



# The Secret of the Glass

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## **The Secret of the Glass** Donna Russo Morin

The Murano glassmakers of Venice are celebrated and revered. But now three are dead, killed for attempting to leave the city that both prized their work and kept them prisoner. For in this, the 17th century, the secret of their craft must, by law, never leave Venetian shores. Yet there is someone who keeps the secret while defying tradition. She is Sophia Fiolario, and she, too, is a glassmaker. Her crime is being a woman. . . Sophia is well aware that her family would be crushed by scandal if the truth of her knowledge and skill with glass were revealed. But there has never been any threat. . .until now. A wealthy nobleman with strong connections to the powerful Doge has requested her hand in marriage, and her refusal could draw dangerous attention. Yet having to accept and cease her art would devastate her. If there is an escape, Sophia intends to find it.

Now, between creating precious glass parts for one of Professor Galileo Galilei's astonishing inventions and attending lavish parties at the Doge's Palace, Sophia is crossing paths with very influential people--including one who could change her life forever. But in Venice, every secret has its price. And Sophia must decide how much she is willing to pay. Praise for Donna Russo Morin's *The Courtier's Secret*

"As opulent and sparkling as Louis XIV's court and as filled with intrigue, passion and excitement as a novel by Dumas. . .a feast for the senses." --"Romantic Times" (4 stars)

"Vivid, delightful, spirited. . .a page-turner as smooth as fine cognac."

Steven Manchester, author of "The Unexpected Storm"

"A wonderfully spun gem of a story." --"Armchair Reviews "

Reading Group Guide Inside"

## **The Secret of the Glass Details**

Date : Published March 1st 2010 by Kensington Publishing Corporation (first published 2010)

ISBN : 9780758226921

Author : Donna Russo Morin

Format : Paperback 408 pages

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# From Reader Review The Secret of the Glass for online ebook

## Penny Ramirez says

Ugh. There are many reasons why I don't much like historical fiction, and this book pretty much had them all. I guess it was 2.5 stars - I sort of liked parts of it. Far too much descriptive language - excessive descriptions of clothing and locations. Crappily edited grammar. Are there no editors on this planet anymore? Sigh.

Not exactly sure why this was considered in a romance contest - yes, there was a romance in the book, but it was by FAR not the main plot line, and only barely a HEA.

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## Heather says

It took to long to get me hooked. It was okay.

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## Laurie says

Kept getting distracted

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## Marie says

Donna Russo Morin tackles seventeenth century Venice in her newest novel, *The Secret of the Glass*. She writes of many underlying themes while she tells the story of Sophia, a girl who is doomed to marry a nobleman against her wishes. She is the eldest child of a glassmaking family, and as such, she is the only daughter that is allowed to marry, bringing with her the inheritance of the lucrative glass factory that has been in heritage for years. The remaining daughters will be forced to enter a convent once Sophia's sickly father dies. The story centers around this possibility, and the fact that Sophia wants nothing to do with her betrothed, Pasquale. Worse yet, her father who suffers from dementia has alluded to the fact that Pasquale's family has something damning to hide, but Sophia cannot approach her father with further questions. She instead decides to follow her betrothed to see if she can find out something about him, as he is not very talkative when they are together.

*The Secret of The Glass* carries with it the intrigue of the glassmaking process, and gives details about it as Sophia herself creates the pieces. That is a subject that would be damaging to the family if anyone found out the fact that it has been Sophia making the glass for so long, since it is against the law for women to do so. When Sophia is presented with the possibility of losing the ability to make the glass due to her betrothal, she decides to try and devise a way out. Along the way, she meets the dashing fellow, Teodoro, someone who is not allowed to marry, and they are instantly attracted to each other.

Beginning with the tradition of carnival time, the author slowly meanders her way through this story,

presenting details of Venice that are intended to bring Venice to life. Although I am normally very appreciative of historical detail, I was turned off by the many Italian words that were inserted. I had no inkling of what many of these words meant, and that really distracted my attention span, which in turn failed to pull me into the story. I would assume that those readers who love Venice and its allure may truly be entertained by the endless snippets of detail that the novel imparts. For this reader though, I felt the reading was sluggish for me, and that it was hard to become emotionally attached to Sophia or any of her supporting characters. Her characters were interesting enough, and I was surprised by one character's actions at the end of the novel, so much so that it was *too* out of character. With a story that focused mainly on the political atmosphere at the time, which was the most intriguing, it seemed that more things were happening around Sophia but not directly to her, which makes the events and plot seem a bit more simple while describing the book. I am particularly interested to see how others will review this book, especially by those who really adore Italy. Perhaps this one was too far out of my comfort zone of England-related reads for me to appreciate at this time.

That being said, I was particularly intrigued by the scenes that included Galileo, as it is told in the novel Sophia made the lenses for his first telescope, which was the central instrument for the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century. This in turn affected the political, social and religious controversy of the times, which was one of the themes incorporated into this novel. Those who believed in theories of the astronomer Copernicus were branded as heretics, and those who supported Galileo were therefore tottering on that same edge of heresy. Another interesting theme was the Pope versus the doge, with an important case of clerics which occurred in 1605 and who should have the authority to govern disputes. I was also touched by one theme of the high dowry and forced marriage situations at that time.

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### **Karielle at Books à la Mode says**

Blurb: The Murano glassmakers of Venice are celebrated and revered. But now three are dead, killed for attempting to leave the city that both prized their work and kept them prisoner. For in this, the 17th century, the secret of their craft must, by law, never leave Venetian shores. Yet there is someone who keeps the secret while defying tradition. She is Sophia Fiolario, and she, too, is a glassmaker. Her crime is being a woman -- Sophia is well aware that her family would be crushed by scandal if the truth of her knowledge and skill with glass were revealed. But there has never been any threat-until now. A wealthy nobleman with strong connections to the powerful Doge has requested her hand in marriage, and her refusal could draw dangerous attention. Yet having to accept and cease her art would devastate her. If there is an escape, Sophia intends to find it.

Now, between creating precious glass parts for one of Professor Galileo Galilei's astonishing inventions and attending lavish parties at the Doge's Palace, Sophia is crossing paths with very influential people--including one who could change her life forever. But in Venice, every secret has its price. And Sophia must decide how much she is willing to pay.

Is it just me, or was history class one of the most painful classes ever, in high school? It wasn't particularly hard, just...boring.

The Secret of the Glass by Donna Russo Morin is of the "historical fiction" genre. For me, reading historical novels was always the best part of history class. It became weary to have to read pages and pages of thick, heavy textbooks, and then sit through hours and hours of dull documentaries (though they were an easy method for me to catch up on my sleep), so being able to read something fictional, yet still relevant, was

always a sort of relief. Had I been given the chance to read *The Secrets of the Glass* in 10th grade Honors World History, I might have dreaded that course a little less. Otherwise, I couldn't quite get myself to enjoy this book.

Don't get me wrong, it's beautifully written. Morin pays such breathtaking attention to detail, and I swear, there wasn't one word that was used twice throughout the entire book. Aside from extensive vocabulary and amazing imagery however, the story lacked intrigue.

Sophia, the protagonist, is an entirely two-dimensional character. She's the most beautiful of the three Fiolario daughters, and the most innocent of them too. Her biggest concerns are 1) her father is suffering from dementia; 2) she is betrothed to a man she despises, Pasquale da Fuligna; 3) she is in "love" with another man, Teodoro Gradenigo; and 4) she is the only woman in the world who knows the art of glassmaking. But because Sophia was such an unrealistic and unmoving character, I couldn't find myself feeling sympathetic for her at all. First of all, she practically bawled every time her father blanked out. Every so often, he would forget everything, everyone, and the doctors said he was losing his mind to age. Sophia is supposed to be the practical goody-good virgin; she's not doing anything practical or goody-good by crying for her father's disease. It was painful for me to read about such babyish behavior. Secondly, Morin made it clear that Sophia must marry da Fuligna, a man who is neither rich, nor handsome in any way. I actually laughed at this a little; surely the Fiolario family must have had the tiniest ounce of dignity. Why they would marry their eldest daughter off to a man who neither loved their daughter, nor had anything to offer, I'll be darned. And of course, Teodoro. Ah. He was probably the only character in the book I could imagine without giggling or wincing. Handsome, charming, polite...what a gentleman. So much of gentleman to Sophia actually, that within first meeting him, she declared to herself that she was in love with him. Chemistry? Nooo, who needs chemistry when you have love at first sight (even though you're already engaged)?

Morin was clearly attempting to weave an intricate plot with complicated details, but for some reason, the two didn't mix. *The Secret of the Glass* made out for a really, really interesting textbook. I could have written my essay on Roman Studies with just this book, in the 10th grade. But as a novel, it was weak and had difficulty capturing my attention.

I understand that this book was written because of an initial passion Donna Russo Morin held for Italian glassworks...a little too big of a passion, perhaps? I mean, the first paragraph of the book is an epic simile where glassblowing is compared to the reaching of an orgasm. I thought I was a fan of the hot and sweaty stuff until I read those few lines.

Most historical romances are romance novels with little tidbits of the respective history thrown in; *The Secret of the Glass* was an informative description with tidbits of respective romance thrown in. If you're into that kind of stuff, this book will enchant you. But if you're like me and require more fiction than fact, then Morin's story may bore you to tears.

Radical Rating: 6 hearts- Would recommend to people. ♥♥♥♥♥♥

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## **Romancing the Book says**

Review by Stephanie

The Murano glassmakers of Venice are celebrated and revered. But now three are dead, killed for attempting to leave the city that both prized their work and kept them prisoner. For in this, the 17th century, the secret of their craft must, by law, never leave Venetian shores. Yet there is someone who keeps the secret while defying tradition. She is Sophia Fiolario, and she, too, is a glassmaker. Her crime is being a woman --Sophia is well aware that her family would be crushed by scandal if the truth of her knowledge and skill with glass were revealed. But there has never been any threat-until now. A wealthy nobleman with strong connections to the powerful Doge has requested her hand in marriage, and her refusal could draw dangerous attention. Yet having to accept and cease her art would devastate her. If there is an escape, Sophia intends to find it.

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Rating: six out of ten. Would I recommend? Sure. Enthusiastically? Eh...

<http://www.romancing-the-book.com/201...>

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## **Amber says**

The over use of simile was a stabbing annoyance throughout this book. Some flowed beautifully with the story but most jolted me out of the narrative every time they made an appearance. These occurred when a modification of the same sentence would have flowed better. They also did not quite fit into the narrative, evoking imagery that really had nothing to do with the scene and did not add any value to it.

A few examples:

Hidden deep within its bowels, like the putrid and grotesque underbelly of a beautiful mythological creature, were rooms of imprisonment and unspeakable torture. (85-86)

Like loved ones separated for a time, they stared at each other with the tenderness of reunion. (149)

Like hushed ghosts haunting the house, the women glided silently along the narrow passageway to the master's bedchamber. (230-231)

Like a graceful dance, he lowered her until she sat on the cushioned ground, Teodoro kneeling by her side. (311-312)

Like the unscrupulous assassin in the instant the soldier blinks his eye, he penetrated her defenses. (327)

Like the lonesome call of the mournful seagulls, wrenching sobs echoed down from above. (329)

There was not as much glassmaking as I would have liked and the "secret" was a vague entity. I cannot fault the author for that, as even today, one has to be a Venetian glassmaker to truly know the secret of the glass.

I did like many parts of the book but the inappropriate use of simile in many places, as well as the ending, did not sit well with me.

Now, because I am so perplexed by some of the book, I have to introduce a spoiler alert. If you have read this book, please keep reading let me know what you thought of the following events. If you have not read this book and do not want to know part of what happens, stop reading now!

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The main character, Sophia Fiolario, finds herself forced into a betrothal with a nobleman named Pasquale da Fuligna, who is equally uninterested in her. Unanswered questions remained by the end of the novel such as what Sophia's father wanted to tell her about da Fuligna but never had the chance to, and what Sophia was hoping to find out with all of her sneaking around. Also, there is a twist at the end that I do not understand at all. Maybe I am daft when it comes to the last chapter, but the resolution seems shaky. If da Fuligna ends up helping Sophia and her family get away, and by doing so, breaks their betrothal, then why do they need to leave at all? The only reason they were leaving once her father died was to escape da Fuligna because her marriage to him would mean her exile to Padua and the rest of her family's exile to a convent. If da Fuligna was so willing in the end to break the betrothal, then Sophia and her family could have stayed in their home, had a bit more closure with Zeno Fiolario's death, and Sophia could have married Teodoro, who would have allowed her to continue making the glass and her family would be better off.

Overall, I did like the book, but the similes and the unfortunate end that did not need to happen after all left a bitter taste in my mouth.

The original review can be found [here](#).

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### **Laura says**

I just could not get into this book--the author uses far too many unnecessary adjectives and forced metaphors.

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### **Jeannie Mancini says**

Donna Russo Morin's second historical novel "The Secret of the Glass" takes place in 17th century Venice among the courts and canals of Le Serenissima's Island of Murano. For centuries Murano has been renowned



for the gorgeous and shimmering glass it creates. Many families have taught generation after generation, the secret of glass making, a secret forbidden to leave the island.

With polished writing and a penchant for historical detail, Morin tells her story of young Sophia, daughter of Murano's best glassmaker, who in secret has learned the art of glassmaking from her father. Not a soul but they know that she is a proficient and talented artisan, and her knowledge must be kept in confidence. The Doge and politicians governing Venice forbid women to work the glass under threat of punishment, imprisonment or death. The author begins the story with Sophia's father developing dementia, causing his glassmaking hands to falter and no longer create. Worried for her family's future, Sophia works the glass in concealed operation by night, keeping the family shop profiting with no one to know but herself. A knock on the door one day surprises her, none other than the famed astronomer Galileo is requesting an unusual glass lens for a scientific invention he hopes to impress the Doge and his council with. Realizing she is up for the task, she agrees to the commission and manufactures the fragile work for him, producing Galileo's first set of telescopic lens.

Unfortunately for Sophia, with her father failing rapidly, her parents make a marriage match for her to a local noble. A man Sophia finds repulsive and arrogant. He has no promises of love, holds no respect or kindness for Sophia, and out and out informs her he is marrying her for the benefit of taking over the glassworks. In shock she is told that once wed, after her father has died, he will send her sisters and mother to a convent. Doing her family duty by acquiescing to this folly, she and her fiancé Pasquale begin to show face amidst the grand fete's and festivals as he properly courts her before marriage bands are set. Wishing a way out of her dilemma, Sophia is introduced to another handsome gentleman at one evenings event, and from this blooming friendship she finds the love of her life, as well as a dear friend with a plan to outwit Pasquale and to save Sophia's family livelihood.

Glamour and glitz, opulent parties and romantic gondola rides permeate the pages of this historical novel, setting the atmosphere for an alluring portrayal of Venice in the 1600s. Although I found the novel a bit long and drawn out and came across many boring sections, all and all it is an enjoyable read well told. Morin's writing style is very accomplished, her historical research allowed me a detailed view of the times, and her character development very endearing. I feel the short fall was within the plot itself. There were a lot pages for a very simple story that was not very complex, and I found it very predictable as it fell into the formula of most historical romance novels of this kind. Having Galileo make a cameo appearance will more than likely be the key interest for readers deciding to purchase the book or not, But I warn that his presence is scarce. Venice is one of my favorite locations to escape to when armchair traveling, and I felt the author did an exquisite job of taking me there, and presenting me with a fairytale Venice of the past.

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## **Bookworm says**

When author Donna Russo Morin contacted me about reading and reviewing her book *The Secret of the Glass*, I was tickled pink. Historical fiction is one of my favorite genres and I always enjoy delving into a story set in another time and place.

Set in Venice during the 17th century, *The Secret of the Glass* is a wonderfully woven story full of drama, romance and Venetian history.

Nineteen year old Sophia Fiolario comes from a family of glass makers, her father Zeno owns a successful glass making factory. Being the eldest of three daughters, Sophia has been taught how to make the glass and

she truly loves it. However, she works in secret with her father because it is illegal for women to work the glass.

The lovely Sophia is betrothed against her will to Pasquale da Fuligna, who is cold hearted and almost twice her age. She unwillingly consents to marry him, thinking of what will happen to her family once her father dies. If all goes as planned, her husband will inherit her fathers business and 'kindly' pay to put her two sisters in a nunnery.

When Sophia meets a handsome and kind stranger Teodoro Gradenigo, there is instant attraction. However, Teodoro is headed to the parish himself. His older brother is set to marry, leaving Teodoro with no other choice.

Teodoro and Sophia are soon unable to forget each other, but they know it is nearly impossible to be together. Sophia is on a mission to find out if her betrothed is up to something illegal so she can report him and hopefully save herself. To make matters worse, Sophia's father has been diagnosed with Dementia and his health is quickly declining.

Another interesting aspect to the story is Galileo Galilei and his famous invention, the telescope. He needs someone to make a special glass piece for it, and he hears the Fiolario's glass making factory is among the finest in Venice.

Author Donna Russo Morin obviously did her research and the result is a beautifully told story with vivid details of 17th century Venice and its history. I really felt swept up in the time period while I was reading.

I liked Sophia's character very much. She's a strong heroine, with a mind of her own trying to make it in a world where her options were limited. The relationship she had with Teodoro was really sweet. I wondered how their story would end.

I also enjoyed reading about the techniques used during glass making. It seemed that Sophia had a passion for it, and truly felt free while making beautiful glass creations. Sadly enough, she had to keep her love of working the glass a secret.

I loved how the story involved different aspects of Venice and its historical figures. Galileo is woven into the storyline seamlessly.

This was a great read and I highly recommend it to fans of Historical Fiction. There's an interesting plot, likable characters and wonderful writing within these pages.

read my full review here

<http://thebookworm07.blogspot.com/201...>

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## Allie says

I tend to really enjoy historical fiction that deals with a specific craft, especially crafts of artistic merit. Take *The Queen's Dollmaker* for example. I loved learning about the details of 18th century dollmaking and all the techniques involved in achieving what was then considered a masterpiece. The same thing goes for *The Secret of the Glass*. The aspect that intrigued me the most was the inclusion of the glassmaking process. Perhaps it is the artistic side of me or the intrinsic businesswoman from within, but I love reading about women with jobs (hidden or open) pre-1970.

The women's empowerment aspect is definitely a draw for me as well. Not only was Sophia a glassmaker, but she also practiced her craft in secret because women were not allowed to be glassmakers in the 17th century. In order to continue profiting generously from the lucrative trade of Murano glass so exclusive to Venice, the Venetian government had forbidden its glassmakers from leaving the island of Murano. Since her father Zeno had no sons to train in his intricate craft, he imparted his knowledge of glassmaking trade secrets on Sophia. In fact, because there were no male heirs among Sophia's family to carry on the family business, the glass factory would become part of Sophia's inheritance upon her father's death. This makes Sophia's secret even more difficult to hide, given that she is to be married off to Pasquale, a man who treats her like his arm candy and whom Sophia simply cannot stand. Which brings up another theme in this novel – arranged marriages. When Sophia's father passes away, her two sisters will be forced to enter convents because her family, though well-standing artisans, can only afford one daughter's expensive dowry. When Sophia falls for the poor son of a nobleman, this only makes her unwelcome betrothal an even bigger burden to bear...

A fault I often find in some historical novels is overwrought historical detail. After an author has done all this extensive research he or she may feel the urge to include every single element of their notes in the final product. Sometimes this can come off to readers (at least this reader) as forced. Demonstrating reserve with all this knowledge and trimming down the research to the parts that best suit the story is often the trickiest part of writing a novel that takes place in the past, so I'm told. One must be very tactful when interweaving all these dates and facts and histories. It must flow delicately along with the rest of the story and not stand apart from the rest of the story. While I did find much of the period detail about Venice in *The Secret of the Glass* interesting, at certain points I felt this was one of those historical novels where the author just crams too much of it all at once.

I could have done without a lot of the beginning section of the book. Again, I think that the overdone period detail weighed it down a bit for me, making it a slower read than it should have been. The book did pick up once Galileo entered the picture, however. I particularly enjoyed learning about the enlightenment period and the very beginning of what would eventually become controversial scientific theory trumping Church edict. Of course, before that could possibly come to fruition, anyone thought to be associated with or believing in Copernican theory was arrested as a heretic, and as we know from the history textbooks, Galileo Galilei was one of them. I enjoyed how Galileo's story was intertwined with Sophia's (I won't reveal how here!), and I believe this was one of the areas of the story where the author really shined in combining history with fictional characters. If you're interested in reading a novel that covers the history of Venice as well as that of a well-guarded trade that has been cloaked in mystery for centuries, topped off with some recognizable historical figures thrown into the mix, then this is the novel for you!

FTC Disclosure: I received this book from the publisher for review.

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### **Tara Chevreton says**

Having read *The Courtier's Secret* and enjoyed it for the most part, I gladly forked over ten dollars to Amazon for this book and gleefully picked it up. A quarter into it, I realized I wasted my money. WAY too many adjectives. I don't need to know a building's entire history as well as facade and color. Who cares how the dresses blow in the wind exactly?? One word would be adequate. I don't need nine. The prose.. tho I realize these are not women of the 21st century, they are a good 16, 17 years old and I found their prose utterly childish. A DNF for me but my ten bucks allows me to post my thoughts.

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## **Sx says**

When I finished this book, I only felt immense relief. It was so dry, I took twice as long as usual to read it. While it was clear Morin paid exquisite attention to detail and tried to acquaint the reader to 17th century Venice, it was educational, but there was lack of life infused to the book - it read more like a dry textbook. I've learnt a lot about Venice, but took nothing away from the characters, which was what I'd have wanted more.

Also, what was with the about-turn of one of the major characters in the book towards the end? Throughout the book, he was painted so horribly that his change of heart and kinship with Sophia at the end felt extremely out of place. For a book about glass making, there was precious little about the intrigue that came with her huge secret or the ramifications she'd have faced. I don't know, maybe I expected more but I felt hugely let down.

Overall, I'd recommend it to anyone wanting to find out more about 17th century Venice and the glass making industry. If you're looking for heart and soul in a book, I'd suggest you look elsewhere.

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## **James Sajo says**

Pretty good story, but the writing style is too close to romance novel for me. Too much simile and metaphor that seemed over-the-top-bosom-heaving for my taste. Three or four chapters were straight out of the romance genre. Best part was the epilogue...

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## **Vanessa says**

I'll admit it --- the gorgeous cover made me buy this book. The premise sounded interesting, as well, but it was mainly the cover (which is really one of the most beautiful I've ever seen for a historical fiction novel).

Unfortunately, the writing was dry and stilted, and the dialogue was really bad. The characters were sketchy --- I didn't feel like I really learned much about any of them.

I gave up halfway through the book --- I could just not make myself finish this one.

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