Keeps readers turning pages well past their bedtime. *San Francisco Chronicle* Harrowing, fascinating . . . will please fans of *Ragtime* and *The Silence of the Lambs*. *The Flint Journal* Extrait Chapter 1 CHAPTER 1 January 8th, 1919 Theodore is in the ground. The words as I write them make as little sense as did the sight of his coffin descending into a patch of sandy soil near Sagamore Hill, the place he loved more than any other on earth. As I stood there this afternoon, in the cold January wind that blew off Long Island Sound, I thought to myself: Of course it's a joke. Of course hell burst the lid open, blind us all with that ridiculous grin and split our ears with a high-pitched bark of laughter. Then hell exclaim that there's work to do action to get! and we'll all be martialled to the task of protecting some obscure species of newt from the ravages of a predatory industrial giant bent on planting a fetid factory on the little amphibians' breeding ground. I was not alone in such fantasies; everyone at the funeral expected something of the kind, it was plain on their faces. All reports indicate that most of the country and much of the world feel the same way. The notion of Theodore Roosevelt being gone is that unacceptable. In truth, he'd been fading for longer than anyone wanted to admit, really since his son Quentin was killed in the last days of the Great Butchery. Cecil Spring-Rice once droned, in his best British blend of affection and needling, that Roosevelt was throughout his life about six; and Herm Hagedorn noted that after Quentin was shot out of the sky in the summer of 1918 the boy in Theodore died. I dined with Laszlo Kreizler at Delmonico's tonight, and mentioned Hagedorn's comment to him. For the remaining two courses of my meal I was treated to a long, typically passionate explanation of why Quentin's death was more than simply heartbreaking for Theodore: he had felt profound guilt, too, guilt at having so instilled his philosophy of the strenuous life in all his children that they often placed themselves deliberately in harm's way, knowing it would delight their beloved father. Grief was almost unbearable to Theodore, I'd always known that; whenever he had to come to grips with the death of someone close, it seemed he might not survive the struggle. But it wasn't until tonight, while listening to Kreizler, that I understood the extent to which moral uncertainty was also intolerable to the twenty-sixth president, who sometimes seemed to think himself Justice personified. Kreizler . . . He didn't want to attend the funeral, though Edith Roosevelt would have liked him to. She has always been truly partial to the man she calls the enigma, the brilliant doctor whose studies of the human mind have disturbed so many people so profoundly over the last forty years. Kreizler wrote Edith a note explaining that he did not much like the idea of a world without Theodore, and, being as he's now sixty-four and has spent his life staring ugly realities full in the face, he thinks he'll just indulge himself and ignore the fact of his friends passing. Edith told me today that reading Kreizler's note moved her to tears, because she realized that Theodore's boundless affection and enthusiasm which revolted so many cynics and was, I'm obliged to say in the interests of journalistic integrity, sometimes difficult even for friends to tolerate had been strong enough to touch a man whose removal from most of human society seemed to almost everyone else unbridgeable. Some of the boys from the Times wanted me to come to a memorial dinner tonight, but a quiet evening with Kreizler seemed much the more appropriate thing. It wasn't out of nostalgia for any shared boyhood in New York that we raised our glasses, because Laszlo and Theodore didn't actually meet until Harvard. No, Kreizler and I were fixing our hearts on the spring of 1896 nearly a quarter-century ago! and on a series of events that still seems too bizarre to have occurred even in this city. By the end of our dessert and Madeira (and how poignant to have a memorial meal in

Delmonicos, good old Dels, now on its way out like the rest of us, but in those days the bustling scene of some of our most important encounters), the two of us were laughing and shaking our heads, amazed to this day that we were able to get through the ordeal with our skins; and still saddened, as I could see in Kreizlers face and feel in my own chest, by the thought of those who didnt. Theres no simple way to describe it. I could say that in retrospect it seems that all three of our lives, and those of many others, led inevitably and fatefully to that one experience; but then Id be broaching the subject of psychological determinism and questioning mans free willreopening, in other words, the philosophical conundrum that wove irrepressibly in and out of the nightmarish proceedings, like the only hummable tune in a difficult opera. Or I could say that, during the course of those months, Roosevelt, Kreizler, and I, assisted by some of the best people Ive ever known, set out on the trail of a murderous monster and ended up coming face-to-face with a frightened child; but that would be deliberately vague, too full of the ambiguity that seems to fascinate current novelists and which has kept me, lately, out of the bookstores and in the picture houses. No, theres only one way to do it, and thats to tell the whole thing, going back to that first grisly night and that first butchered body; back even further, in fact, to our days with Professor James at Harvard. Yes, to dredge it all up and put it finally before the publicthats the way. The public may not like it; in fact, its been concern about public reaction thats forced us to keep our secret for so many years. Even the majority of Theodores obituaries made no reference to the event. In listing his achievements as president of the Board of Commissioners of New York Citys Police Department from 1895 to 1897, only the Heraldwhich goes virtually unread these daystacked on uncomfortably, and of course, the solution to the ghastly murders of 1896, which so appalled the city. Yet Theodore never claimed credit for that solution. True, he had been open-minded enough, despite his own qualms, to put the investigation in the hands of a man who could solve the puzzle. But privately he always acknowledged that man to be Kreizler. He could scarcely have done so publicly. Theodore knew that the American people were not ready to believe him, or even to hear the details of the assertion. I wonder if they are now. Kreizler doubts it. I told him I intended to write the story, and he gave me one of his sardonic chuckles and said that it would only frighten and repel people, nothing more. The country, he declared tonight, really hasnt changed much since 1896, for all the work of people like Theodore, and Jake Riis and Lincoln Steffens, and the many other men and women of their ilk. Were all still running, according to Kreizlerin our private moments we Americans are running just as fast and fearfully as we were then, running away from the darkness we know to lie behind so many apparently tranquil household doors, away from the nightmares that continue to be injected into childrens skulls by people whom Nature tells them they should love and trust, running ever faster and in ever greater numbers toward those potions, powders, priests, and philosophies that promise to obliterate such fears and nightmares, and ask in return only slavish devotion.

Can he truly be right . . . ? But I wax ambiguous. To the beginning, then! CHAPTER 2 An ungodly pummeling on the door of my grandmothers house at 19 Washington Square North brought first the maid and then my grandmother herself to the doorways of their bedrooms at two oclock on the morning of March 3, 1896. I lay in bed in that no-longer-drunk yet not-quite-sober state which is usually softened by sleep, knowing that whoever was at the door probably had business with me rather than my grandmother. I burrowed into my linen-cased pillows, hoping that hed just give up and go away. Mrs. Moore! I heard the maid call. Its a fearful racketshall I answer it, then? You shall not, my grandmother replied, in her well-clipped, stern voice. Wake my grandson, Harriet. Doubtless hes forgotten a gambling debt! I then heard footsteps heading toward my room and decided Id better get ready. Since the demise of my engagement to Miss Julia Pratt of Washington some two years earlier, Id been staying with my grandmother, and during that time the old girl had become steadily more skeptical about the ways in which I spent my off-hours. I had repeatedly explained that, as a police reporter for The New York Times, I was required to visit many of the citys seamier districts and houses and consort with some less than savory characters; but she remembered my youth too well to accept that admittedly strained story. My homecoming deportment on the average evening generally reinforced her suspicion that it was state of mind, not professional obligation, that drew me to the dance halls and gaming tables of the Tenderloin every night; and I realized, having caught the gambling remark just made to Harriet, that it was now crucial to project the image of a sober man with serious concerns. I shot into a black Chinese robe, forced my short hair down on my head, and opened the door loftily just as Harriet reached it. Ah, Harriet, I said calmly, one hand inside the robe. No need for alarm. I was just reviewing some notes for a story, and found I needed some materials from the office. Doubtless thats the boy with them now. John! my grandmother blared as Harriet nodded in confusion. Is that you? No, Grandmother, I said, trotting down the thick Persian carpet on the stairs. Its Dr. Holmes. Dr. H. H. Holmes

was an unspeakably sadistic murderer and confidence man who was at that moment waiting to be hanged in Philadelphia. The possibility that he might escape before his appointment with the executioner and then journey to New York to do my grandmother in was, for some inexplicable reason, her greatest nightmare. I arrived at the door of her room and gave her a kiss on the cheek, which she accepted without a smile, though it pleased her. Don't be insolent, John. It's your least attractive quality. And don't think your handsome charms will make me any less irritated. The pounding on the door started again, followed by a boy's voice calling my name. My grandmother's frown deepened. Who in blazes is that and what in blazes does he want? I believe it's a boy from the office, I said, maintaining the lie but myself perturbed about the identity of the young man who was taking the front door to such stern task. The office? my grandmother said, not believing a word of it. All right, then, answer it. I went quickly but cautiously to the bottom of the staircase, where I realized that in fact I knew the voice that was calling for me but couldn't identify it precisely. Nor was I reassured by the fact that it was a young voice of the most vicious thieves and killers I'd encountered in the New York of 1896 were mere striplings. Mr. Moore! The young man pleaded again, adding a few healthy kicks to his knocks. I must talk to Mr. John Schuyler Moore! I stood on the black and white marble floor of the vestibule. Who's there? I said, one hand on the lock of the door. It's me, sir! Stevie, sir! I breathed a slight sigh of relief and unlocked the heavy wooden portal. Outside, standing in the dim light of an overhead gas lamp the only one in the house that my grandmother had refused to have replaced with an electric bulb was Stevie Taggart, the Stevepipe, as he was known. In his first eleven years Stevie had risen to become the bane of fifteen police precincts; but he'd then been reformed by, and was now a driver and general errand boy for, the eminent physician and alienist, my good friend Dr. Laszlo Kreizler. Stevie leaned against one of the white columns outside the door and tried to catch his breath something had clearly terrified the lad. Stevie! I said, seeing that his long sheet of straight brown hair was matted with sweat. What's happened? Looking beyond him I saw Kreizler's small Canadian calash. The cover of the black carriage was folded down, and the rig was drawn by a matching gelding called Frederick. The animal was, like Stevie, bathed in sweat, which steamed in the early March air. Is Dr. Kreizler with you? The doctor says you're to come with me! Stevie answered in a rush, his breath back. Right away! But where? It's two in the morning! Right away! He was obviously in no condition to explain, so I told him to wait while I put on some clothes. As I did so, my grandmother shouted through my bedroom door that whatever that peculiar Dr. Kreizler and I were up to at two in the morning she was sure it was not respectable. Ignoring her as best I could, I got back outside, pulling my tweed coat close as I jumped into the carriage. I didn't even have time to sit before Stevie lashed at Frederick with a long whip. Falling back into the dark maroon leather of the seat, I thought to upbraid the boy, but again the look of fear in his face struck me. I braced myself as the carriage careened at a somewhat alarming pace over the cobblestones of Washington Square. The shaking and jostling eased only marginally as we turned onto the long, wide slabs of Russ pavement on Broadway. We were heading downtown, downtown and east, into that quarter of Manhattan where Laszlo Kreizler plied his trade and where life became, the further one progressed into the area, ever cheaper and more sordid: the Lower East Side. From Publishers Weekly Set in 1896, Carr's novel about a serial killer loose in New York City was a 25-week PW bestseller. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.