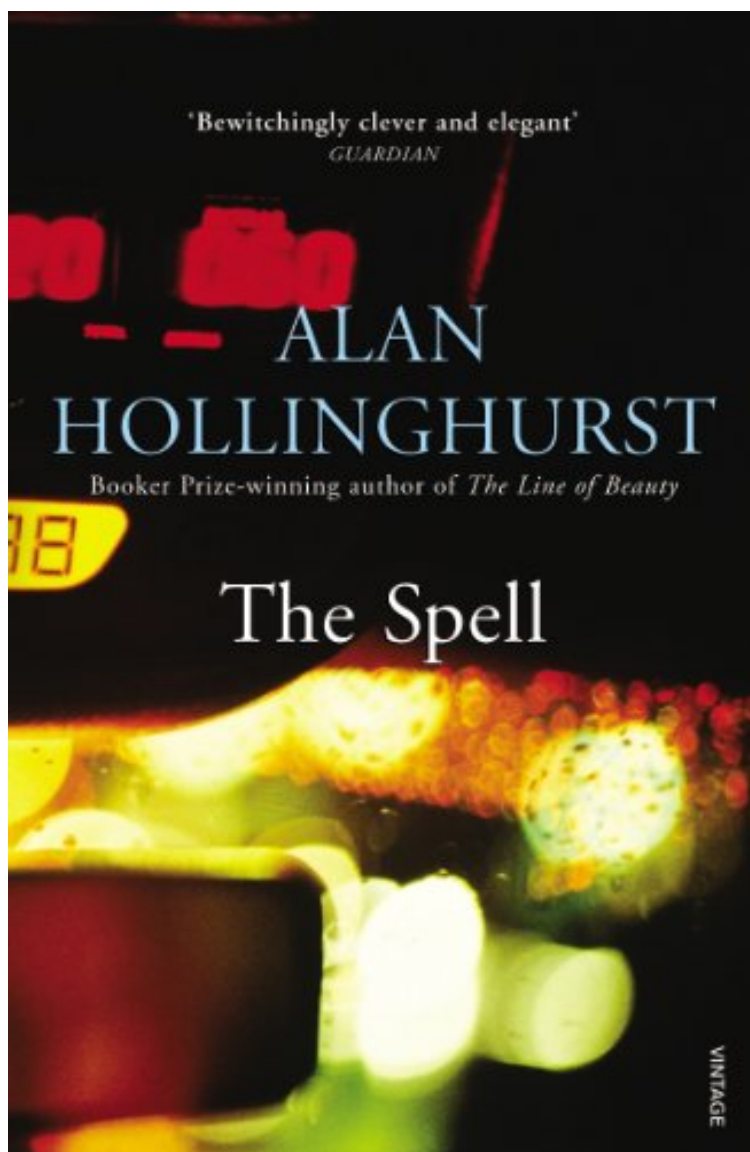


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The Spell



Par Alan Hollinghurst
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Par Alan Hollinghurst : The Spell
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Description : Description du produitHere are the interlocking affairs of four men: Robin Woodfield, an architect in his late forties trying to build an idyllic life in Dorset with his young lover, Justin, a would-be actor increasingly disenchanted with the countryside; Robin's attractive and dangerously volatile twenty-two-year-old son Danny; and Justin's former boyfriend Alex, whose life is unexpectedly transformed by a night of house music and a tab of ecstasy.As each falls under the spell of romance or drugs, country living or rough trade, a richly ironic picture emerges of the illusions of love, and of the clashing imperatives of modern gay life: the hunger for contact and the fear of commitment, the need for permanence and the continual disruptions of sex. Ultimately, *The Spell* details the restlessness of every human heart.

Prsentation de l'diteurThe Spell is a comedy of sexual manners that follows the interlocking affairs of four

men: Robin, an architect in his late forties, who is trying to build an idyllic life in Dorset with his younger lover, Justin; Robin's 22 year old son Danny, a volatile beauty who lives for clubbing and casual sex; and the shy Alex, who is Justin's ex-boyfriend. As each in turn falls under the spell of romance or drugs, country living or rough trade, a richly ironic picture emerges of the clashing imperatives of modern gay life. At once lyrical, sceptical and romantic, *The Spell* confirms Alan Hollinghurst as one of Britain's most important novelists. From the Booker Prize-winning author of *The Line of Beauty*.com Alan Hollinghurst writes like a dream about the nightmare of unequal affection. In his third novel, *The Spell*, four men dance around one another, their emotions and actions ranging from casual cruelty to anxiety to adoration. Hollinghurst's painful but smiling roundelay alternates between Dorset--where 40ish architect Robin shares a house with the impossibly self-involved Justin--and London. When Justin's ex, Alex, arrives for a weekend in the country, the atmosphere is instantly rich with jealousy and power plays. And after the trio is joined by a younger gay man, Danny--who turns out to be Robin's son--the attractions and duplicities multiply exponentially. Alex, for instance, soon admits to Danny, "I've got a ruinous taste for takers," and they (and we) are off and running. As ever, Hollinghurst's prose is musical and sensual but also deeply witty. Even the birds in this novel modulate their song from somnolent calls to outright chuckles--echoing the pleasures and absurdities of the humans they circle. And the author's feel for the easy intimacies and brutalities that his characters exchange is unmatched. As Justin (clad only in a tanga) escorts Alex around the cottage, he points out some vases: "These pots, darling, were made by potters of the greatest probity." Hollinghurst's descriptions are marvelous, whether of landscape or human frailty. After leaving a rather unrelaxed restaurant with Alex, "Danny recovered his air of bossiness and mystery, like a prefect in the school of pleasure." And when the two obtain some Ecstasy and hit one of Danny's haunts--a brilliantly realized club--the author reveals the rapture and idiocy in each moment: The boys glistened and pawed at the ground. They looked like members of some dodgy brainwashing cult.... Alex saw that what he most wanted was happening and groped marvellingly between the different kinds of happiness, the chemicals and the sex. It seemed that happening and happiness were the same, he must remember that, to tell everyone. But as amusing as Alan Hollinghurst is, his forte is loss. Again and again he reminds us that solitary sadness is a wink away from comedy and sexual possession. --Kerry Fried

From Publishers Weekly

Confirming his status as the preeminent new voice chronicling the worldly, debauched erotics of linguistically limber gay British men, Hollinghurst (*The Swimming-Pool Library*; *The Folding Star*, which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize) explores London's drug-addled discos and Dorset's country charms. This colorful and often breathtakingly eloquent novel follows the lives of four gay men in the late '90s. After his longtime lover dies from AIDS, Robin Woodfield, "big and fit and handsomely unshaven" and at 46 still scoring with much younger men, sets up house with the utterly selfish and duplicitous (though of course fetching) 35-year-old Justin. The two had been meeting for regular and "fierce speechless sex" in a public loo during the degeneration of Justin's relationship with the decent, tender and very handsome Alex. But Alex isn't exactly dumped. He spends a weekend at the Dorset cottage with the lovebirds, and succumbs to the sexual charm of another Woodfield, Robin's randy gay son, Danny. Alcohol, drugs and a high-camp combination of butch bravado and queenly preening keep the social wheels lubricated. A witty and ingenious writer, Hollinghurst weaves prose that shifts deftly from steamy sex to genteel country living, from edgy cocaine-fed conversations to delicately sensuous observations about the "tussocky hillside" or "crowded dim moons of cow-parsley." He also conveys a significant empathy for the perennial struggle of urban gay men to find true love without forfeiting their sexual autonomy. The author excels at pithy character portraits, and his keen observations of human nature (gay and otherwise) give a depth and realism even to the bit players in this marvelous tale.

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