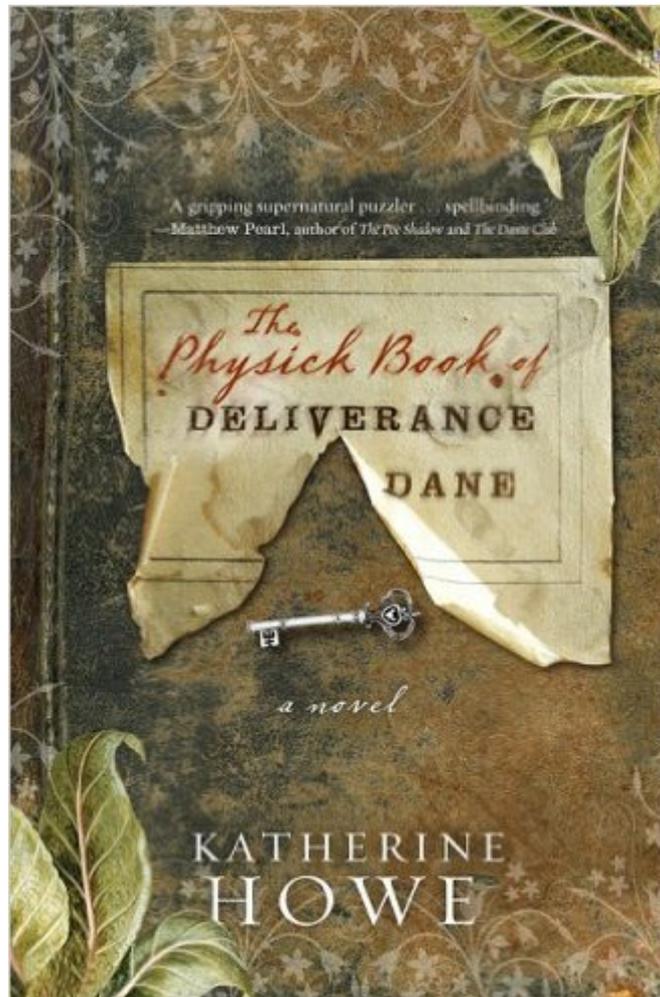


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The Physick Book Of Deliverance Dane



Synopsis

"A fresh present-day story infused with an original take on popular history. Forget broomsticks and pointy hats; here are witches that could well be walking among us today. This debut novel flows with poetic charm and eloquence that achieves high literary merit while concocting a gripping supernatural puzzler. Katherine Howe's talent is spellbinding."--Matthew Pearl, author of *The Poe Shadow* and *The Dante Club*

A spellbinding, beautifully written novel that moves between contemporary times and one of the most fascinating and disturbing periods in American history--the Salem witch trials. Harvard graduate student Connie Goodwin needs to spend her summer doing research for her doctoral dissertation. But when her mother asks her to handle the sale of Connie's grandmother's abandoned home near Salem, she can't refuse. As she is drawn deeper into the mysteries of the family house, Connie discovers an ancient key within a seventeenth-century Bible. The key contains a yellowing fragment of parchment with a name written upon it: Deliverance Dane. This discovery launches Connie on a quest--to find out who this woman was and to unearth a rare artifact of singular power: a physick book, its pages a secret repository for lost knowledge. As the pieces of Deliverance's harrowing story begin to fall into place, Connie is haunted by visions of the long-ago witch trials, and she begins to fear that she is more tied to Salem's dark past than she could have ever imagined. Written with astonishing conviction and grace, *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane* travels seamlessly between the witch trials of the 1690s and a modern woman's story of mystery, intrigue, and revelation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Connie Goodwin is a Harvard Graduate student working on her doctoral dissertation. Her advisor, Manning Chilton, suggests that she find a unique and undiscovered primary source to focus her research on. Unfortunately for Connie and her academic progress, not a lot of work is getting done on the dissertation, not since Connie's earthly and eccentric mother Grace called to ask her to go up to Marblehead, Massachusetts and help get her grandmother's house ready for selling. While going through her Grandmother's house, Connie chances along an old bible and a key that contains a scroll with the name Deliverance Dane. Her curiosity is peaked. Uncovering the past through scattered documents and records, Connie soon enough learns that Deliverance Dane was accused and killed as a witch during the famous Salem Witch Trials, leaving behind a book of receipts, or what we would refer to as recipes. Connie passionately searches this book out, tracing the lives of mother to daughter until she comes to see her own family connection in this all. The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane weaves reality, history, and magic together as logical and realistic Connie faces the possibility that there may be something more to this world than can be explained by reason alone, especially when her own safety begins to be threatened by something faceless and nameless. This is a page turner. I just couldn't put this book down and loved the flashbacks to Deliverance's time the most. The late 1600s were hard for women, especially Puritan women who had to be steely and reserved at all times. I came to respect Deliverance for her steadfast nature and her want to help those very people who condemned her. It is certainly hard to be strong when faced with conflict, especially that of the life threatening brand. The mother-daughter dynamic is important in the book, and each mother and daughter carries on their family legacy of spells and healing while adapting to the times. Just as mothers and daughters tend to be, each daughter is both like and unlike her mother. Sometimes it seems as though Howe, a historian herself, uses the plot and Connie as an excuse to let us know just how much she personally knows about history. While this isn't a bad thing, quite the opposite in the opinion of this historian, it does make the dialogue sound forced at times. There was one thing I did take issue with, but not enough to put me off of the book. I was sort of disappointed that this book turned from historical fiction / thriller to thriller / fantasy. I would have liked it better had the author not chosen to make the 'magic' aspect of what Deliverance and her kin did actual reality. When the characters began to do real magic, I gave a sigh. Part of the appeal of the book was that it spoke to me as an historian and a realist. What I wanted to see and get from the book was the story of a woman, a natural woman capable of using the earth as anyone could, being marked as evil for her skill with healing. That hope was cut short when the characters began actually speaking spells and shooting light from the tips of their

fingers. To be honest, I could see the ending coming a mile away. It was quite obvious from the get-go who the bad guy is. I was surprised that it took super-intelligent Connie so long to figure it out for herself. Then again, maybe I just have a distrustful nature. My suspicion as to the end of the book didn't ruin the plot for me, though, and I absolutely devoured the book.

Take several loaves of moldy bread coupled with cookware made of toxic base metals, stir in a cup of religion, a tablespoon each of imagination, jealousy and superstition and you have the basic ingredients of the Salem Witch Trials as well as the intriguing infrastructure of *THE PHYSICK BOOK OF DELIVERANCE DANE*. Enter modern day PhD candidate, Connie Goodwin, asked by her mother to spend the summer cleaning up her grandmother's ancient home in Marblehead, Mass. Connie discovers that Granna's garden contains an overgrown mass of "healing herbs" and her house is filled with bottles and jars of unusual elixirs as well as a plethora of items worthy of a spot on the Antiques Roadshow. (What it does not have is electricity). Connie meets a local steeplejack named Sam who just happens to be a college grad (complete with nose ring) and together they begin a search for the lost "recipe" book of one Deliverance Dane, victim of the Salem Trials. Enroute to the solution and conclusion of the book, Connie makes some amazing discoveries, not the least of which are her own healing abilities as well as her families long history with Salem. It appears that even Connie's dog, Arlo, could be a pet with a past. The book moves smoothly between the two eras and the stories of Connie and Deliverance are captivating. The attention to historical detail is admirable. If I have one complaint about this book it is this. In the name of authenticity Katherine Howe has imbued her Marblehead, Mass. characters with a New England accent that I found irritating and difficult to read. I repeatedly had to go back and re-read certain sentences in order to determine what a character was saying, and this did nothing but interrupt the flow of the story. Other than that minor complaint, this book is a must read for anyone intrigued by magic, witchcraft or historically accurate fiction. 3 1/2 stars

Katherine Howe's *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane* takes the Salem Witch trials of 1692 and asks the question: What if at least one of the accused really was a witch? With that intriguing question, she brings us into the academic world of Connie Goodwin, a grad student at Harvard in 1991, whose doctoral thesis takes a back seat when her mother persuades her to clean out and sell her grandmother's house in Marblehead, Massachusetts. Once she arrives at the abandoned house, Connie discovers an old key containing the name "Deliverance Dane" inside a family Bible, and with her curiosity piqued, she begins tracing an old "physick" book used by the accused witch.

Along the way she encounters romance, an anxious and grumpy mentor, and a mystery that seems to grow the more she investigates. Set mostly in 1991, Howe intersperses her story with chapters set in the past, giving illumination to what was going on before, during, and after the witch trials. Though the mystery is fairly easy to figure out, all of the characters are likeable and Connie's journey into the past is fascinating. I had an easy time imagining the settings, and the paranormal aspect comes out naturally through the course of Connie's work. There was a bit of a slow start, but once the story picked up, the pages flew by as I got caught up in the plot. Biggest complaint? Howe's need to have some of her characters speak phonetically to reinforce their New England accents, a totally unnecessary element that pulled me out of the story every single time it occurred. Still, *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane* is a well-researched, well-written glimpse into a What If? scenario that I doubt many of us in modern times had thought to ponder. Excellent reading!

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