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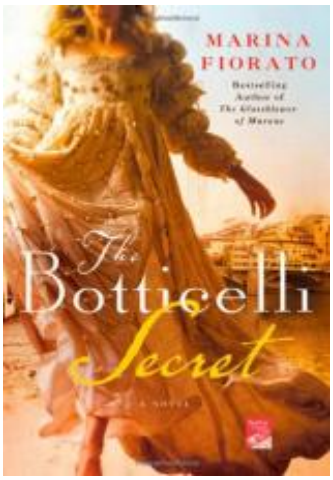
The Botticelli Secret

by Marina Fiorato



About the Book

Luciana Vetra, a slyly intelligent, headstrong prostitute in Florence, and the irreverent hero of **The Botticelli Secret**, models for what will become Sandro Botticelli?s famous masterpiece *La Primavera*. But when the artist dismisses her without payment, Luciana impulsively steals an unfinished sketch of the painting, unleashing a series of murders all meant for her.

With the help of Brother Guido, a learned novitiate and the one man who can resist her feminine charms, Luciana flees Florence and interprets the message encoded in this mysterious sketch; a message that leads Luciana and Guido on an extraordinary adventure through the cities of 15th century Italy.

Discussion Guide

1. Few works of art are as celebrated as Sandro Botticelli?s La Primavera. Keeping in mind that this is only a fictional account of the story behind the famous painting, how did reading the book teach you about --- or change your impression of --- its subject? Has anyone in the group ever seen the painting in person?

2. What do you think of Luciana? Do you like her more, or less, for her brash conduct? Is a person?s moral code something that?s written in stone, or is it a result of varying circumstances? Do you think your code of conduct would change if you were poor and hungry?

3. Duplicity is an important theme throughout the book. How is Guido plagued by a feeling of duplicity? In which other characters do we see (or not see. duplicity? Can there be both positive and negative effects of a duplicitous nature?

4. Despite their differences, why do you think Luciana and Guido drawn to each other?

5. Guido, as a man of the cloth, believes in God whereas Luciana, as a woman of the streets, believes only in herself. Throughout the story, both beliefs are called into question. Do you think it?s more important to have faith in God, or faith in yourself? Are the two mutually exclusive?

6. Discuss the nine cites of Renaissance Italy as a ?character? in the book. How is each characterized? And what role does each play in shaping Luciana and Guido?

7. Do you believe that a picture is worth a thousand words? Can a work of art --- a painting, or a book --- ever truly capture a person?s essence? Did Botticelli?s portrait of Luciana, even as she sat as an archetype, capture hers?

8. The action in this novel is built around several secrets which Luciana and Guido unearth. Discuss the element of mystery in these pages. What made The Botticelli Secret a page-turner for you? What types of narrative devices did the author use to keep the keep the reader guessing?

9. The Botticelli Secret is about strength and frailty, truth and beauty, art and artifice. It is also about the ties that bind us to family --- in all its glory and pain. How important is the notion of family to Luciana? Which relationships, regardless of the standard definition of ?family,? seem the most real to you in the book?

10. In the story, Sandro Botticelli is an artist but he?s also a member of a powerful inner circle. What does **The Botticelli Secret** suggest about the role and function of art in the Renaissance era? Was it more or less political than today?

11. What do you imagine happens after the end of the novel? What do you think Luciana and Guido?s life will be like now that they are free to be together, and Luciana knows her true identity? What truths do you think she?ll learn about herself?

Author Bio

Marina Fiorato is half-Venetian and a history graduate of Oxford University and the University of Venice, where she specialized in the study of Shakespeare?s plays as an historical source. She has worked as an illustrator, actress, and film reviewer, and designed tour visuals for rock bands including U2 and the Rolling Stones. **The Glassblower of Murano**, her debut novel, has generated enormous attention in Europe, having sold over 100,000 copies in Germany and ranked #1 on the Independent Publishers' list in the UK. She was married on the Grand Canal in Venice, with a reception on Murano, and now lives in London with her family.

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Publication Date: March 30, 2010
Paperback: 544 pages
Publisher: St. Martin's Griffin
ISBN-10: 0312606362
ISBN-13: 9780312606367