



The Boy Who Would Be Shakespeare: A Tale of Forgery and Folly

Doug Stewart

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In the winter of 1795, a frustrated young writer named William Henry Ireland stood petrified in his father's study as two of England's most esteemed scholars interrogated him about a tattered piece of paper that he claimed to have found in an old trunk. It was a note from William Shakespeare. Or was it?

In the months that followed, Ireland produced a torrent of Shakespearean fabrications: letters, poetry, drawings—even an original full-length play that would be hailed as the Bard's lost masterpiece and staged at the Drury Lane Theatre. The documents were forensically implausible, but the people who inspected them ached to see first hand what had flowed from Shakespeare's quill. And so they did.

This dramatic and improbable story of Shakespeare's teenaged double takes us to eighteenth century London and brings us face-to-face with history's most audacious forger.



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