

★ All the Lost Places

Amanda Dykes

Bethany House Publishers (Dec 13, 2022)

Softcover \$16.99 (400pp)

978-0-7642-3950-2

In Amanda Dykes's mesmerizing historical novel *All the Lost Places*, a California man travels to Venice, where he confronts the mysteries around a fabled book.

In 1807, Sebastien was set afloat in a canal. He was discovered by an artisan who raised him in a Venetian guild. Later, Sebastien learned from his found family the arts of Murano glassblowing, lace making, printing, gondoliering, and gardening.

In 1904, Daniel is a former grifter and an isolated cannery worker who lives among obsolete rail cars. He saves the money that he makes, hoping to atone for his past wrongs, including those involving his mother, who raised him at her Italian restaurant. When Daniel learns that she is in financial need, he convinces a banker that he's the right sketch artist and translator to search Venice for the story behind the unfinished tale *The Book of Waters*.

Told with atmospheric details that build on water motifs, Daniel's search and translations are covered via poetic, graceful phrasing, as when Venice's islands are likened to a garment stitched by its waterways. And Daniel's charming encounters with a friendly Venetian woman help to draw him out of his spiritual exile.

Daniel's initial rejection of grace manifests in his focus on making restitution on his own terms; this, combined with *The Book of Waters*'s accounts of a child who was destined for an unusual life, plays on the book's Christian themes. The evocative setting and themes of artistry also hint at history and God's way of fashioning and remaking beauty out of broken materials.

There's a recurrent message of hope in *All the Lost Places*, a historical novel in which, through the delicate act of translating, a former thief reawakens.

KAREN RIGBY (November / December 2022)

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