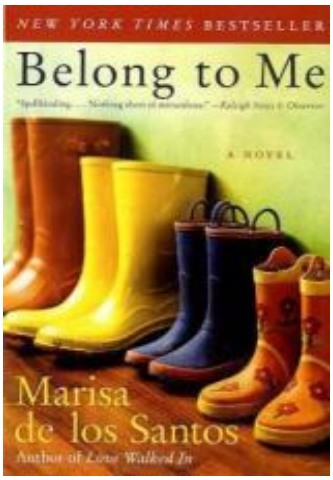
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Belong to Me: A Novel

by Marisa de los Santos



About the Book

Everyone has secrets. Some we keep to protect ourselves, others we keep to protect those we love.

A devoted city dweller, Cornelia Brown surprised no one more than herself when she was gripped by the sudden, inescapable desire to leave urban life behind and head for an idyllic suburb. Though she knows she and her beloved husband, Teo, have made the right move, she approaches her new life with trepidation and struggles to forge friendships in her new home. Cornelia's mettle is quickly tested by judgmental neighbor Piper Truitt. Perfectly manicured, impeccably dressed, and possessing impossible standards, Piper is the embodiment of everything Cornelia feared she would find in suburbia. A saving grace soon appears in the form of Lake. Over a shared love of literature and old movies, Cornelia develops an instant bond with this warm yet elusive woman who has also recently arrived in town, ostensibly to send her perceptive and brilliant son, Dev, to a school for the gifted.

Marisa de los Santos's literary talents shine in the complex interactions she creates between these three women. She deftly explores the life-altering roller coaster of emotions Piper faces as she cares for two households, her own and that of her cancer-stricken best friend, Elizabeth. Skillfully, de los Santos creates an enigmatic and beguiling character in Lake, who draws Cornelia closer even as she harbors a shocking secret. And from the first page until the exhilarating conclusion, de los Santos engages readers with Cornelia, who, while trying to adapt to her new surroundings, must remain true to herself. As their individual stories unfold, the women become entangled in a web of trust, betrayal, love, and loss that challenges them in ways they never imagined, and that ultimately teaches them what it means for one human being to belong to another.

Discussion Guide

1. Each character faces a different challenge: what are these challenges and how do they handle them? Who has changed the most by the end of the novel?

2. When we meet Cornelia's neighbor, Piper, she is commenting on Cornelia's lawn and home, suggesting changes. Does she have a right to criticize Piper's lawn and home? How did this make you feel? What does it mean to be a good neighbor?

3. Piper confesses that she finds security through organizing, but when her best friend, Elizabeth becomes ill, this surprise rattles her carefully organized world. What does safety mean? What rituals, if any, do you have to create a feeling of safety?

4. What is Dev's relationship with his mother like? Do you think mothers and sons have a different relationship than mothers and daughters or fathers and sons? Why or why not? What do Dev and Lake learn from each other?

5. Part of the way into the story Dev embarks on a quest to find his father? What issues does he face? If you were Dev would you look for your father? Why or why not?

6. Near the end of the novel Lake says that everything she's done has been for Dev. Is this acceptable? Is it ok to lie to protect the people you love?

7. Do you think Clare's and Dev's relationship is an accurate depiction of first love? How does their relationship differ from the other romantic relationships in the novel? What do you think will happen between them in the future?

8. How would you describe Cornelia's childbirth experience? How does it lead her to make a decision that would change the lives of the people in her life?

9. What does "family" mean and how is this explored in the novel? Is it possible for one person to belong to another?

10. Cornelia compares life to the movies. What if any movie does the novel remind you of? What movie(s) would you compare your life to?

Author Bio

Marisa de los Santos is the *New York Times* bestselling author of nine novels, including LOVE WALKED IN and I'LL BE YOUR BLUE SKY. Marisa holds a PhD in literature and creative writing and teaches in the low-residency creative writing program at Wilkes University. She lives in Wilmington, Delaware, with her husband, David Teague.

Critical Praise

"By the book?s end, humanity is discovered in the unlikeliest places, and Cornelia learns that tempting as it is, you can?t always judge a woman by her hairstyle."

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