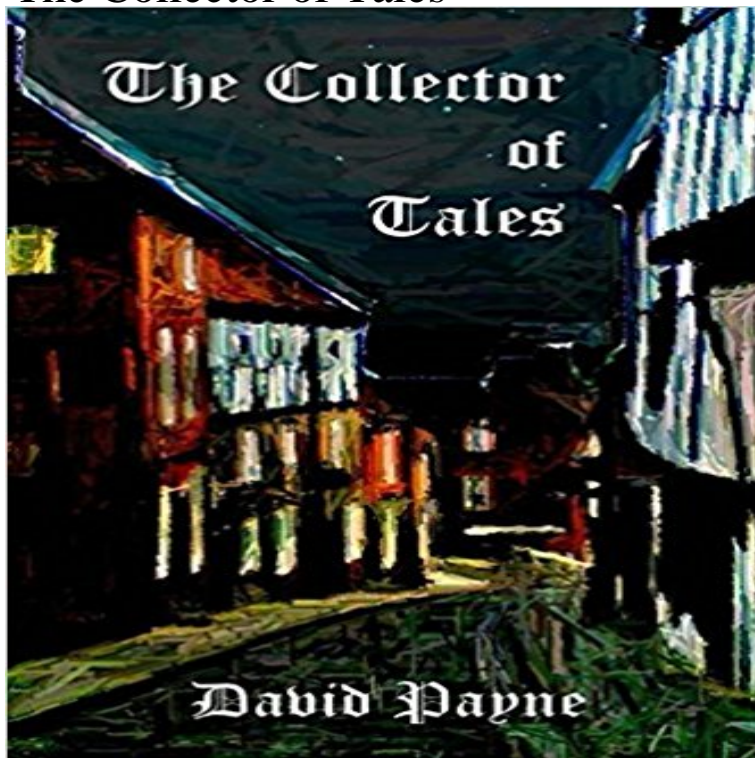


The Collector of Tales



The Collector of Tales is about a man in a crisis of age, the choices that he makes and the infinite variations of possibility that buffet him and seek to drive him from his chosen path through life. It is set in a medieval style world where manners are crude and life is nasty, brutish and short. It is written as a series of consecutive tales, following a series of events from idea into reality. This is a curious story of self-discovery in a world dictated by random events. It is a dark comedy set in a medieval world where books are rare and the currency of learning is the spoken word. The landscape is cold and unforgiving. The people are crude. Life here is nasty brutish and short. It is here that we find The Collector of Tales as he struggles to find some meaning in his life. We first meet our itinerant story teller on the road in search of new material for his trade. He is standing at a bifurcation in the way: one path straight and narrow and leading away from humanity, the other long and winding that leads him towards the company of his fellow creatures. He makes what is, of course, another in a life of binary decisions and in this case heads towards humanity and as the road unfolds beneath him so does his tale and the tales of those people that he meets. After a few enlightening nights in what The Collector takes to be an inn (although its sign could had read as brothel and its pronunciation could have sounded as stable) he moves on to travel further north into the snow and ice with a travelling spice trader whose only word in the common tongue appears to be Welcome. They converse however in the lingua franca of the age until they reach The Collectors destination , the northern town of Trellesheim, where they part: the trader (apparently) to be murdered brutally in a marketplace and the collector to continue his search for a particular story. In trellesheim, the influence of randomness steps up a pace and The Collector finds

himself moving in and out of a number of events that appear to have little significance to him and yet somehow manage to conspire against his apparent purpose in being there. These events culminate in him being abandoned on a frozen road heading further north, sick and unconscious, after a night that possibly (because he cannot remember) involved sex with a young woman that he found washing in the bath in his rented room. In another binary act of good fortune, The Collector is rescued by a traveller family as they head towards a festival somewhere north of the town. This act of random kindness holds a suggestion of something more sinister that grows in his delirious mind until by chance he happens to mention where he is from and becomes adopted by the family as a distant relative (by geographic association, it would seem). This enables him to participate in the strange celebrations of these folk as they enact what he believes to be no more than a myth that he was told of at the start of his journey. In participating, he is stripped down, both literally and figuratively, to the simple man that he is and given the opportunity to glean a little understanding about...

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