

# Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore: A Novel

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A gleeful and exhilarating tale of global conspiracy, complex code-breaking, high-tech data visualization, young love, rollicking adventure, and the secret to eternal life—mostly set in a hole-in-the-wall San Francisco bookstore

The Great Recession has shuffled Clay Jannon out of his life as a San Francisco Web-design drone—and serendipity, sheer curiosity, and the ability to climb a ladder like a monkey has landed him a new gig working the night shift at Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore. But after just a few days on the job, Clay begins to realize that this store is even more curious than the name suggests. There are only a few customers, but they come in repeatedly and never seem to actually buy anything, instead "checking out" impossibly obscure volumes from strange corners of the store, all according to some elaborate, long-standing arrangement with the gnomish Mr. Penumbra. The store must be a front for something larger, Clay concludes, and soon he's embarked on a complex analysis of the customers' behavior and roped his friends into helping to figure out just what's going on. But once they bring their findings to Mr. Penumbra, it turns out the secrets extend far outside the walls of the bookstore.

With irresistible brio and dazzling intelligence, Robin Sloan has crafted a literary adventure story for the twenty-first century, evoking both the fairy-tale charm of Haruki Murakami and the enthusiastic novel-of-ideas wizardry of Neal Stephenson or a young Umberto Eco, but with a unique and feisty sensibility that's rare to the world of literary fiction. Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore is exactly what it sounds like: an establishment you have to enter and will never want to leave, a modern-day cabinet of wonders ready to give a jolt of energy to every curious reader, no matter the time of day.

## Amazon Best Books of the Month, October 2012 (Debut Spotlight)

: Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore is an old school mystery set firmly in tech-loving, modern day San Francisco. Clay Jannon (former web designer) lands a job at a bookstore with very few patrons and even fewer purchases. His curiosity leads him to the discovery of a larger conspiracy at play, one exciting enough to rope in his best friend (CEO at a startup) and love interest (works at Google). As Clay and company unravel the puzzles of Mr. Penumbra's book shop, the story turns into a sort of nerdy heist, with real-life gadgets, secret societies, and a lot of things to say about the past, present, and future of reading. Sloan originally self-published Mr. Penumbra as a short story through Kindle Direct Publishing, before expanding it to its current form with a traditional print publisher—a fitting trajectory for a fast, fun story that has so wholly and enthusiastically embraced the tension between the digital and analog books. --Kevin Nguyen

Robin Sloan grew up in Michigan and now splits his time between San Francisco and the Internet.

### Other Books

Sourdough, From Robin Sloan, the New York Times bestselling author of Mr. Penumbra's 24-Hour Bookstore, comes Sourdough, "a perfect parable for our times" (San Francisco

Magazine): a delicious and funny novel about an overworked and under-socialized software engineer discovering a calling and a community as a baker. Named One of the Best Books of the Year by NPR, the San Francisco Chronicle, and Southern Living Lois Clary is a software engineer at General Dexterity, a San Francisco robotics company with world-changing ambitions. She codes all day and collapses at night, her human contact limited to the two brothers who run the neighborhood hole-in-the-wall from which she orders dinner every evening. Then, disaster! Visa issues. The brothers quickly close up shop. But they have one last delivery for Lois: their culture, the sourdough starter used to bake their bread. She must keep it alive, they tell her—feed it daily, play it music, and learn to bake with it. Lois is no baker, but she could use a roommate, even if it is a needy colony of microorganisms. Soon, not only is she eating her own homemade bread, she's providing loaves to the General Dexterity cafeteria every day. Then the company chef urges her to take her product to the farmer's market—and a whole new world opens up.

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