

# Blood from a Stone

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Guido Brunetti, the hero of Donna Leon's internationally bestselling crime series, is back, in a novel that combines an ingenious plot with an alluring portrait of contemporary Venice. On a cold December night, a Senegalese man who sells counterfeit fashion accessories is killed on the Campo Santo Stefano. What first appears to be a straightforward clash between rival dealers soon raises questions: What was a penniless foreigner doing with a fortune in diamonds? And why does Brunetti's boss want him off the case? Fans of Donna Leon will be thrilled with *Blood from a Stone*, as Brunetti delves into the secrets of Venice's immigrant community and continues to uncover corruption in the upper echelons of the government.

Guido Brunetti, the protagonist of Donna Leon's brilliant series about crime in high and low places in Venice, Italy, is back in a smart thriller about a murdered street vendor, one of the illegal immigrants who sell fake fashion accessories outside the tourist mecca's high-priced boutiques while trying to stay one step ahead of the law. Someone had a reason for wanting the nameless African man dead, and the search for the killers and the men who sent them to Brunetti's beloved and beautifully evoked city shortly before Christmas leads the thoughtful, multifaceted and uxorious Commissario to the unfamiliar Venetian milieu where the *vu cumprà* live. In the cramped, airless room where the Senegalese vendors manage to find shelter, Guido discovers a fortune in so-called "conflict diamonds" hidden among the murdered man's meager belongings. But finding the diamonds' provenance and the killers who were seeking them proves to be an exercise in bureaucratic misdirection. Warned off the case by his boss in the name of "national security," Guido nonetheless persists with his investigation, in the course of which he discovers what--and who--really matters to him. Leon depicts the city she also clearly loves with such skill the reader can almost hear the water lapping at the edges of the canals and smell the espresso beans roasting in the crisp cold winter air. A tour de force from an author whose reputation for skillful plotting, extraordinary descriptive powers, and complex characters has earned her a loyal base of fans; if you haven't discovered her work before this, *Blood from a Stone* will only whet your appetite for her extensive backlist of titles featuring Brunetti and his colleagues. --Jane Adams


A New Yorker of Irish/Spanish descent, Donna Leon first went to Italy in 1965, returning regularly over the next decade or so while pursuing a career as an academic in the States and then later in Iran, China and finally Saudi Arabia. It was after a period in Saudi Arabia, which she found "damaging physically and spiritually" that Donna decided to move to Venice, where she has now lived for over twenty years.

Her debut as a crime fiction writer began as a joke: talking in a dressing room in Venice's opera-house La Fenice after a performance. Donna and a singer friend were vilifying a particular German conductor. From the thought "why don't we kill him?" and discussion of when, where and how, the idea for *Death at La Fenice* took shape, and was completed over the next four months.

Donna Leon is the crime reviewer for the London Sunday Times and is an opera expert. She has written the libretto for a comic opera, entitled *Dona Gallina*. Set in a chicken coop, and making use of existing baroque music, *Dona Gallina* was premiered in Innsbruck.

Brigitte Fassbaender, one of the great mezzo-sopranos of our time, and now head of the Landestheater in Innsbruck, agreed to come out of retirement both to direct the opera and to play the part of the witch Azuneris (whose name combines the names of the two great Verdi villainesses Azucena and Amneris).

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