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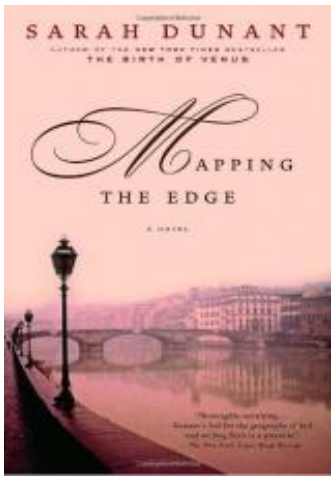
Mapping the Edge: A Novel

by Sarah Dunant



About the Book

Anna, a self-sufficient and reliable single mother, packs her bags one day for a short vacation to Italy. She leaves her beloved daughter at home in London with good friends. When Anna doesn?t return, everyone begins to make excuses, until the likelihood that she might not come back at all becomes chillingly clear. In this dazzling work of suspense, Sarah Dunant interweaves parallel narratives that are stretched taut with tension even as they raise difficult questions about love, trust, and accountability. We are challenged, unnerved, and ultimately exhilarated as Dunant redefines the boundaries of the psychological thriller.

Discussion Guide

1. Do you think the book?s speculative agenda, its parallel narratives, explore a disquiet particularly characteristic of midlife? Is it an unrest limited to middle age? Why or why not?

2. Discuss Dunant?s portrayal of Anna?s unconventional "family." Is it a sufficient replacement for a typical nuclear family, in your opinion? What did you make of the rivalry between Estella and Paul, or that between Anna and Michael, for that matter? How does the childhood loss of her own mother inform Estella?s feelings for Lily?

3. How does the disingenuous nature of Anna?s affair with the art dealer heighten its intensity, for both? What is Dunant suggesting about the nature of sexual intimacy and personal trust?

4. Do you think Dunant succeeds in her divergent storytelling? How do differing versions of the truth work to subvert the form of the typical thriller? How does the double plot serve as a metaphor for the duality of Anna?s desires, or those of anyone? How does Dunant resolve this dilemma, in your opinion? Does she?

5. Discuss Dunant?s comparison of the physical connection between a mother and child to that of a woman and her

lover. How are the varieties of love and desire intertwined here--for better and for worse?

6. Discuss the intense, visceral love Anna and Lily feel for one another. According to Dunant, to what extent can Anna have a life separate from Lily?

Author Bio

Sarah Dunant is the author of the international bestsellers THE BIRTH OF VENUS, IN THE COMPANY OF THE COURTESAN, SACRED HEARTS and BLOOD AND BEAUTY, which have received major acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic. Her earlier novels include three Hannah Wolfe crime thrillers, as well as SNOWSTORMS IN A HOT CLIMATE, TRANSGRESSIONS and MAPPING THE EDGE. She has two daughters and lives in London and Florence.

Critical Praise

"What if we cannot know even those we love best? In **Mapping the Edge**, Sarah Dunant writes with wonderful intelligence about the dark intricacies of motherhood, friendship, love, and obsession. A brilliantly plotted, ruthlessly intelligent, and highly readable novel."

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