

READING GROUP GUIDE

1. Early in the novel, Celia is faced with the difficult decision of giving up the stage name she's been trying to establish to take the lead role in *Il Prezzo*. Do you think she made the right decision? Would you have made the same decision?
2. As he guides her around Venice, Rupert tells Celia that he is giving her memories because "you only see anything once for the first time." Where else in the story do you see the importance of first impressions? Were there any moments in which a first impression was misleading? Did you have any impressions of the characters that changed as the story unfolded?
3. Even though Celia is attracted to Alex, she is hesitant to spend time with him for fear of behaving like her mother. In the novel, the author presents the idea that the sins of the parents affect the child; this is also the reason that Galeazzo D'Ascanio will not let the truth about Celia the First's death be known. Is Celia's attempt to distance herself from her mother successful? Is it necessary? Where else do you see the sins of the parents influencing their children?

4. Galeazzo D'Ascanio stole precious items from the Casetta Fiorita and brought them to Il Piacere, only to have many of these items stolen again. Arguably none of these parties were legitimate owners because the treasures had originally been stolen by the Crusaders. Alex tells Celia: "No one owns things like that. They're passing through time, and we're only custodians, really." Do you agree with him? Could the same be argued for Il Piacere?
5. Alex D'Ascanio has difficulty identifying with his heritage because he is both Italian and English. His dual heritage causes him to feel out of place. Do you think that he embodies one identity more than the other? Is it necessary for him to choose one? Have you ever had a similar issue with your own identity?
6. Family relationships, traditional or not, are very prevalent in this story. Celia was not raised by her own parents but by Rupert and Bryan, with whom she has no blood ties. Alex grew up without his mother but with a distant father and loving grandmother. What does this say about the concept of family? Does one need to be related by blood to be considered family?
7. Alex's two dogs, Max and Nero, are often used in the story as a way of revealing the characters' natures. What does the dogs' presence tell us about Daniela, Poppy, Alex, Bryan, and Celia?
8. How did the inclusion of scenes in the past revealing Galeazzo and Celia the First's story affect your reading?

Are there parallels between events that took place at Il Piacere in the past and in the present? Are there parallels between characters from the past and those of the present?

9. What do you think is the significance of the novel's title? *Season of Storms* was also the title of the poetry collection Galeazzo wrote for Celia the First; why did he choose that title? Where else in the story do you see storms symbolically?
10. Were you surprised upon learning the truth behind Celia the First's disappearance? Was Galeazzo wrong to handle her death as he did, even if it was an attempt to protect his son?
11. In the epilogue, Celia states that she gave her son a name "that's all his own." Would you have done the same in her position? Is there anything wrong with naming a child after someone?
12. Celia wonders if a room can absorb the energies of those who lived in them and hopes that Celia the First's talents will rub off on her. Do you think that Celia gained some of the talent or character of Celia the First? Is it possible for Celia the First's energy to still be in that room?
13. Celia has the habit of assigning Shakespearean characters to the people she meets. What literary character, Shakespearean or otherwise, would you assign to Celia? To yourself?