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The Catalans

Patrick O'Brian

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The Catalans

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The Catalans Patrick O'Brian
Set amongst the rolling vineyards and gentle courtyards of a small seaside village in Catalonia, Patrick O'Brian's second novel is a poignant story of tumultuous love, complex faith and one man's desperate bid to reclaim his humanity. Summoned from his medical practice in China by a bevy of anxious aunts, Alain Roig returns to his Catalan hometown to discover he has been nominated by family members with vested interests in the ancestral property to prevent an impending marriage between his cold, ascetic cousin Xavier and Madeleine, a quiet, introspective village girl of unusual beauty. As Alain seeks to understand his cousin's complex motivations for wooing the unhappy girl, he is slowly drawn into Xavier's dark crisis of faith, the well-worn pattern of the sleepy Catalan days and the tight circle of village gossip that surrounds Madeleine. Throughout, Patrick O'Brian's slow, seductive narrative lures the reader into the landscapes, rhythms and passions of Catalonia, while his subtle, insightful characterisation paints a psychological portrait of a unique way of life and two very different men - one generous and impulsive, the other desperate to revive in his soul the dying flames of affection which he senses could be his salvation. With themes and characters that in many ways prefigure his enormously successful Aubrey/Maturin series, THE CATALANS demonstrates all the insight, lyricism and psychological drama that made O'Brian one of the best storytellers of his generation.

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