



Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Colette (Ballantine Reader's Circle)

Judith Thurman

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A scandalously talented stage performer, a practiced seductress of both men and women, and the flamboyant author of some of the greatest works of twentieth-century literature, Colette was our first true superstar. Now, in Judith Thurman's *Secrets of the Flesh*, Colette at last has a biography worthy of her dazzling reputation.

Having spent her childhood in the shadow of an overpowering mother, Colette escaped at age twenty into a turbulent marriage with the sexy, unscrupulous Willy--a literary charlatan who took credit for her bestselling Claudine novels. Weary of Willy's sexual domination, Colette pursued an extremely public lesbian love affair with a niece of Napoleon's. At forty, she gave birth to a daughter who bored her, at forty-seven she seduced her teenage stepson, and in her seventies she flirted with the Nazi occupiers of Paris, even though her beloved third husband, a Jew, had been arrested by the Gestapo. And all the while, this incomparable woman poured forth a torrent of masterpieces, including *Gigi*, *Sido*, *Cheri*, and *Break of Day*.

Judith Thurman, author of the National Book Award-winning biography of Isak Dinesen, portrays Colette as a thoroughly modern woman: frank in her desires, fierce in her passions, forever reinventing herself. Rich with delicious gossip and intimate revelations, shimmering with grace and intelligence, *Secrets of the Flesh* is one of the great biographies of our time.

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