ReadingGroupGuides
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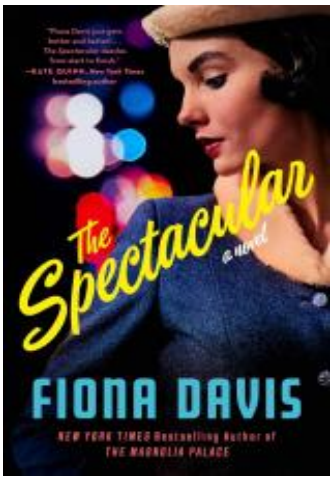
The Spectacular

by Fiona Davis



About the Book

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE MAGNOLIA PALACE: A thrilling story about love, sacrifice and the pursuit of dreams, set amidst the glamour and glitz of Radio City Music Hall in its mid-century heyday.

New York City, 1956: Nineteen-year-old Marion Brooks knows she should be happy. Her high school sweetheart is about to propose and sweep her off to the life everyone has always expected they?d have together: a quiet house in the suburbs, Marion staying home to raise their future children. But instead, Marion finds herself feeling trapped. So when she comes across an opportunity to audition for the famous Radio City Rockettes --- the glamorous precision-dancing troupe --- she jumps at the chance to exchange her predictable future for the dazzling life of a performer.

Meanwhile, the city is reeling from a string of bombings orchestrated by a person the press has nicknamed the ?Big Apple Bomber,? who has been terrorizing the citizens of New York for 16 years by planting bombs in popular, crowded spaces. With the public in an uproar over the lack of any real leads after a years-long manhunt, the police turn in desperation to Peter Griggs, a young doctor at a local mental hospital who espouses a radical new technique: psychological profiling.

As both Marion and Peter find themselves unexpectedly pulled in to the police search for the bomber, Marion realizes that as much as she?s been training herself to blend in --- performing in perfect unison with all the other identical Rockettes --- if she hopes to catch the bomber, she?ll need to stand out and take a terrifying risk. In doing so, she may be forced to sacrifice everything she?s worked for, as well as the people she loves the most.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss Marion?s path to Radio City Music Hall. What direction do you think Marion?s life would have taken if she

hadn?t shown up to the Rockettes? audition?

2. What does Marion?s pearl necklace symbolize? When Simon confiscates the pearls, what does his actions reveal about him and the relationship he has with his daughters?

3. In the 1950s, it was unheard of for psychiatrists to be involved in a police case. If you were in the position of the police officers, what would you make of Peter?s character analysis of the suspect?

4. The novel raises questions about the cost of suppressing one?s own creativity and individuality for the good of the greater whole, whether as a dancer in a kick line or as an employee of a large corporation. What are the consequences of doing so for Marion and for her father? How do they differ in their responses to the pressure to conform?

5. How did the novel?s two timelines impact your reading experience? How do the past and future inform each other?

6. ?It was as if she?d internalized the idea that people would find her disappointing and abandon her and then made it happen in real life.? (page 184). Do you agree that the events up until this point were a consequence of Marion?s decisions? Why or why not?

7. Later in the novel, Marion learns a disturbing truth about Lucille?s life and choices. Do you believe that Marion should have been told earlier? How could it have affected her relationship with her father?

8. Did your opinion of the bomber shift after his history was revealed? Why or why not?

9. How did your understanding of Simon change throughout the novel? Were there moments when you sympathized with his choices?

10. What did you make of Marion and Peter?s relationship as the novel progressed, and what did you think of Peter?s confession at the end?

Author Bio

Fiona Davis is the *New York Times* bestselling author of eight historical novels set in iconic New York City buildings: THE STOLEN QUEEN, THE SPECTACULAR, THE MAGNOLIA PALACE, THE DOLLHOUSE, THE ADDRESS, THE MASTERPIECE, THE CHELSEA GIRLS and THE LIONS OF FIFTH AVENUE, which was a "Good Morning America" Book Club pick. Her articles have appeared in publications like *The Wall Street Journal* and the *Oprah* magazine.

She first came to New York as an actress, but fell in love with writing after getting a master's degree at Columbia Journalism School. Her books have been translated into over 20 languages, and she's based in New York City.

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Publication Date: July 23, 2024
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction
Paperback: 400 pages
Publisher: Dutton
ISBN-10: 0593184068
ISBN-13: 9780593184066