When Shakespeare died in 1616 half of his plays died with him. His plays were rarely performed, 18 of them had never been published, and the rest existed only in bastardized forms that did not stay true to his original language. Seven years later, Shakespeare’s business partners, companions, and fellow actors, John Heminges and Henry Condell, gathered copies of the plays and manuscripts, edited and published 36 of them. This massive book, the First Folio, was intended as a memorial to their deceased friend. They could not have known that it would become one of the most important books ever published in the English language, nor that it would become a fetish object for collectors.

The Millionaire and the Bard is a literary detective story, the tale of two mysterious men — a brilliant author and his obsessive collector — separated by space and time. It is a tale of two cities — Elizabethan and Jacobean London and Gilded Age New York. It is a chronicle of two worlds — of art and commerce — that unfolded an ocean and three centuries apart. And it is the thrilling tale of the luminous book that saved the name of William Shakespeare “to the last syllable of recorded time.”