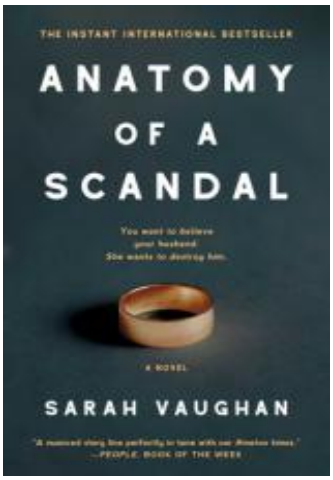
Anatomy of a Scandal

by Sarah Vaughan



About the Book

Sophie?s husband James is a loving father, a handsome man, a charismatic and successful public figure. And yet he stands accused of a terrible crime. Sophie is convinced he is innocent and desperate to protect her precious family from the lies that threaten to rip them apart.

Kate is the lawyer hired to prosecute the case: an experienced professional who knows that the law is all about winning the argument. And yet Kate seeks the truth at all times. She is certain James is guilty and is determined he will pay for his crimes.

Who is right about James? Sophie or Kate? And is either of them informed by anything more than instinct and personal experience? Despite her privileged upbringing, Sophie is well aware that her beautiful life is not inviolable. She has known it since she and James were first lovers, at Oxford, and she witnessed how easily pleasure could tip into tragedy.

Most people would prefer not to try to understand what passes between a man and a woman when they are alone: alone in bed, alone in an embrace, alone in an elevator? Or alone in the moonlit courtyard of an Oxford college, where a girl once stood before a boy, heart pounding with excitement, then fear. Sophie never understood why her tutorial partner Holly left Oxford so abruptly. What would she think, if she knew the truth?

Discussion Guide

1. One of the themes of ANATOMY OF A SCANDAL is what is seen versus what is hidden or secret. From the simplest element of Kate putting on her robe and wig versus wearing her ?civilian? clothes, to the upright, clean-cut facade of James?s public persona versus his carefully concealed past, the major characters in the novel have secret sides of themselves. In what other ways does Sarah Vaughan emphasize the dual natures of characters and situations?

2. While at Oxford University, the characters live with many traditions and within ancient buildings full of history. How is the past interwoven into the characters? lives? How do the settings add to the atmosphere and reflect the themes of the novel?

3. Why do you think Sarah chose to have Sophie and Holly study English? How do they use their education as adults?

4. On page 112, Sophie thinks to herself, ?she imagined a veneer of serenity encasing her, a hard impenetrable polish.? What does this tell you about Sophie as a character? When and how do you see this hard shell protecting her during the novel? Do you think it also harms her?

5. What does Holly?s physical transformation communicate about her emotions and internal life? What physical elements of Holly remain in her new identity as Kate?

6. When Kate sees Olivia testifying for the first time, she thinks, ?She is about to reveal herself as emphatically as if she were cut to the bone? (p. 123). How does the trial reveal character traits? What subtle traits does Sarah imply through the characters? testimonies and actions in court rather than tell us in the more explicit narration?

7. Each woman in the novel is confronted with a series of choices. Which choices do the women feel they must make? Do you think they had other options than the ones they went with?

8. When Sophie confronts James after the court has found him not guilty of raping Olivia, saying she knows that he didn?t tell the whole truth to the jury, he responds, ?I told the truth, near enough. Or the truth as I saw it.... We all adjust the truth from time to time? (p. 312). As a group, discuss the small and large ways in which the various characters adjust the truth throughout the novel.

9. What was the impact on you as readers of realizing Kate wasn?t a reliable narrator? Did it lessen your sympathy toward her?

10. Were you surprised by Sophie?s reaction to James?s admission of perjury (even if he wouldn?t define it as such)?

11. At the end of the novel, Brian tells Kate not to worry, that James won?t ?get away with it this time? (p. 338). What do you think will happen to James? Will he be held accountable?

12. After finishing the book, read the epigraph from Hilary Mantel?s historical novel BRING UP THE BODIES. Her book delves into the heart of Tudor history, exploring the dramatic trial of Anne Boleyn and her lovers for adultery and treason. The quote itself comes from Thomas Cromwell; many of the men he has accused of adultery are his political enemies. By citing a moment from history, what themes does Sarah?s epigraph emphasize in her book?

13. Sarah worked for many years as a journalist for leading British publications. In what ways can you see her journalistic background informing ANATOMY OF A SCANDAL?

14. If there were one more chapter in ANATOMY OF A SCANDAL, what do you imagine would happen in it?

Author Bio

Sarah Vaughan studied English at Oxford and went on to become a journalist. She spent 11 years at *The Guardian* as a news reporter and political correspondent before leaving to freelance and write fiction. Her first thriller, ANATOMY OF A SCANDAL, was an instant international bestseller, translated into 24 languages, and is available to stream on Netflix as a worldwide number one series starring Sienna Miller, Michelle Dockery and Rupert Friend. Her bestselling novel, LITTLE DISASTERS, has also been optioned for television, as has REPUTATION, her fifth novel.

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