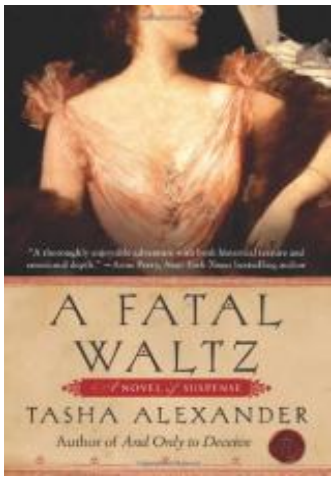
ReadingGroupGuides
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A Fatal Waltz

by Tasha Alexander



About the Book

At her friend Ivy's behest, Lady Emily Ashton reluctantly agrees to attend a party at the sprawling English country estate of a man she finds odious. But the despised Lord Fortescue is not to be her greatest problem. Kristiana von Lange, an Austrian countess once linked romantically with Emily's fiancé, the debonair Colin Hargreaves, is a guest also. And a tedious evening turns deadly when their host is found murdered, and his protégé, Robert Brandon --- Ivy's husband --- is arrested for the crime.

Determined to right a terrible wrong, Emily embarks on a quest that will lead her from London's glittering ballrooms to Vienna's sordid backstreets --- and into a game of wits with a notorious anarchist. But putting Colin in deadly peril may be the price for exonerating Robert --- forcing the intrepid Emily to bargain with her nemesis, the Countess von Lange, for the life of her fiancé.

Discussion Guide

1. How do you think the coffeehouses as gathering places for writers, artists, and musicians influenced Austrian culture in the 1890s? Do we have an equivalent now?

2. Vienna is often described as a city of contrasts. Compare the dark and bright parts of it. Are there elements shared by both?

3. How does Emily react to seeing a part of the world so removed from her own? Do you think she's beginning to grow a social conscience?

4. Describe Jeremy's relationship with Emily. Does he truly love her?

5. Discuss the way Robert deals with Ivy while he's in prison. Do his efforts to protect her help or hurt her? Is there ever a case where shielding someone you love from difficult truths is a good idea?

6. Discuss the sort of freedom Sissi has. Infinite resources allow her to have a castle in Greece and to indulge many whims. At the same time, however, she's subject to myriad restrictions and denied information. Would you be able to live in such circumstances?

7. Discuss the different models of marriage seen in the book: The Emperor and Sissi, who happily tolerates her husband's "soul friendship" with another woman, Robert and Ivy's traditional views, and the Fortescues, whose marriage was intended to give little more than material comfort.

8. Do you think Lady Fortescue is a tragic figure?

Author Bio

Tasha Alexander is the author of the *New York Times* bestselling *Lady Emily* mystery series. The daughter of two philosophy professors, she studied English Literature and Medieval History at the University of Notre Dame. She and her husband, novelist Andrew Grant, live on a ranch in southeastern Wyoming.

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