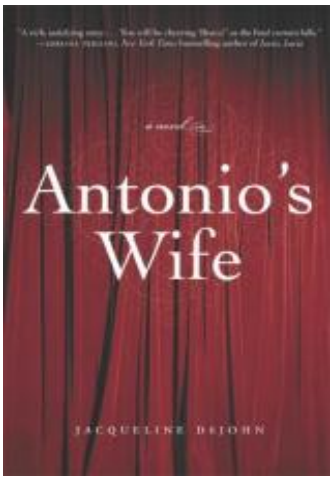
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Antonio's Wife

by Jacqueline DeJohn



About the Book

From the glamorous uptown world of opera to New York City's worst tenements, a roller-coaster ride of kidnapping, betrayals, hidden identities, and twisted intrigues.

By 1908 Francesca Frascatti has reached the pinnacle of success in the opera world. A Neapolitan diva with an infamously volatile temperament, Francesca secretly aches with regret for having given up her daughter, Maria Grazia, on the road to stardom, and she has come to America to find her and make amends. By night Francesca appears as Tosca, both delighting and tyrannizing the Manhattan Opera House; by day, she tries desperately to find Maria Grazia before her cunning grandfather can spirit her away to Italy and out of her scandalous mother's reach forever.

At the opera house, Mina DiGianni, a gentle Italian lace maker, becomes Francesca's costume dresser and confidante. Like Francesca, Mina is haunted by a secret she's been keeping. As Mina and Francesca's worlds collide in a shocking turn of events, both women face the greatest challenges of their lives: to finally lay their pasts to rest and to embrace the present.

Discussion Guide

1. Mina tires to remain faithful to her marriage vows in spite of the abuse she suffers from Antonio. How have expectations for married women changed since the turn of the century?

2. What is the significance of the lace metaphor used throughout the novel? In what way is life like a piece of lace?

3. Dante and Mina come from different worlds. Mina fears she will have nothing to offer Dante. What attributes build a loving relationship?

4. Does God intervene in the lives of human beings? How much of life is predetermined by birth and life choices? What role does destiny play?

5. Why did the author choose to refer to Mina as Antonio's wife? Is this a good title for the novel or would another title have been a better choice?

6. "Sangue è sangue è mai acqua, Blood is blood and never water." Francesca says. What value does biological relationship bring to a loving relationship? Do we love someone more because they are "our blood?"

7. What role does violence play in advancing the plot? Is society more or less violent than at the turn of the century?

8. Each character in **Antonio's Wife** is playing a role and not behaving authentically. Do you think the author was trying to make a comment about life in general or just using a clever plot device?

9. Arranged marriages were common for centuries. Couples "learned to love one another" and divorce was difficult to obtain. In what ways might arranged marriage be beneficial to the growth of individuals and the concept of love?

10. "The past, the future- they're illusions. There is only this moment, this reality." Dante says at the end of Chapter 30. How does practicing this philosophy allow happiness to enter Francesca's and Mina's lives?

11. Kathleen and Antonio are raw, hard, realistic characters who face life's struggles head on and take no quarter. What causes them to ignore the feelings of others and seek only their own ambitions? Are they evil because of their lack of compassion for others?

Author Bio

Jacqueline DeJohn was inspired to write *Antonio's Wife* by her father's stories about her grandmother Filomina, who came to America as a mail-order bride. This is her first novel. She lives in New York City.

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