



The Figaro Murders: A Novel

Laura Lebow

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In 1786 Vienna, Lorenzo Da Ponte is the court librettist for the Italian Theatre during the height of the enlightened reign of Emperor Joseph II. This exalted position doesn't mean he's particularly well paid, or even out of reach of the endless intrigues of the opera world. In fact, far from it.

One morning, Da Ponte stops off at his barber, only to find the man being taken away to debtor's prison. Da Ponte impetuously agrees to carry a message to his barber's fiancée and try to help her set him free, even though he's facing pressures of his own. He's got one week to finish the libretto for *The Marriage of Figaro* for Mozart before the opera is premiered for the Emperor himself.

Da Ponte visits the house where the barber's fiancée works—the home of a nobleman, high in the Vienna's diplomatic circles—and then returns to his own apartments, only to be dragged from his rooms in the middle of the night. It seems the young protégé of the diplomat was killed right about the time Da Ponte was visiting, and he happens to be their main suspect. Now he's given a choice—go undercover into the household and uncover the murderer, or be hanged for the crime himself.

Brilliantly recreating the cultural world of late 18th century Vienna, the epicenter of the Enlightenment, Lebow brings to life some of the most famous figures of music, theatre, and politics.

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