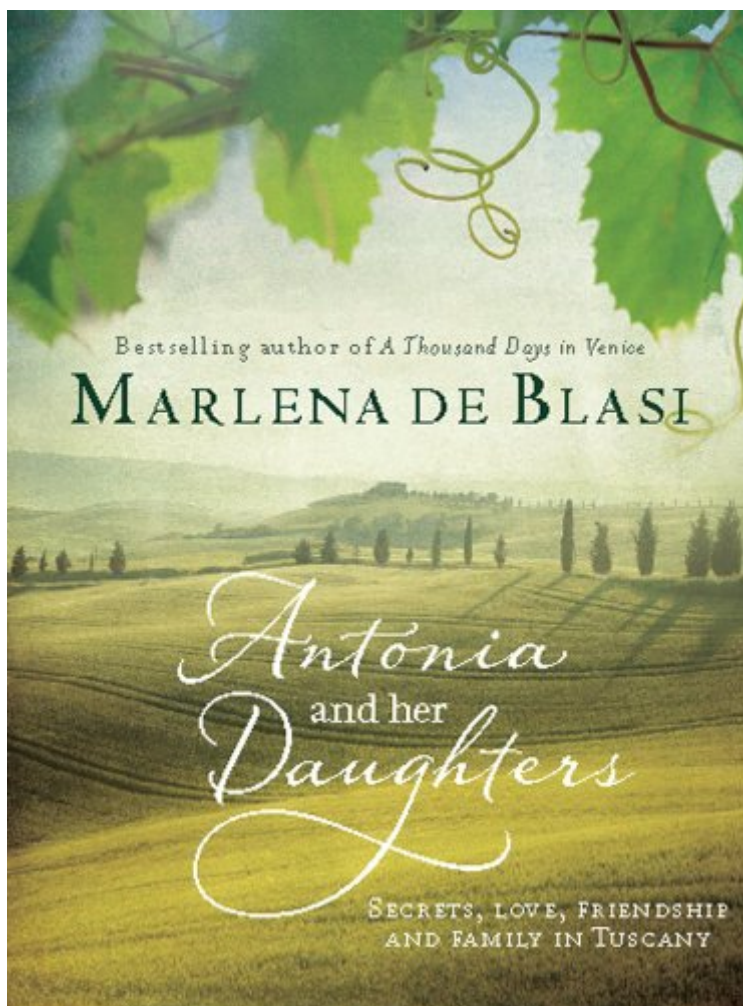


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Antonia And Her Daughters



Synopsis

The renovations to 34 via del Duomo now complete, Marlena de Blasi, the bestselling international author and woman with the 'fairytale life', longs to find time and space to finish a book. Lured by a friend's offer of a simple stone cottage in a remote province of western Tuscany and distant from the distractions of everyday life in Orvieto, she sets off for a period of solitude. Enter Antonia. Imperious, tempestuous, Antonia is the still-stunning elderly matriarch of a complicated family of four generations of beautiful blue-eyed, high-bottomed, high-strung hellions, each with a story of her own. Mistrustful of tourists and outsiders, Antonia baits and clashes with Marlena, sets out to destroy her fragile peace and send her packing. Yet the two are drawn to one another. Walking together in the pre-dawn Tuscan light over the high meadows to forage for wild herbs, cooking and feasting with the family, an affinity grows between them, a sympathy which belies the differences in their ages, cultures, characters and histories and inspires Antonia to reveal her terrible secrets. Evocative, powerful, haunting, the narrative gives compelling insight into Tuscany's recent past and an uncensored look into one extraordinary woman's story.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'm a loyal De Blasi fan, one who buys all her books as a matter of course and reads and rereads them many times. She's a wonderfully skilled writer. Her descriptions of people, food and country seem to magically open a richer world--and at the same time she's by no means a softy. In her Orvieto memoir, she was not afraid to address the real, everlasting coldness with which some natives treat foreigners. And in *Antonia and Her Daughters*, she deals with a tragedy which took place in the unforgotten past.(SPOILERS) From almost the first words that old Antonia speaks, we're aware that she and others dear to her were the victims of atrocities during the WWII Nazi occupation of their country home. The exact details don't emerge until near the end of the book. However, the gist of what happened is clear to us very early on. I was troubled by the writer's "shaping" these disclosures, with mysterious and portentous language, pretty much throughout the book. It is done with much art, but somehow that is the heart of my objection. I think there are certain tragedies in life that need to be presented exactly as they were--with more of reality and less of art. There are a few other less important lapses in the book. De Blasi is a profoundly gifted writer, but sometimes she depends too much on her charm to make us accept repetitious material. There are descriptions of certain landscapes and meals that, however pleasant at the time, are perilously close to filler. And toward the beginning of the book, either she or her Marlena-persona indulge in some borderline mean-spirited remarks about her husband Fernando. There is no question that this is a devoted couple, smitten lifelong with each other. However, De Blasi sets up her need to retreat alone to a country place by implying that Fernando is both emotionally and financially dependent on her. Did she really need to share this viewpoint? She seems to be using it as an excuse to do what she had determined to do anyway. And she seems to forget what her other books have revealed: she too is emotionally dependent on Fernando, and in the past he has made serious financial sacrifices to be with her. De Blasi only reached her greatest fame and productivity after she and Fernando became life partners. He seems to be the rock from which she can soar. And what one would ask of De Blasi is to recognize his profound contributions both to their life together, and to her accomplishments.

This is a beautifully written and touching story which I just could not put down. I love most of what Marlena De Blasi writes, having been hooked early on by her first book *"A Thousand Days in Venice"*, a truly romantic read. Set in Lunigiana in northern Tuscany among the mountains, when the author goes to a peaceful retreat to write, she meets an amazing family of women ruled by the redoubtable Antonia. Many fascinating encounters ensue. A gorgeous book.

I have read Marlena De Blazi's other novels and liked them all. This is a light enjoyable holiday read, interesting characters and a good story. Ms De Blazi is a good storyteller and clearly understands the expats place in their new community, warts and all. The Antonia in this story adds a dimension to the Tuscan dream not often considered in our romantic view of Italy. I really liked this book and recommend it.

The title is deceiving, as the book is much more focused on the author's reactions and emotions, consistent with her previous works. That is what I liked about it, and other fans may postpone reading this book, as I did, thinking it would not follow Marlena's magic formula. Antonia's story is heart-wrenching. My reason for buying the book was to continue to accompany Marlena de Blasi across Italy, through her descriptive writing style. I was not disappointed.

I have read all of the non-fiction books written by Marlena de Blasi. And I recommend that they be read in the same order as she lived them. They are not all the same. Some are about her and her husband. Some are about interesting people they meet along the way. All are very enjoyable. This book was no exception. It was different and it was enjoyable.

Beautiful, poetic memoir told to the author by an incredible Italian woman who lived through World War II in Tuscany. It recounts the trials she endured, the depravity of the Nazi occupiers, the confusion about the Resistance, Mussolini supporters, Nazi invaders, Allies, etc. all the while trying to stay alive with scant availability of food. This is a book I urge most people to read.

In this book Marlena De Blasi brings us to a new place, while remaining in an old place--a less familiar Tuscan landscape. She pens the history and life story of Antonia and the people who make up Antonia's larger family. And of course food in its growing, harvesting, preparation, and serving threads through the chapters. The serious events remembered, revealed and wonderfully told in this story will remain with me. It interests me that somehow I was reading "The Book Thief" by Markus Zusak at the same time. I am about to read "The Lost Wife" by Alyson Richman, to continue my reading trend.

After buying De Blasi's book, *Dolce e Salata*, at a jumble sale I have been hooked into her Italian experiences. Having lived in Italy for a number of years when I was younger it is great to look at it through a more mature women's eyes and still find the magic I remember so well. Antonia and her

daughters are really a captivating family, and reading their history helped to remind me of some of the things that happened to my own family in Italy during WW2. It is great Antonia's story has been written down for posterity and her descendants because so many never talk about it and what really happened is often not known. Well done De Blasi, and get your other books on Kindle!

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