The Parisian Heist

by Jo Piazza



About the Book

From the bestselling author of THE SICILIAN INHERITANCE and EVERYONE IS LYING TO YOU comes a propulsive dual-timeline mystery drenched in art-world intrigue and brimming with family secrets, betrayal and the intoxicating lure of power.

Emma, a struggling American artist in Paris, thought she had left her dreams behind when she took a job cleaning for the city?s wealthy elite. Then she meets Stella Swanson, the widow of one of the most notorious art dealers in the business. The Swansons move in a world where billionaires, oligarchs and heads of state pay fortunes for masterpieces. Drawn in by their dazzling wealth and the pull of a dangerously charming grandson, Emma becomes both a player and a pawn in a family battle to protect their empire and conceal its crimes.

In the late 1800s, young widow Jo van Gogh inherits hundreds of paintings from her brother-in-law, Vincent, that the art world deems worthless. Determined to prove their genius and to secure a future for herself and her young son, she becomes consumed by Vincent?s legacy. As her devotion deepens, a vanished painting and a thwarted love affair leave her unsure who she can trust and how much of herself she?s willing to lose in the process.

From glittering auction houses to the idyllic canals of Amsterdam and the grand museums of Paris, the lives of these two women converge as Emma uncovers the Swanson family?s darkest secrets and agrees to mastermind a daring heist inside the Musée d?Orsay. The stakes have never been higher, and these women refuse to be written out of history, no matter the cost.

Discussion Guide

1. ?It is absolutely terrible to be rich.? (p. 3) These are the first words we hear Stella Swanson say. How did your understanding of this quote change over the course of the story?

2. The book grapples with how money and wealth shape what we value as ?great? art. Did anything about that surprise you, or change how you think about the art world?

3. Who/what really determines the value of a piece of art in this story --- the artist, the buyer, the dealer, or the myth around it?

4. Jo van Gogh feels guilty about the ways her presence destabilized the friendship between brothers Vincent and Theo. How would you describe her relationship with Vincent, both before and after his death?

5. The women in this novel operate in a world that hasn?t historically welcomed them. Did any character?s ambition feel justified...or dangerous?

6. How do the women in the story use power differently from the men?

7. Some of the reviews of Vincent?s exhibition are unkind, and Jo struggles throughout the book to find buyers for his art. What do you think of the changing opinions on Vincent van Gogh?s art over time? How do you feel about his paintings? Were you aware of this origin story of his fame?

8. If you had the chance to steal one piece of art and get away with it, would you? How would you orchestrate a heist?

9. Which character would you trust the least in real life, and which would you choose to help you pull off a crime?

10. What does it mean for something to be ?real? in this book? Is authenticity about origin, intention or belief?

Author Bio

Jo Piazza is a bestselling author, podcast creator and award-winning journalist. She is the national and international bestselling author of many critically acclaimed novels and nonfiction books, including WE ARE NOT LIKE THEM, CHARLOTTE WALSH LIKES TO WIN, THE KNOCKOFF and HOW TO BE MARRIED. Her work has been published in 10 languages in 12 countries, and four of her books have been optioned for film and television.

A former editor, columnist and travel writer with Yahoo, Current TV and the *Daily News* (New York), her work has also appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *New York* magazine, *Glamour*, *Elle*, *Time*, *Marie Claire*, *The Daily Beast* and *Slate*. She holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania in economics and communication, a master?s in journalism from Columbia University, and a master?s in religious studies from New York University.

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