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Recommended Readings

The Book of Air and Shadows
Reviewed by Judi Morrel

If you enjoyed Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code, then you will love this smart, literary thriller by Michael Gruber. With a finely drawn cast of characters including an intellectual property attorney, a pair of antiquarian bookstore workers, a soldier/actor from the Shakespearean era, and members of the Russian mob, the story revolves around the discovery of a set of ciphered letters purportedly written by an acquaintance of William Shakespeare. These letters, found within the binding of an antique book damaged in a bookstore fire, claim that the Bard actually wrote an until-now-unknown play about Mary Queen of Scots (and, of course, that Shakespeare was actually a secret Papist). The letters, once deciphered (there's a good bit of fascinating code-breaking and cryptological information in the text), also point to the location of a hiding place for the manuscript. The existence of such a play would, of course, rock the literary world, so, as you might imagine, many folks, some academically motivated, some commercially motivated, are interested in finding such a manuscript. As the plot moves back and forth both in time and in location, questions arise about the authenticity of the letters. Is it an elaborate hoax or is it true? You will be kept in suspense in this fast-paced page-turner.

- Judi Morrel is associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and associate professor of mathematics at Butler University.