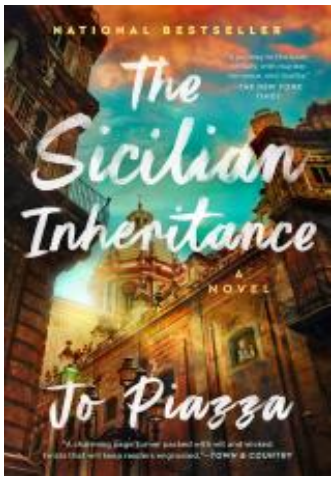
The Sicilian Inheritance

by Jo Piazza



About the Book

From bestselling author and award-winning journalist Jo Piazza comes a transporting novel rooted in the author?s own family history about a long-awaited trip to Sicily, a disputed inheritance, and a family secret that some will kill to protect.

Sara Marsala barely knows who she is anymore after the failure of her business and marriage. On top of that, her beloved great-aunt Rosie passes away, leaving Sara bereft with grief. But Aunt Rosie?s death also opens an escape from her life and a window into the past by way of a plane ticket to Sicily, a deed to a possibly valuable plot of land and a bombshell family secret. Rosie believes Sara?s great-grandmother Serafina, the family matriarch who was left behind while her husband worked in America, didn?t die of illness as family lore has it. She was murdered.

Thus begins a twist-filled adventure that takes Sara all over the picturesque Italian countryside as she races to solve a mystery and learn the story of Serafina --- a feisty and headstrong young woman in the early 1900s thrust into motherhood in her teens, who fought for a better life not just for herself but for all the women of her small village. Unsurprisingly, the more she challenges the status quo, the more she finds herself in danger.

As Sara discovers more about Serafina, she also realizes she is coming head-to-head with the same menacing forces that took down her great-grandmother. At once an immersive multigenerational mystery and an ode to the undaunted heroism of everyday women, THE SICILIAN INHERITANCE is an atmospheric, page-turning delight.

Discussion Guide

1. How does the novel?s prologue at the police interrogation set the stage?

2. What would you do if someone left you the instructions Rosie left Sara --- to take their ashes to another country, all

expenses paid for a week, but also to find the truth behind a century-old death?

3. In our first chapter with Serafina, we see her travel with her closest friend, Cettina, to *la strega* for help with an unwanted pregnancy, though it is too late. How does this scene set up the ways that women care for one another in the early 1900s, and how does it foreshadow what is in store for Serafina?

4. ?But I didn?t take to those kinds of things, the curses and superstitions. I had even stopped whispering my secrets in the dragon?s ear and I skipped the confession box as often as I could.? (p. 89) Serafina doesn?t believe in superstitions, but she can?t escape them. In what ways does superstition shape her village and her life?

5. Throughout the book, we encounter many different marriages and affairs. Which relationships were most compelling to you? How are they each shaped by their time period and culture?

6. ??I do not think Penelope stayed saintly and chaste while Odysseus was gone. I think Penelope f*cked,? Giusy said.? (p. 192) We hear about multiple historical and mythological women who inspired and shaped Giusy over her life. What stories have shaped you most? What other characters of Greek myths or other folktales do you think deserve to break from their traditional story roles?

7. Giusy is many readers? favorite character. She wasn?t in the initial outline for the book, but as Jo was writing she became a much larger part of the narrative and then one of the main characters. How did you feel about Giusy? Did you have mixed feelings about her and her motives? What do you think was driving her? How would you have handled things differently than she did?

8. Over the course of the novel, Sara laments that it was difficult for her to be ambitious as both a mother and a businesswoman. Have you experienced conflicts in your own life when it comes to pursuing ambition or defining ambition?

9. What motivations do you think Serafina and Sara have in common? What dreams do they share?

10. What did you find most surprising about the revelations at the end of the novel?

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

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