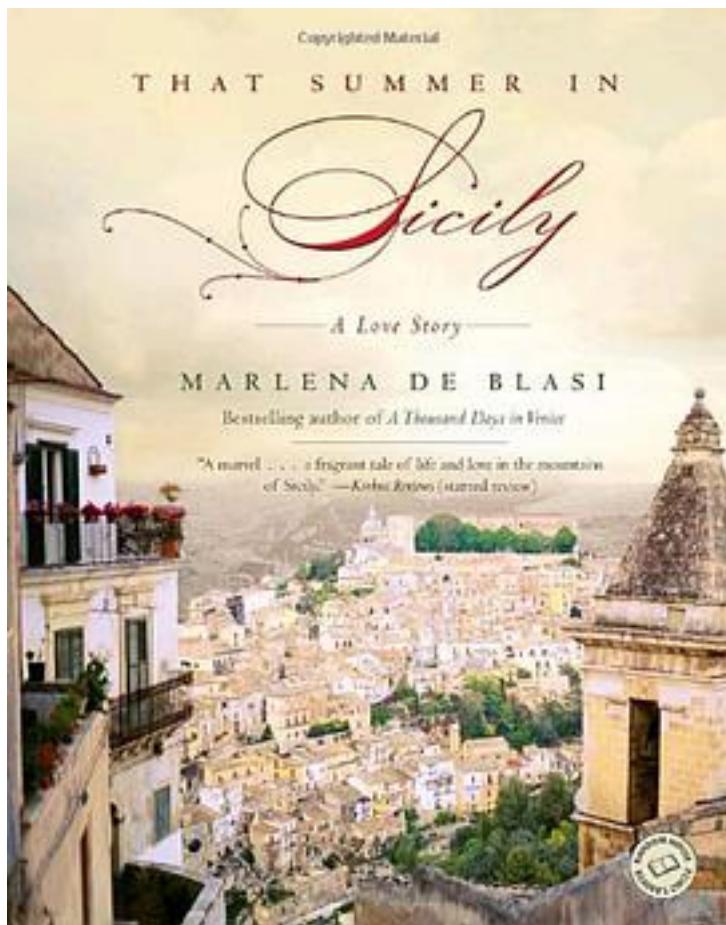


That Summer in Sicily



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著者:de Blasi, Marlena

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"From de Blasi (The Lady in the Palazzo, 2007, etc.), a fragrant tale of life and love in the mountains of Sicily. Shortly after the Venetian interlude she luxuriously captured in A Thousand Days in Venice (2002), the author accepted an assignment to write a magazine article on the interior regions of Sicily. Like many other journalists, she was

met by silence from the wary Sicilians. She was about to retire to the mainland when she stumbled upon Villa Donnafugata, whose romantic turrets, towers, balconies and chromatically tiled roof were surrounded by gardens, fields, piazzas and hills. The black-draped, oldish women in residence tended to their various labors, chanted, laughed and prayed. The sun was hot, the smell of herbs suffused the air. Was this a fever dream? de Blasi wondered. No, but it was surely a place from another time, and how it emerged out of feudalism through an act of moral modernity was a story unfurled to the author by the villa's mistress, Tosca. The tale, which comprises most of the book, is a marvel. As a child of nine or ten, Tosca was sent by her horse-breeder father to live with a Sicilian prince, Leo, who "had a stallion that Tosca's father wanted more than his daughter." Early rebellion gave way to affection, then love. Together, in the years following World War II, the prince and his ward brought education, health care and a shared sense of purpose to the village around their manor. Rapture and grief came in measured doses, but ultimately Leo was run out of town for his affront to the "centuries' -old system of hierarchy that kept the wealthy in comfort and the poor in misery." Even in 1995, when de Blasi first visited Donnafugata, the old ways abided, like the shawl Tosca wore at night, still permeated with the scent of her beloved. Swift, sinuous, deep and brimming with cultural artifacts."

-Kirkus Reviews

"Strangers seldom wander into the mountainous wild at Sicily's heart. The locals, having resisted repeated waves of invaders, maintain their own traditions in defiance of the outside world. So when de Blasi and her Venetian husband trek into Sicily's core in search of background for a travel guide, they discover a world much removed from modern life. Persevering in what seems a fruitless search, they finally stumble upon the Villa Donnafugata, an old wreck of a castle presided over by an imperious woman called Tosca. The villa has become a refuge for widows from the region. It also houses a birthing clinic, vital to the mountains' isolated women. The residents eat well and heartily, the leftovers distributed to the local town's poor. De Blasi uncovers Tosca's past, an extraordinary tale of passion and love stretching over decades of the twentieth century. Admirers of this author will relish her latest volume."

- BOOKLIST

"At villa Donnafugata, long ago is never very far away," writes bestselling author Marlena de Blasi of the magnificent if somewhat ruined castle in the mountains of Sicily that she finds, accidentally, one summer while traveling with her husband, Fernando. There de Blasi is befriended by Tosca, the patroness of the villa, an elegant and beautiful woman-of-a-certain-age who recounts her lifelong love story with the last prince of Sicily descended from the French nobles of Anjou.

Sicily is a land of contrasts: grandeur and poverty, beauty and sufferance, illusion and candor. In a luminous and tantalizing voice, *That Summer in Sicily* re-creates Tosca's life, from her impoverished childhood to her fairy-tale adoption and initiation into the glittering life of the prince's palace, to the dawning and recognition of mutual love. But when Prince Leo attempts to better the lives of his peasants, his defiance of the local Mafia's grim will to maintain the historical imbalance between the haves and the have-nots costs him dearly.

The present-day narrative finds Tosca sharing her considerable inherited wealth with a harmonious society composed of many of the women—now widowed—who once worked the prince's land alongside their husbands. How the Sicilian widows go

about their tasks, care for one another, and celebrate the rituals of a humble, well-lived life is the heart of this book.

Showcasing the same writerly gifts that made bestsellers of *A Thousand Days in Venice* and *A Thousand Days in Tuscany*, *That Summer in Sicily*, and de Blasi's marvelous storytelling, remind us that in order to live a rich life, one must embrace both life's sorrow and its beauty. Here is an epic drama that takes readers from Sicily's remote mountains to chaotic post-war Palermo, from the intricacies of forbidden love to the havoc wreaked by Sicily's eternally bewildering culture.

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