



The Mascherari: A Novel of Venice

Laura Rahme

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In this late medieval tale of mystery and witchcraft, Laura Rahme breathes life into a Venice long forgotten. From the dark sottoporticos of the Arsenal, to the wealthy mansions of Castello, and deep within the secret passages of the Ducal Palace, *The Mascherari* is an occult tale rich with history. VENEZIA, 1422. Doge Tommaso Mocenigo lies on his death bed. An evil has come to Venice. An evil that will set the course for the future of La Serenissima. On the eve of Carnevale, five wealthy Venetian merchants set upon a mask maker in the ancient district of Santa Croce. They are led by Giacomo Contarini, a ruthless patrician. The following day, the Venice Republic's security council, the most feared Council of Ten, summons Florentine inquisitor, Antonio da Parma, to hold an inquest on a most baffling case. During a sumptuous banquet, Giacomo Contarini and his partners have met a chilling death. Newly widowed and fresh from Florence, Antonio da Parma's reputation precedes him. He is known for his susceptibility to the occult and is sternly warned that The Council of Ten want none of that. Yet in the throes of this macabre investigation Antonio is lured by his dreams and visions and by the mysterious silver pendant that he discovers on one of the dead merchants. Enter the dashing Esteban del Valle, a formidable swordmaster of Nubian origins. Esteban grieves his stolen inheritance and the death of his Catalan adopted father. He survives, mysteriously, through the influence of high ranking patricians. He never removes his mask and has sworn to reclaim his wealth. Noble Catarina Contarini has a sad tale to tell. Her husband's death weighs upon her and so too, do the scandalous accusations that have been raised against him. In her grief, she confides in Antonio and reveals her shocking secrets. But Catarina's darkest secret concerns a witch; a Napoletana named Magdalena. Antonio is drawn ever closer to the magnetic Magdalena. He unveils the truth behind the merchants' murders and comes face to face with a machination of monstrous evil. Through this fascinating Magdalena, an enchanter of admirals and merchants alike, Antonio begins to realize that his true quest is one he could never have imagined. Weaving historical mystery and the supernatural, *The Mascherari* evokes a Venice that will leave your breathless.

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