



Charlie St. Cloud: A Novel

By Ben Sherwood

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Questions for Ben Sherwood About *Charlie St. Cloud*



Q: Did you always imagine your book becoming a movie?

A: In a word...no. I quit a great job at NBC News in New York to write this book. It was a risky career move. I wish I could say the road was easy, but it wasn't. There were major creative challenges and serious professional setbacks. Indeed, the route from blank page to the finished book might well be described as a near-death publishing experience. Perhaps that's why I never really imagined this book becoming a movie. Indeed, the very idea of a film adaptation seemed farfetched. As one of my close friends always said: "I'll believe *Charlie St. Cloud* is a movie when I'm sitting in the theater and eating popcorn."

Q: How involved were you with the movie and did you write the screenplay?

A: The producers and studio were generous to include me at many stages of the process but I wasn't involved with the movie or screenplay. I was fortunate to visit the production twice, once on location in a cemetery and another time on a soundstage in Vancouver. Each time, I relished how filmmakers turned some of the book's tiniest details into movie reality. For instance, Major League Baseball sent three small Red Sox mitts for Sam to use when he played catch with Charlie. I watched an assistant prop master carry a brand-new red mitt around all day, rubbing it constantly to give it a well-worn appearance.

On another occasion, the director showed me the closing shot of the film. Today, words still fail to describe the exhilarating experience of seeing Charlie and Tess literally sailing into the sunset. Seven years earlier, in the quiet of my little writing room, I had imagined these two young people on a boat aimed at the open ocean. Suddenly, they were on the screen, leaning into each other with wind tousling their hair and sails, steering a Gryphon Solo, one of the world's fastest fifty-foot sailboats, filmed by a camera mounted on a helicopter hovering above.

Q: How does it feel to see your book turned into a movie?

A: Quite simply, I'm filled with gratitude. To create the movie version of *Charlie St. Cloud*, it took 28 actors, 34 stunt people, and some 250 crew. When I visited the set in Vancouver, I tried my best to thank every single one, including the wrangler responsible for a noisy flock of geese, the messy bane of Charlie's existence.

When I called my wife in Los Angeles, she asked, "How does it feel?" I thought for a moment. Then I

answered: "I want to hug every person I meet."

Q: Did you imagine Zac Efron as Charlie St. Cloud?

A: In candor, I never imagined Zac Efron in the role of Charlie. Wrecked by loss and grief, Charlie was a character who had wasted many years of his precious life. I always imagined Charlie as much older and much sadder. Thank goodness I'm not a movie producer.

I salute the studio and producers for realizing that Efron was a perfect choice. Young, dynamic, and charismatic, he embodies the promise of Charlie St. Cloud without the burden and loss. With Efron's vibrant presence and performance, a sometimes weighty story feels more hopeful and uplifting. As I told Efron when we met in the cemetery in Vancouver, I'm delighted and very thankful that he took the part and filled it with vitality.

Q: How do you feel about the movie being made in Vancouver, Canada instead of Marblehead, Massachusetts, where the novel takes place?

A: I love Marblehead and the people of the town. While researching the book, I traveled to Marblehead several times to walk among the tombstones in Waterside Cemetery, eat breakfast with fishermen at the Driftwood before dawn, drink beers with 'Headers at Maddie's, and compete in my first and only sailboat race.

Vancouver is a country away from the wonderful town where I situated the story. But a movie adaptation isn't supposed to be a literal translation of a book. It's an interpretation. While I sincerely hoped that the film would be made in Massachusetts--and while the filmmakers tried their best too--I understood the financial decision to pick Canada, where production costs are significantly lower.

Given this choice, the filmmakers did a great job transplanting Charlie and Sam's story to the Pacific Northwest, which looks absolutely spectacular on film.

Q: Your writing seems to focus on questions of life and death. Why?

A: Maybe it's my age or life experience but I've spent a lot of time thinking about how we overcome grief and loss and make the most of our time on earth. These are subjects that have come to occupy my recent work. Over the last few years, I wrote a nonfiction book called *The Survivors Club*, exploring the secrets and science of the world's most effective survivors and thrivers. Interviewing survivors around the world, I discovered even more proof that love is a powerful and universal survival tool. In my own life, falling in love with my future wife, Karen, helped unlock the stranglehold of my father's sudden and untimely death 17 years ago. (That's why I dedicated the book to both of them.) In Charlie's case, discovering Tess helped him break free of the cemetery and the suffocating grip of grief.

Q: You have two young sons. What do you hope they take away from this book some day?

A: When I was leaving the movie set in Vancouver to fly home to Los Angeles, one of the producers generously asked if I wanted a souvenir from the production. I asked for one of Sam's red mitts from Major League Baseball. Our two young boys can play catch with it. Then some day when they outgrow it, the glove can sit in my office, a reminder of the power of brotherly love and what happens when you take risks, seize life, and set your imagination free.

From Publishers Weekly

Not even death can keep two brothers from meeting to play ball: it sounds like a sentimental TV movie,

doesn't it? Actually, Sherwood's second novel (after *The Man Who Ate the 747*) is warmhearted but not maudlin, exploring the bonds between the living and the dead and the lengths to which we'll go for love. A secret jaunt to a Sox game ends in tragedy when Charlie St. Cloud, who isn't old enough for a driver's license, crashes the car he pinched from a neighbor. The hearts of Charlie and his younger brother, Sam, stop, but miraculously, Charlie is resuscitated. Thirteen years later, Charlie is 28 and working as the caretaker for the Marblehead cemetery where Sam is buried; he's also spending every evening playing catch with the ghost of 12-year-old Sam, who's putting off going to heaven for the game. Charlie's world gets shaken up, though, by feisty, beautiful Tess Carroll, a sailor who had plans to be one of the first women to circumnavigate the globe solo. They have a perfect date, and sparks fly. But then news comes that her boat is lost at sea, and Charlie, whose gift of seeing spirits has grown, realizes that her fading apparition is the result of a failing effort to rescue her. Sherwood tugs at readers' heartstrings throughout the novel, and the sentimentality mostly works. Charlie's final effort to save his lady love from ghostly oblivion strains credibility, of course, but isn't that the point of a tale about love triumphant?

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From [Booklist](#)

Charlie St. Cloud loves his kid brother, Sam, more than anything else in the world. So one day, he "borrows" their neighbor's car and takes Sam to see a Red Sox game, never dreaming that their escapade will end in a terrible accident that Sam does not survive. Thirteen years pass. Still keeping his promise to his brother that he'll never leave him, Charlie is the caretaker at Waterside, the cemetery where Sam is buried. Every evening, as soon as Waterside is secured for the night, Charlie goes to a hidden area of the memorial park and plays catch with his brother. Meanwhile, master sailor Tess is ready to make a solo trip around the world even though she loves the "snug little village" of Marblehead, Massachusetts. But in spite of her state-of-the-art vessel, her tip-top physical fitness, and the drive of an adventurer, she barely survives a disastrous trial run. Shaken, she visits her father's grave and meets Charlie, who is immediately drawn to her. However, he believes that because he robbed Sam of his life, he doesn't deserve love, but the more he's around the living, the weaker his link to the dead becomes. Uniquely lyrical, Sherwood's story of a devotion so strong it transcends death is mystical, magical, and moving. *Shelley Mosley*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Adam Cohn:

Why? Because this *Charlie St. Cloud: A Novel* is an extraordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap the idea but later it will shock you with the secret it inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who also write the book in such incredible way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining approach but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This excellent book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book include such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking means. So , still want to delay having that book? If I were you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

Houston Boynton:

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