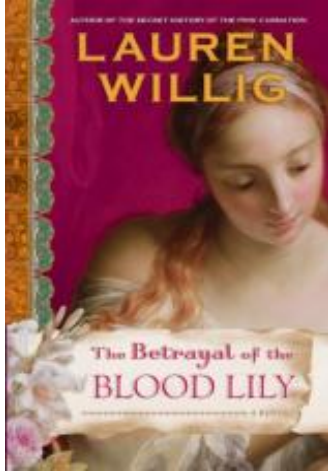


The Betrayal of the Blood Lily

by Lauren Willig



About the Book

The heroines of Lauren Willig's bestselling *Pink Carnation* series have engaged in espionage all over 19th-century Europe. In the sixth stand-alone volume, our fair English heroine travels to India, where she finds freedom --- and risk --- more exciting than she ever imagined.

Everyone warned Miss Penelope Deveraux that her unruly behavior would land her in disgrace someday. She never imagined she'd be whisked off to India to give the scandal of her hasty marriage time to die down. As Lady Frederick Staines, Penelope plunges into the treacherous waters of the court of the Nizam of Hyderabad, where no one is quite what they seem --- even her own husband. In a strange country, where elaborate court dress masks even more elaborate intrigues and a dangerous spy called the Marigold leaves venomous cobras as his calling card, there is only one person Penelope can trust?

Captain Alex Reid has better things to do than play nursemaid to a pair of aristocrats. Or so he thinks --- until Lady Frederick Staines out-shoots, out-rides, and out-swims every man in the camp. She also has an uncanny ability to draw out the deadly plans of the Marigold and put herself in harms way. With danger looming from local warlords, treacherous court officials, and French spies, Alex realizes that an alliance with Lady Staines just might be the only thing standing in the way of a plot designed to rock the very foundations of the British Empire?

Discussion Guide

1. Lauren Willig employs nineteenth-century India and modern-day London as the settings for **The Betrayal of the Blood Lily**. If you had to choose two different places or eras in which to set this book, which would they be?

2. What did you think of Penelope when she was first introduced? Did your opinion of her change as the novel progressed?
3. "She hated that name. It was like a shackle around her neck, engraved with the name of her master" [page 53]. Talk about Penelope's resistance to conventions such as manners, marriage, and mores. Why did she buck authority so much? Why do you think she was attracted to Alex, who appeared to be the personification of tradition and honor?
4. Which figures in the 19th-century story line most resemble some of the modern-day characters, such as Eloise, Colin, or Serena?
5. Willig created Eloise as a first-person protagonist, but chose to tell Penelope's story indirectly, through a third-person narrator. As a reader, do you prefer being "in the head" of a character, or would you rather experience their stories through the filter of an outside party? Would the novel have been different if Eloise and Penelope's perspectives were swapped?
6. Captain Alex Reid first appears as a mysterious figure. Initially, did you have any clues to what he might have been hiding? What did you think of him as his secrets were revealed?
7. The portion of **The Betrayal of the Blood Lily** devoted to Penelope is longer than Eloise's part. Did you want to read more about Eloise, and/or less about Penelope? Or did you find the balance between the two story lines to be satisfactory?
8. "When had it become about making Captain Reid jealous?" [page 207]. Answer this question yourself: What was Penelope's motivation here? Why did she feel compelled to stoke Alex's protectiveness?
9. Once the identity of the Marigold was revealed, were you shocked or surprised? What were some hints that might have pointed to who the Marigold really was?
10. Given his principled nature, was it surprising that Alex worked to construct the cover-up described in Chapter 31? Why did he work so hard to shield his brother from scrutiny?
11. Prior to reading **The Betrayal of the Blood Lily**, what did you know about India in the 19th-century, and Britain's interests in the country?
12. Eloise and Colin, Alex and Penelope: Discuss some of the couples in **The Betrayal of the Blood Lily**. What did you think of them? Which were the more unlikely pairs?
13. In its praise for the *Pink Carnation* series, *USA Today* has said that "Pride and Prejudice lives on." Do you agree with this characterization? Can you think of other authors or series to compare to Lauren Willig and her *Pink Carnation* books?

Author Bio

Lauren Willig is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of more than 20 works of historical fiction,

including *BAND OF SISTERS*, *THE SUMMER COUNTRY*, *THE ENGLISH WIFE*, the RITA Award-winning *Pink Carnation* series, and three novels co-written with Beatriz Williams and Karen White. Her books have been translated into over a dozen languages, awarded the RITA, Booksellers Best and Golden Leaf awards, and chosen for the American Library Association's annual list of the best genre fiction. An alumna of Yale University, she has a graduate degree in history from Harvard and a JD from Harvard Law School. She lives in New York City with her husband, two young children and vast quantities of coffee.

Critical Praise

"A page-turner to anyone who enjoys a little romance with his history."

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