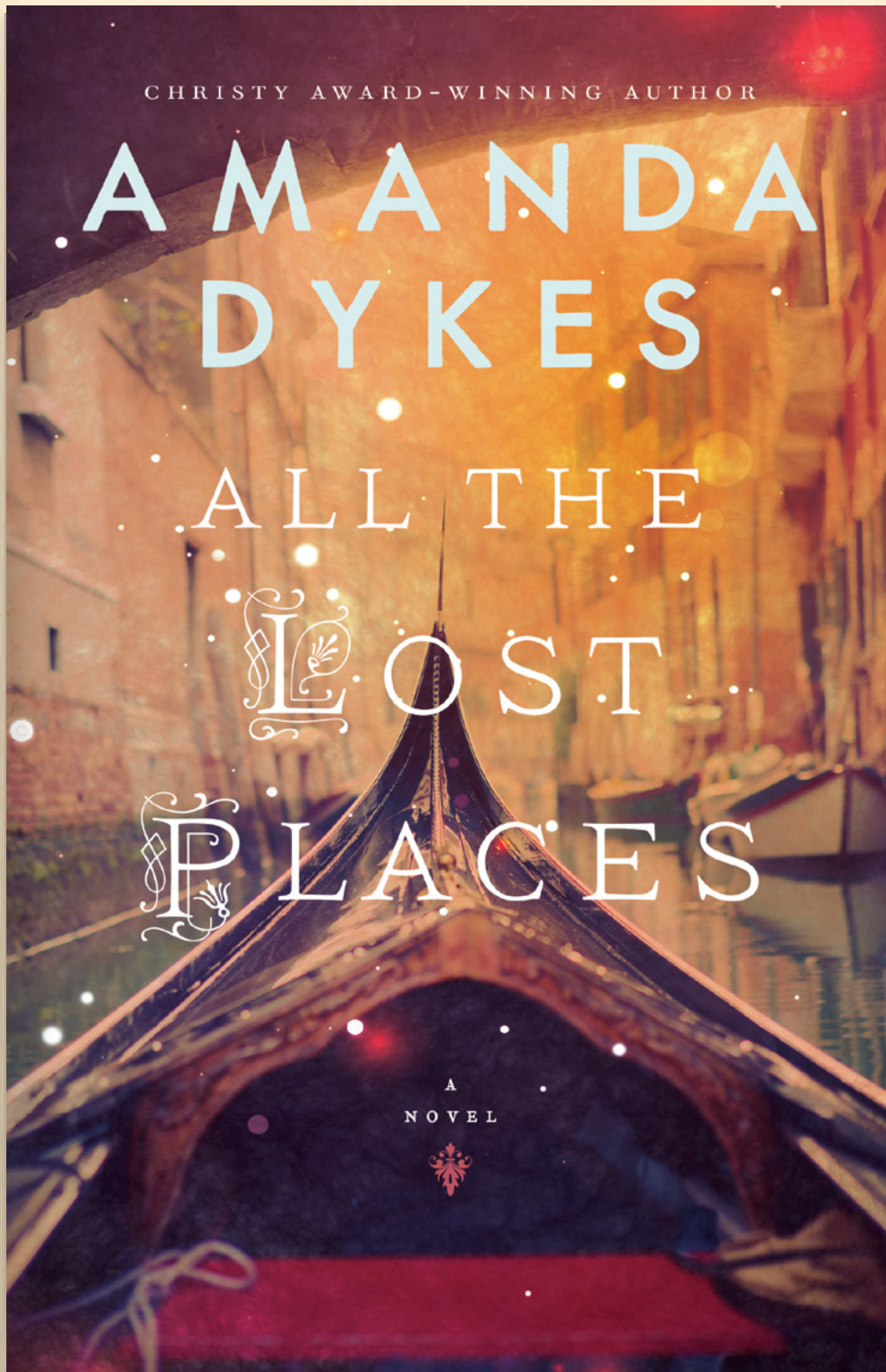


BOOK CLUB KIT



DEAR BOOK CLUB LEADER,

Across the world, an enchanted land of secrets and stories appears to float, anchoring its impossible beauty into unseen places beneath. A place where water laps upon aged bricks, and bridges swing shadows over the canals as the Adriatic sun makes its daily crossing. Where bells ring and windows gleam. Where art, architecture, theatre, and music flood life with breathtaking beauty.

But to me, the real showstopper is this: All of that breathtaking beauty was built upon a swamp. Long ago, out of sheer desperation, exiles fled to the very last place they could think of, the only place where their relentless enemies might not follow: a disease-ridden, insect-inhabited swamp. A place where there was not even land enough to build, and they had to drive piles down into the muck to create little islands and therein find—at last—a home.

Those islands grew until they were a network of stitched-together plots of piles, bridged here and there. Over the years, this cobbled and plucky land grew into a powerful, beautiful republic.

Venice.

Venice began as a “lost place”—a place no one dared to venture until they were desperate. Venice, whose tale arrived in a time of obscurity in the 1800s where, as the pages of this story say, one dark night a baby was found floating in a basket upon those lifesaving canals.

All the Lost Places unfolds from that night, ushering readers into a story of many things. One of those things . . . is family. What it means to belong, to have a place of safety, to know and be known.

I picture Sebastien in Pietro’s workshop, surrounded by his beloved guild who are flinging this and that at him in preparation for the masquerade.

I picture Mariana at her Alpen window, tracing pictures in the frost and longing for a brother who is far away.

I picture that faraway brother and his lifelong strivings to accomplish, to deliver, to be someone.

And I picture the swamp-turned-city and the eternal story that echoes around every shadowed turn, into every hidden place.

I hope as you and your own beloved book club consider reading and discussing *All the Lost Places*, it might be a place to delight together as a book club family, in the shared gift of books (Vittoria would give anything to be at your meeting!), and a place to consider together the hidden gems of “lost” places. I think when we lean in and look hard, there are more than we ever imagined.

Thank you, with all my heart, for reading.

Trovato,

Amanda



RECIPES

FRITOLE

VENETIAN-STYLE CARNEVALE DONUTS

¼ cup milk

1 large egg

¾ cup self-rising flour

¼ cup caster sugar or baker's sugar (finer than granulated sugar, not as fine as powdered sugar. If you can't find this, you can put granulated sugar in the food processor for a minute or two—but be aware it might make a cloud of sweetness in the air! If you don't mind a grainier end result, you can simply use regular granulated sugar as a replacement.)

Pinch of salt

Zest from half an orange

1 large peeled, cored, and grated apple

Optional: ¼ cup to ½ cup raisins, soaked

Powdered sugar, for dusting

vegetable oil, for frying

Whisk egg and milk, set aside. In a separate mixing bowl, mix flour, sugar, and salt. Add the milk and egg mixture, stirring until mixed. Fold in orange zest and grated apple. The batter should be the consistency of cake batter. Add milk or flour to adjust consistency if needed.

Heat vegetable oil (2–3 inches deep, to cover fritole) in medium-high heat in a saucepan. Using a cookie dough scooper or two spoons, drop approx. 2-inch balls of mixture into the oil. Don't worry if they don't retain their shape; it's part of the charm! Cook about 4–5 at a time.

Cook for about a minute on each side, until golden brown. To test doneness, open one to see if it's cooked through. Place on a paper towel to drain.

Dust with powdered sugar just before serving and serve warm if possible. Enjoy!





8 oranges

½ cups heavy
whipping cream

⅔ cup sugar (more
or less to taste)

Splash of vanilla

SORBETTO DI ARANCE


FROSTED ORANGES

Slice the top of each orange off and scoop out the flesh. Leave the peel intact (you'll be filling it again later).

Remove any seeds from the flesh, then blend the orange flesh with the remaining ingredients until creamy.

Fill the orange peels back up with the orange cream, then freeze for at least 8 hours before serving.

Serve with a spoon.



1 lb small shrimp, tails
off, deveined

Juice of 1 lemon

3 ⅓ cups milk

8 cups water

3 ½ cups cornmeal

2 bunches chopped
parsley

Extra virgin olive oil

Salt

Pepper

SCHIE CON LA POLENTA

SHRIMP WITH POLENTA

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Add shrimp boil for 2 minutes. Drain, then drizzle with lemon juice.

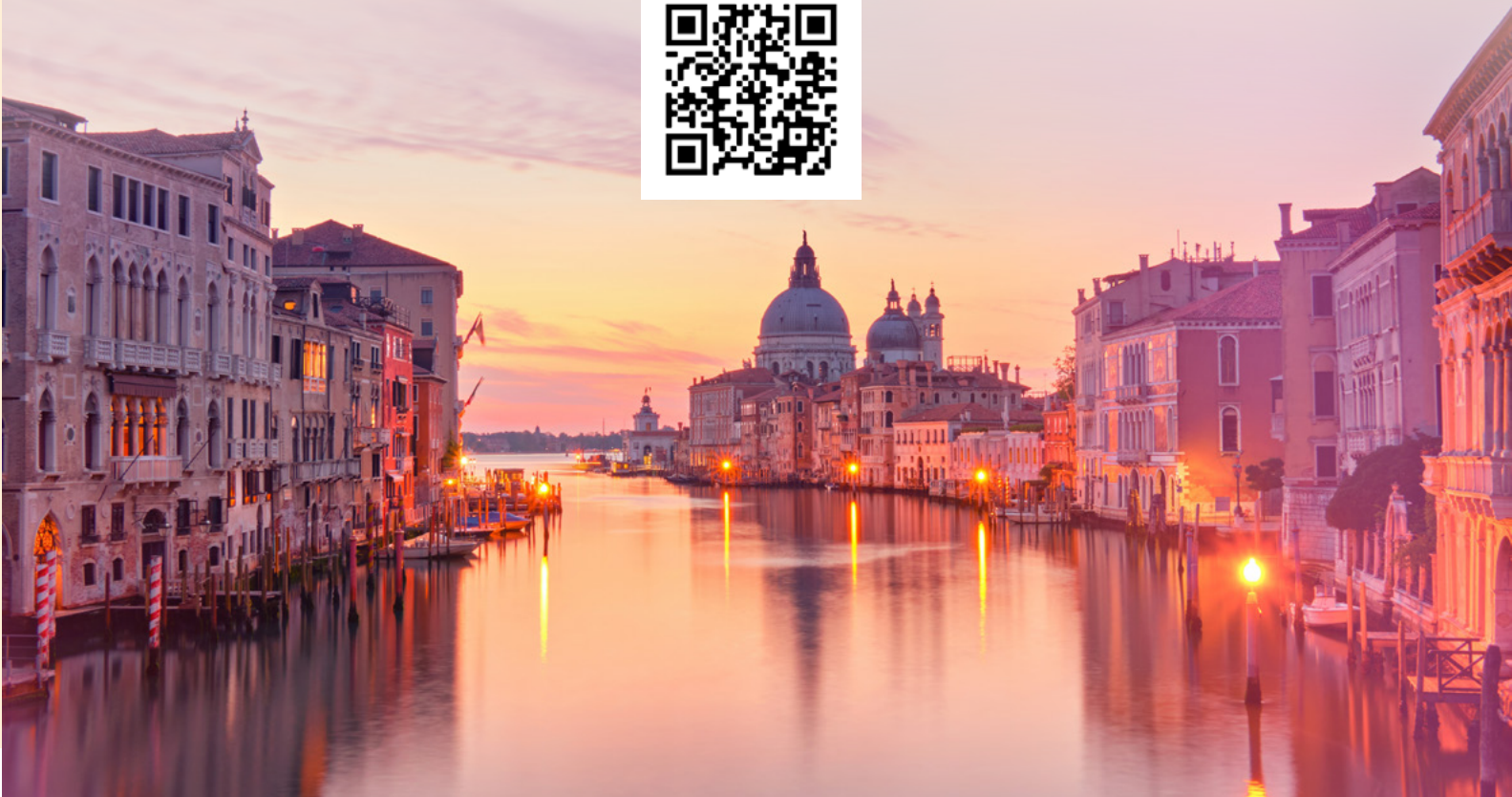
For polenta: Boil milk and water. Pour in cornmeal, reduce heat to low. Cook until thickened but still slightly fluid, about 30 minutes, stirring constantly.

Place the polenta mixture in a serving dish and spread shrimp on top. Top with chopped parsley, a drizzle of olive oil, and salt and pepper to taste.

VIRTUAL TOUR OF VENICE

Take an 8-minute virtual tour through *La Serenissima* with this video:

[\(257\) Venice in 4K - YouTube](#)





MOSAIC ACTIVITY

In the book, the monk who is doing the slow and careful work of a mosaic describes his project like this:


“So I come, in the dark, to piece together things of hope from things of destruction.”

The author’s note says,

“Do you know the difference between a shattered vessel and a mosaic? It is only in the hands who hold the pieces—hands that can make something broken into something beautiful. Give shape to sharp edges and form to the found.”

Consider creating a mosaic as you discuss the book at your meeting. Each person could create their own, or you could work collectively on one and draw a winner for it at the end of the night, or you could place it in a community garden for others to enjoy.

Most arts and crafts stores carry mosaic stepping-stone kits ([here is one example](#)) that might provide a fun hands-on project for your time together.



DISCUSSION GUIDE

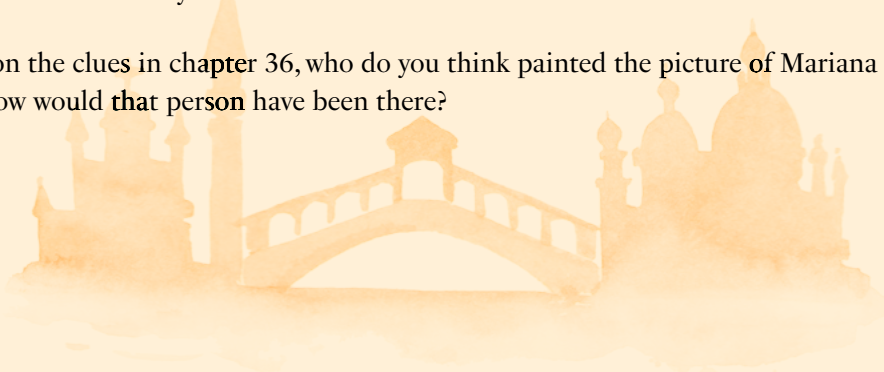
- 1) Discuss Dante's words at the end of the story about price versus worth:
"The question is not the price of a man," he said. "That has already been paid. The question . . . is that of a man's worth. His value. Not quantum . . . but precium."

What do you think the difference between *price* and *worth* is? How might this have spoken to Daniel as he uncovered this tale?

- 2) Sebastien is deeply moved by the statue of Moses, with Aaron and Hur holding up Moses's arms in battle:
"He knew something of this story—what it was to be caught up by those around. To be held up as the world crumbled beneath you, and to be strengthened for the very thing you were made to do . . . all because of the hands of others. Elena. Dante. Pietro. Valentina. Giuseppe. They had gripped him, reared him, pulled him from waters, pulled him up from mire."

Have you experienced the gift of being "held up" by others? How and when?

- 3) In what other ways does Sebastien's life echo that of Moses?
- 4) What do you think the symbolism might be of Sebastien holding the former Doge's scepter out to Massimo as a means of rescue in the last scene?
- 5) What do you make of Massimo?
- 6) Dante and Elena have a few interchanges on page. Do you think they could have a future together?
- 7) What do you think about Daniel witnessing the crafting of a mosaic in the refectory, right beneath the giant blank canvas where a work of art once stood?
- 8) If you visited Venice and had to choose between:
(a) exploring the canals for the day in a gondola, or
(b) hopping from island to island in the outer lagoon isles and exploring,
which would you choose?
- 9) When Sebastien became the boatman in the House of Fedele, what do you suppose he and Mariana wrote in the letters they slid under each other's doors?
- 10) Based on the clues in **chapter** 36, who do you think painted the picture of Mariana at the masquerade? How would **that** person have been there?



- 11) Mariana tells Pietro's grandchildren that she would love nothing more than to be a mother someday. Having read the story, you know that this was one of Mariana's "lost places"—something that never happened for her. And yet in her lost place, she poured her love for children into books for generations to come and changed the lives of countless people, including the son of one of those children who was there when she confided her dream.

What do you think she would feel if she could see the fruits of what she poured her lost dream into?

- 12) Vittoria says to Daniel, "You are always a mystery. One has to work to invite your words up. Build a staircase with questions, that they might climb out. I . . . am like a floodgate that has lost its gate. A flood of words!"

Which description do you relate to more? Or are you somewhere in between?

- 13) Contrast the concept of rebuilding "Com'era, Dov'era."—As it was, where it was—with the concept of a mosaic artist. The monk who lays mosaics in the story explains it like this: "Mosaic . . . it is the art of empty spaces. Broken things, harvested as treasure and pieced together into something entirely . . . different. Old, but new. Broken, but whole."

What are the differences between Mosaic and Com'era, Dov'era? And what can we learn from them?

- 14) Compare and contrast Daniel to both Massimo and Sebastien. What things did he share with each of the men who came before him? What do you think he learned from each of them as he translated their story?
- 15) Consider lives who have come before you and influenced or taught you, either in history or through personal connection. How do you hope your own life might touch others?





FINAL INVITATION

As a book club, may I invite you to watch the sunset together?

I know you've seen it before. You've probably been awestruck by it before! But that's the beautiful thing about sunsets—you can never see the same one twice. Each one is a living, moving tapestry of clouds, light, weather, and sky.

When I was writing *All the Lost Places*, I was blown away by this thought:

Genesis tells us a breathtakingly majestic account of the world's creation. Considering what we know about the water cycle (evaporation, condensation, precipitation), this very feasibly means that whenever you are looking at a lake, the ocean, or a rainstorm . . . you could be looking at those very Genesis waters. You could be looking at waters that have been all over the world—to places you've visited, places you've dreamed of visiting.

And what are clouds but an airborne body of water, made of water molecules?

That means that when you watch the sunset tonight, it is those ancient waters forming the clouds. Genesis waters. Waters that have born up ships and baskets, been split in two and tempest tossed. Waters that have been rain, have been crystalline snow . . . They are now the sky's canvas, being ignited by the light of a faraway star.

The sunset is a display of pretty colors, yes. . . but when you think of it like that, it becomes so much more.

Go watch it and be prepared to have your breath taken away. Perhaps while you discuss the questions in this packet, perhaps while you indulge in the *fritole* that the guild was eating when we first met them on page . . . or perhaps while you simply sit together and take it in.

Ciao!

Ciao: Word of Venetian origin. Traditional word of parting signifying “good-bye,” but in its origins, meaning “your servant.”

