



## Antonio's Wife

By Jacqueline DeJohn  
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### Introduction

Set in New York in 1908, *Antonio's Wife* abounds with life, from the rich traditions and passionate dreams of immigrants who come in search of opportunities, to the glamorous world of opera, to the seedy underbelly of the city.

Francesca Frascatti, world-renowned opera diva, has come to America to find her daughter, whom she left in the care of another woman as she fought to put her past behind her on the road to stardom. Hot on her trail is the child's grandfather, a ruthless nobleman who denied the love between Frascatti and his son. Frascatti is aided in the search for her daughter by a handsome detective named Dante who poses as her lover. Mina DiGianni, a newly married Italian immigrant with high hopes for her life but an abusive husband, becomes Frascatti's seamstress, and the two women become friends. Mina fights her feelings as she falls in love with Dante, while her own unfaithful husband plots with his cunning

mistress to sell his wife for a large sum of money. You will not be able to put this book down until knowing the outcome of the intertwining stories of Mina and Francesca.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Mina tires to remain faithful to her marriage vows in spite of the abuse she suffers from Antonio. How have expectations for married women changed since the turn of the century?
2. What is the significance of the lace metaphor used throughout the novel? In what way is life like a piece of lace?
3. Dante and Mina come from different worlds. Mina fears she will have nothing to offer Dante. What attributes build a loving relationship?
4. Does God intervene in the lives of human beings? How much of life is predetermined by birth and life choices? What role does destiny play?
5. Why did the author choose to refer to Mina as Antonio's wife? Is this a good title for the novel or would another title have been a better choice?
6. "Sangue ' sangue ' mai acqua, Blood is blood and never water." Francesca says. What value does biological relationship bring to a loving relationship? Do we love someone more because they are "our blood?"
7. What role does violence play in advancing the plot? Is society more or less violent than at the turn of the century?
8. Each character in *Antonio's Wife* is playing a role and not behaving authentically. Do you think the author was trying to make a comment about life in general or just using a clever plot device?
9. Arranged marriages were common for centuries. Couples "learned to love one another" and divorce was difficult to obtain. In what ways might arranged marriage be beneficial to the growth of individuals and the concept of love?
10. "The past, the future- they're illusions. There is only this moment, this reality." Dante says at the end of Chapter 30. How does practicing this philosophy allow happiness to enter Francesca's and Mina's lives?
11. Kathleen and Antonio are raw, hard, realistic characters who face life's struggles head on and take no quarter. What causes them to ignore the feelings of others and seek only their own ambitions? Are they evil because of their lack of compassion for others?