



Chasing the Rose: An Adventure in the Venetian Countryside

Andrea Di Robilant

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From the author of the best-selling *A Venetian Affair*, here is the charming chronicle of his search for the identity of a mysterious old rose. Andrea di Robilant's tale takes us back to the time of Josephine Bonaparte, as well as into some of the most delightful rose gardens in Italy today, brought to colorful life on the page in the watercolors of artist Nina Fuga.

In his 2008 biography of the Venetian lady Lucia Mocenigo (his great-great-great-great-grandmother), di Robilant described a pink rose that grows wild on the family's former country estate, mentioning its light peach-and-raspberry scent. This passing detail led to an invitation for an audience with a local rose doyenne, Eleonora Garland. She and other experts wondered if di Robilant's unnamed rose could possibly be one of the long-lost China varieties that nineteenth-century European growers had cultivated but which have since disappeared. On the hunt for the identity of his anonymous yet quietly distinctive rose, Di Robilant finds himself captivated by roseophiles through time—from Lucia and her friend Josephine Bonaparte to the gifted Eleonora, whose garden of nearly fifteen hundred varieties of old roses is one of the most significant in Europe—and by the roses themselves, each of which has a tale to tell.

What starts out as a lighthearted quest becomes a meaningful journey as di Robilant contemplates the enduring beauty of what is passed down to us in a rose, through both the generosity of nature and the cultivating hand of human beings, who for centuries have embraced and extended the life of this mysterious flower.

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