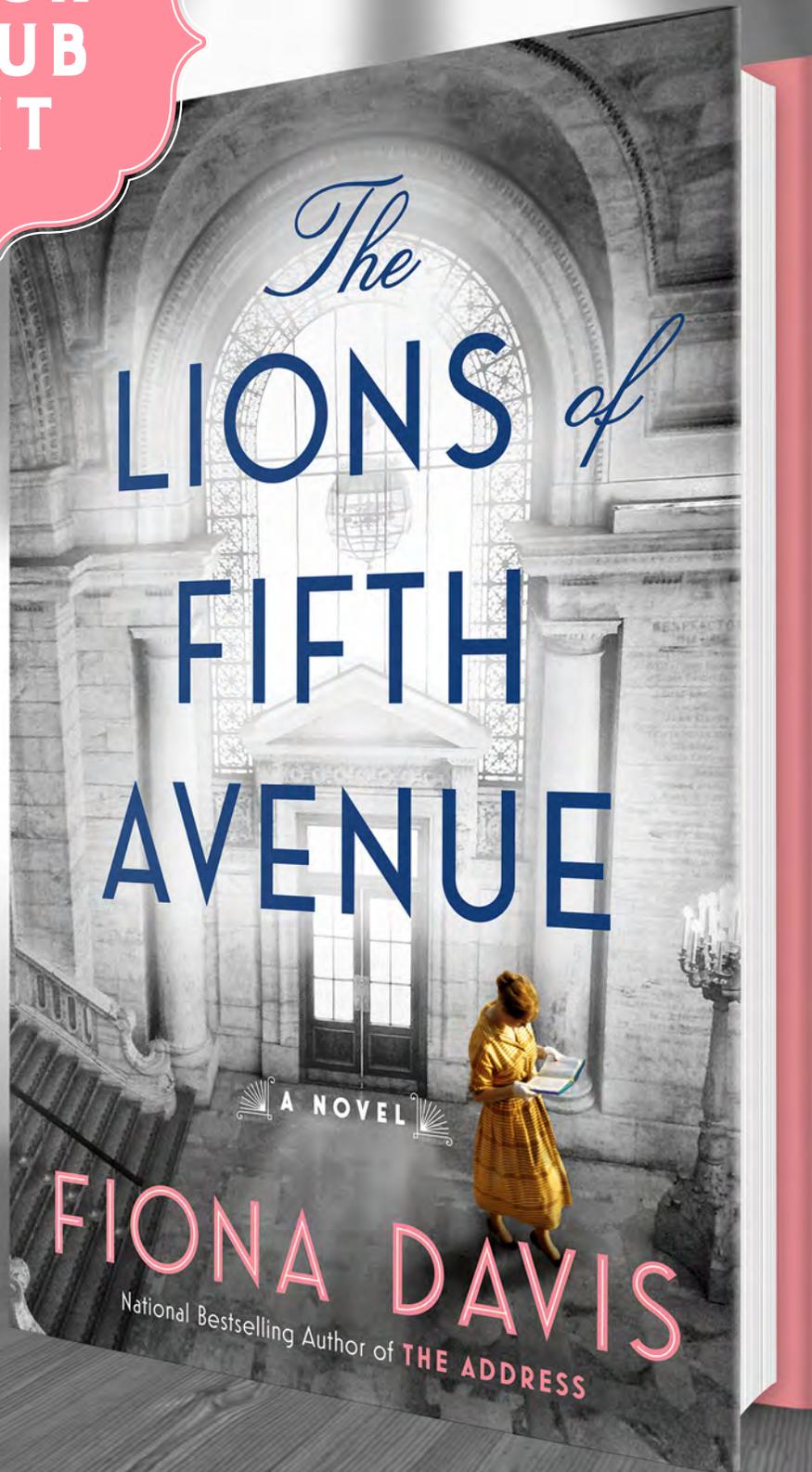


BOOK
CLUB
KIT





A NOTE TO READERS

As I've traveled around the country the past few years giving author talks, readers joyously offered up ideas for landmark settings for my books. One suggestion kept popping up, over and over: the New York Public Library.

My own love affair with libraries started as a child. We moved around a lot, but there was one constant, no matter what state we lived in—once a week we'd head to the library and check out books. My mother would hit the latest releases, my brother would disappear into the science fiction section, and I would scour the shelves for anything about horses or by Judy Blume.

I moved to New York after college, and at first, the main branch of the library seemed daunting. It was enormous, filled with tourists, and buzzing with energy. Soon enough it became my go-to place for research, because almost any question could be answered there, with the help of the indefatigable librarians. As I started working on *The Lions of Fifth Avenue*, I was lucky enough to get a desk in the Allen Room, which is reserved for authors with book contracts. Each week I'd check my assigned bookshelf and discover gems like a book on typhoid in the early 1900s, or a massive volume on the history of the very building I was sitting in. I read about the rise of the “New Woman” in archived issues of *Harper's Bazaar*, before getting sidetracked by a detailed account in the same magazine of the “barrel diet” of the early 1910s. (This involved crawling into an open barrel—preferably festooned with ribbons—and then rolling around one's bedroom until the pounds dropped off. Seriously.)

I was in writer heaven, I have to say.

I'm thrilled to be able to share this book, which is so dear to my heart, with you. It's about family and love and loss, and the importance of libraries to the community at large. I hope you enjoy it.

**HAPPY READING,
FIONA**

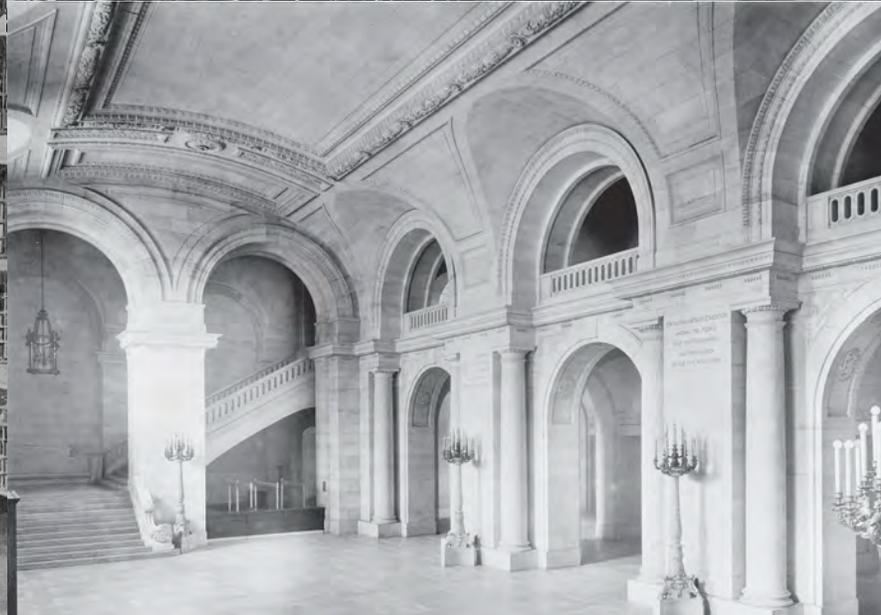


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Laura Lyons, despite her husband's protests, wants to be a wife, a mother, and a dedicated journalism student. Do you think women still face societal pressure today to only fill traditional roles? Do you think it's possible to "have it all"?
2. The NYPL is very important to both Laura and Sadie. Is the library important to you? What role do you think your local library plays in your community?
3. How does Sadie's character challenge stereotypes about librarians? Before reading this book, did you know the different roles they play in serving the public?
4. How did going to the Heterodoxy club change Laura? Do you see similar organizations at work today? What is the importance of having spaces where women can voice their opinions, stories, and plans for the future?
5. What do you think of how Laura handles the situation after she finds out the identity of the book thief?
6. Losing the only copy of his manuscript is a devastating blow to Jack. Do you think the act of burning the manuscript was justified? Why or why not? How do you think technology has changed the value we put on the written word?
7. In her note, Laura writes that "it was all ultimately her fault, that her own actions initiated a cascade of tragedies." Why do you think Laura believes she is responsible? Do you agree? Would things have been different if so much responsibility in the home didn't fall only to Laura?

Bottom left: The New York Public Library, glass negative depicting horse carriages and trolleys. (1908) Bottom right: Circulating department, American history section of the New York Public Library (1911)





Clockwise from left: A sectional view of the New York Public Library's Stacks (1911); New York City Public Library Reading Room (1911); Main Entrance Hall (between 1910 and 1920)

8. At the trial, Sadie argues for a harsher sentence for the book thief because what was stolen was more than a number of pages worth a certain amount, but “pieces of Western history and culture that have a dramatic impact . . . the loss of these items is a detriment to all of humanity.” Do you agree that the thief should receive a longer sentence? Given these items are priceless, do you think that locking them away is a viable solution? If not, why do you think it’s important for the public to have access to these items?

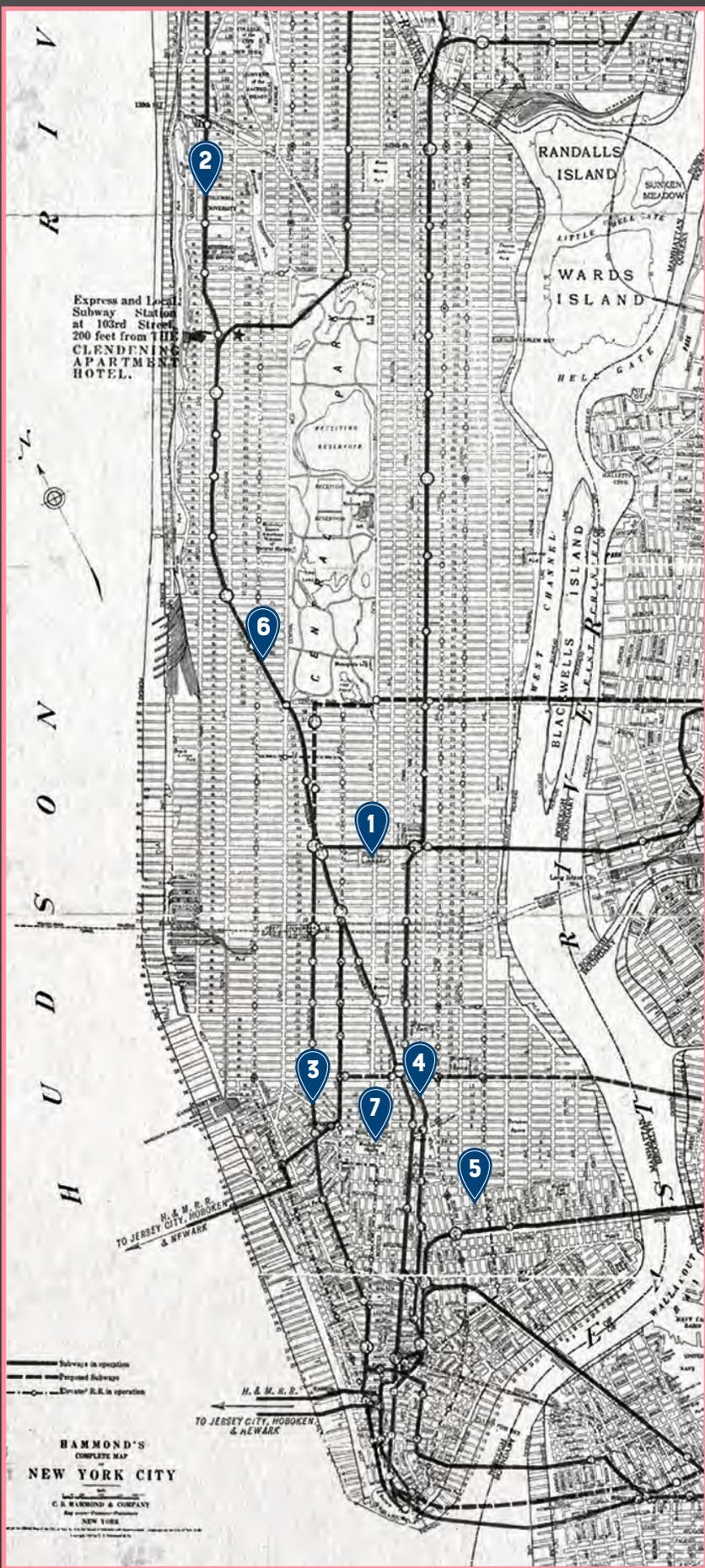
9. Why do you think Sadie was so closed off from people? In part, she used her grandmother’s life as a justification for her own. What do you think finding out about Laura’s real life did for Sadie?

10. Laura struggles with her conflicting commitments to school and the Heterodoxy club. Do you think she did the right thing? Would you have done the same? Why do you think it was important to the women of the Heterodoxy club to keep their discussions private? Why wouldn't they want their ideas disseminated?



The Lyons of Fifth Avenue tour of

NEW YORK CITY



Express and Local
Subway Station
at 103rd Street,
200 feet from THE
CLEDENING
APARTMENT
HOTEL.



1. NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
Home of the Lyons family

2. COLUMBIA JOURNALISM SCHOOL
Where Laura Lyons goes to journalism school

3. PATCHIN PLACE
Home of Dr. Amelia Potter

4. FORMER BOOK ROW
Where bookstores flourished from the 1890s to the 1960s.

5. FORMER LOCATION OF CBGB
Former location of the infamous club, where Sadie likes to let off steam.



6. LINCOLN CENTER
Where Sadie and Nick meet by the fountain.

7. FORMER LOCATION OF POLLY HALLIDAY'S RESTAURANT
Where the early meetings of the Heterodoxy Club were held.