



★ **The Absinthe Forger: A True Story of Deception, Betrayal, and the World's Most Dangerous Spirit**

Evan Rail

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Evan Rail follows the trail of a clever and creative fraudster in *The Absinthe Forger*, an engrossing true crime story.

The word “absinthe” alone is enough to conjure images of tortured artists, fin de siècle decadence, and vacant-eyed addicts driven to despicable crimes. Since the drink was banned in France in 1915, absinthe lovers have been enthusiastic about tracking down unopened bottles from the pre-ban glory days. This presented a unique opportunity for one enterprising man to defraud and upend the small yet spirited absinthe underground.

In the exciting first chapter, Rail puts himself in the shoes of the forger: Christian, a mysterious figure who skitters along the edges of the rest of the book, visible only through the recollections of the many absinthe enthusiasts he cheated—and who ultimately came to suspect and unmask him as a confidence man. Rail also explores the cultural and legal history of absinthe, the rumors and myths that still surround it, and how contemporary connoisseurs rediscovered and revived the intricate rituals surrounding its consumption, creating a passionate, close-knit community of “absintheurs.” But, as Rail discovered, the betrayal of someone who was both a high-profile expert and a friend has had a tragic cooling effect on that community. Now wary and much less willing to take chances on rare purchases, they are nonetheless generous about sharing their memories and museum-worthy collections with Rail. Guided by their stories and his own investigations, Rail comes ever closer to the elusive Christian, uncovering the hows and whys of his devastating operation.

In the end, as it has ever been, absinthe is not about how it is made but what the drinker makes of it. *The Absinthe Forger* is the bracing true story of a much-maligned spirit and the counterfeiter who turned its mythic status to his own ends.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (September / October 2024)

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