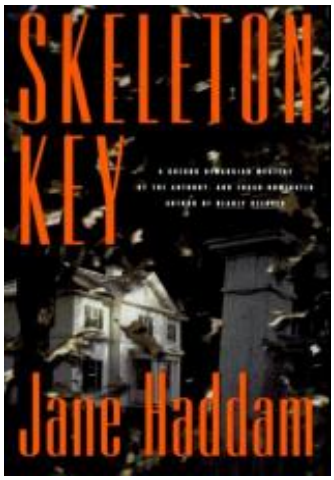
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The Girl at the Lion d'Or

by Sebastian Faulks



About the Book

From the author of the international bestseller Birdsong, comes a haunting historical novel of passion, loss, and courage set in France between the two world wars. This Vintage Original edition marks its first appearance in the United States.

On a rainy night in the 1930s, Anne Louvet appears at the run-down Hotel du Lion d'Or in the village of Janvilliers. She is seeking a job and a new life, one far removed from the awful injustices of her past. As Anne embarks on a torrential love affair with a married veteran of the Great War, The Girl at the Lion d'Or fashions an unbreakable spell of narrative and atmosphere that evokes French masters from Flaubert to Renoir.

Discussion Guide

1. How would you characterize the climate of inter-war France--the period historian Eugen Weber has called "The Hollow Years"--as described by Faulks? In what way was the period "hollow," and why? What elements of the defeatist, cynical France of the Occupation can you trace here, several years before World War II? In what ways are the Stavisky affair and the death of Roger Salengro indicative of the political atmosphere?

2. Hartmann is disturbed by Anne's life story, particularly the "unfairness of the persecution of the villagers" [p. 158]. Why did these villagers persecute Anne's family? Was it from pure meanness, or out of some unspoken fear or perceived threat? If Anne's hometown and her adopted town of Janvilliers are typical of provincial French life at this period, what are that life's drawbacks? What are its strengths?

3. How do Anne's political opinions [see p. 183] reflect those of the country in general, and how do those opinions account for the country's precarious state? What dangers do these opinions, when held by a large portion of the population, imply for France? What about Roland's opinions [pp. 190-92]? How deeply has he thought out his political ideas? Does he have any understanding of where such ideas will lead? Is he evil, or simply unintelligent and thoughtless?

4. What connections, if any, does the author draw between Roger Salengro and Anne's father?

5. Why does Hartmann turn away from Anne at the end? Is it from selfishness and cowardice or out of a sense of duty and a sort of love? What sort of future do you envision for Anne? What might become of her as France moves toward war?

Author Bio

Sebastian Faulks is the internationally bestselling author of 11 novels, including CHARLOTTE GRAY, which was made into a film starring Cate Blanchett, and the #1 international bestseller and classic BIRDSONG, which has sold more than three million copies and has been adapted for the stage, for television (starring Eddie Redmayne) and is now in development as a feature film. In 2008, Faulks was invited to write a James Bond novel, DEVIL MAY CARE, to mark the centenary of Ian Fleming. In 2011, he presented the four-part television series "Faulks on Fiction" for the BBC. He lives in London.

Critical Praise

"I would urge those who appreciated--The French Lieutenant's Woman to try this one--. They may well think it superior. "

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Publication Date: September 6, 2012
Hardcover: 276 pages
Publisher: Minotaur Books
ISBN-10: 0312209096
ISBN-13: 9780312209094