The Forbidden Garden

by Ellen Herrick



About the Book

At the nursery she runs with her sisters on the New England coast, Sorrel Sparrow has honed her rare gift for nurturing plants and flowers. Now that reputation, and a stroke of good timing, lands Sorrel an unexpected opportunity: reviving a long-dormant Shakespearean garden on an English country estate.

Arriving at Kirkwood Hall, ancestral home of Sir Graham Kirkwood and his wife, Stella, Sorrel is shocked by the desolate state of the walled garden. Generations have tried --- and failed --- to bring it back to glory. Sorrel senses heartbreak and betrayal here, perhaps even enchantment. Intrigued by the house?s history --- especially the haunting tapestries that grace its walls --- and increasingly drawn to Stella?s enigmatic brother, Sorrel sets to work. And though she knows her true home is across the sea with her sisters, instinct tells her that the English garden?s destiny is entwined with her own, if she can only unravel its secrets.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the role that family secrets and family legends plays in THE FORBIDDEN GARDEN. Is it possible that the secrets of the past can still affect families generations later?

2. From the outset Graham Kirkwood says that the Shakespeare Garden is cursed. Do you think it?s actually possible for a place or thing to be ?cursed? or somehow tainted?

3. From the outside, the Kirkwood family appears perfect but the reality is somewhat different. How does the novel make use of the concept of appearance being different from the truth where it pertains to the Kirkwood and Sparrow families?

4. Graham Kirkwood originally approaches Sorrel by writing a letter. Why do you think someone would use such an old-

fashioned method of communication in this day of emails, texts and even phone calls?

5. The Kirkwood family seems to have their own private language. How much of this do you think it?s used to keep strangers at a distance? How much of this is mere whimsy on their parts?

6. Andrew is a minister who seems to do some very unreligious things. Did this startle or upset you? Why or why not?

7. Graham sometimes seems to act in ways that is protective of his family but detrimental to others. Do you feel he is justified in his actions? Are there times when protecting one?s family at the expense of others is acceptable?

8. The Sparrow Sisters seem to have ties and ways of communicating that seem, at times, almost paranormal. Have you ever seen members of a family who are able to somehow communicate in these ways?

9. How do you think Andrew and Sorrel are going to live out their futures?

10. Is it possible for one?s faith to be restored by nature? By extension, can one be a person of religious faith who is also a person of science?

Author Bio

Ellen Herrick was a publishing professional in New York City until she and her husband moved to London for a brief stint; they returned nearly 20 years later with three children (her own, it must be said). She now divides her time between Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a small town on Cape Cod very much like Granite Point.

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Publication Date: April 4, 2017
Genres: Fiction, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 400 pages
Publisher: William Morrow Paperbacks
ISBN-10: 0062499955
ISBN-13: 9780062499950