



The Madwoman Upstairs: A Novel

By Catherine Lowell

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In Catherine Lowell's smart and original debut novel—hailed by Deborah Harkness as a “charming and memorable read”—the last remaining descendant of the Brontë family embarks on a modern-day literary scavenger hunt, using only the clues her eccentric father left behind, and the Brontës' own novels.

Samantha Whipple is used to stirring up speculation wherever she goes. Since her father's untimely death, she is the presumed heir to a long-rumored trove of diaries, paintings, letters, and early novel drafts passed down from the Brontë family—a hidden fortune never revealed to anyone outside of the family, but endlessly speculated about by Brontë scholars and fanatics. Samantha, however, has never seen this alleged estate and for all she knows, it's just as fictional as *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights*.

But everything changes when Samantha enrolls at Oxford University and long lost objects from her past begin rematerializing in her life, beginning with an old novel annotated in her father's handwriting. With the help of a handsome but inscrutable professor, Samantha plunges into a vast literary mystery and an untold family legacy, one that can only be solved by repurposing the tools of literature and decoding the clues hidden within the Brontës' own novels.

A fast-paced adventure from start to finish for readers who devoured *The Weird Sisters* and *Special Topics in Calamity Physics*, *The Madwoman Upstairs* is a moving exploration of what happens when the greatest truth is, in fact, fiction.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

In this debut novel, Samantha Whipple is the last surviving descendant of the Brontë family. Her father, who died when she was 15, was obsessed with his ancestors, and now Samantha is at Oxford, hoping that studying the Brontës will lead her to a rumored family legacy. She lives in a 14th-century tower room (included on public tours of the campus) that was once used to quarantine plague victims, and it contains a painting called *The Governess*. Samantha argues about authorial intent with her tutor, James Timothy Orville III, who seems disinclined to discuss the Brontës with her and instead assigns her to read Browning, Pope, and *The Old College Book of Disciplinary Procedures*. Meanwhile, volumes of *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Agnes Grey* start showing up on Samantha's doorstep—and not just any copies but Samantha's father's personal possessions, books that she thought were destroyed in the fire that killed her father. Lowell's dry wit and her ability to combine academic discussion with mystery, romance, and elements of Gothic literature make this a sure-fire hit for teens who like smart and funny books. VERDICT Fans of the Brontë sisters will devour this adaptation.—Sarah Flowers, formerly of Santa Clara County Library, CA

Review

“[A] piquant paean to the Brontë sisters.” (*The New York Times Book Review*)

"An enigmatic father's legacy sets the scene for gothic intrigue involving the last descendant of the Bronte sisters in Catherine Lowell's irresistibly clever, Oxford debut, *The Madwoman Upstairs*." (*Vogue*)

"Part mystery, part picaresque, Catherine Lowell's *The Madwoman Upstairs* is a smartly conceived first novel." (*Elle*)

"For those who like their Bronte with a side of wry, turn to the hilarious *The Madwoman Upstairs*... Sam's self-conscious quips are LOL hilarious and do Ms. Bronte proud." (*USA Today*)

"A smart, clever and properly Gothic novel....Deftly, Lowell combines a rollicking treasure hunt with a wickedly dark story." (*Minneapolis Star-Tribune*)

"Catherine Lowell's debut is a smart and funny literary mystery set among the dreaming spires of Oxford University. Lowell's deft handling of her quirky characters and unpredictable plot twists make *The Madwoman Upstairs* a charming and memorable read." --Deborah Harkness, author of the *All Souls Trilogy*

"THE MADWOMAN UPSTAIRS had me hooked well into the wee hours; this book is absolutely addictive. Set in the most romantic parts of Britain, the story takes us on a clever present-day romp through the literary universe of the enigmatic Brontes and drills deeply into all their dangerous secrets. Catherine Lowell has such a unique, inspired turn of phrase that you'll find yourself laughing out loud even as she lures you deeper and deeper into this delicious mystery that is destined to become the page-turner of the year."--Anne Fortier, author of *Juliet*

"Catherine Lowell's terrific first novel is a mystery, a love story, and a very dark comedy with the Brontës, of all people, playing a role back there in the shadows. The book is about the traces that literature and our ancestors leave in us, and it is about memory as a token of love."--Charles Baxter, author of *There's Something I Want You to Do* and *Feast of Love*

"Smart and surprising and fiercely funny. Catherine Lowell is a thrillingly original talent." –Jennifer DuBois, author of *Cartwheel*

"Lowell crafts a first novel that is as enthralling as it is heartbreaking. Brontë aficionados and fans of Sloane Crosley's *The Clasp* will love this title." (starred review) (*Library Journal*)

"An entertaining and ultimately sweet story." (*Kirkus Reviews*)

"A thriller tailor-made for English majors... Lowell is an intelligent writer who bears watching." (*Booklist*)

"Lowell has hit it out of the ballpark with this novel." (*RT Book Reviews*)

"An enjoyable academic romp that successfully combines romance and intrigue." (*Publishers Weekly*)

"An engaging literary mystery filled with juicy speculation about the life of the Brontës—a delightful reminder that how we read fiction matters." (*Stanford Magazine*)

About the Author

Catherine Lowell received her BA in English from Stanford University, and currently lives in New York City. *The Madwoman Upstairs* is her first novel.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Cheryl Steele:

The book *The Madwoman Upstairs: A Novel* make you feel enjoy for your spare time. You should use to make your capable much more increase. Book can being your best friend when you getting stress or having big problem along with your subject. If you can make looking at a book *The Madwoman Upstairs: A Novel* to become your habit, you can get a lot more advantages, like add your current capable, increase your knowledge about many or all subjects. You are able to know everything if you like open and read a e-book *The Madwoman Upstairs: A Novel*. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science book or encyclopedia or other individuals. So , how do you think about this guide?

Keesha Marks:

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Kimberly Spradlin:

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