



## The House at the Edge of Night

*Catherine Banner*

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**The House at the Edge of Night** Catherine Banner

**A sweeping saga about four generations of a family who live and love on an enchanting Mediterranean island off the coast of Italy—combining the romance of *Beautiful Ruins* with the magical tapestry works of Isabel Allende.**

Castellamare is an island far enough away from the mainland to be forgotten, but not far enough to escape from the world's troubles. At the center of the island's life is a café draped with bougainvillea called the House at the Edge of Night, where over generations the community gathers to gossip and talk. Amedeo Esposito, a foundling from Florence, finds his destiny on the island with his beautiful wife, Pina, whose fierce intelligence, grace, and unwavering love guide her every move. An indiscretion tests their marriage, and their children—three sons and an inquisitive daughter—grow up and struggle with both humanity's cruelty and its capacity for love and mercy.

Spanning nearly a century, through secrets and mysteries, trials and sacrifice, this beautiful and haunting novel follows the lives of the Esposito family and the other islanders who live and love on Castellamare: a cruel count and his bewitching wife, a priest who loves scandal, a prisoner of war turned poet, an outcast girl who becomes a pillar of strength, a wounded English soldier who emerges from the sea. The people of Castellamare are transformed by two world wars and a great recession, by the threat of fascism and their deep bonds of passion and friendship, and by bitter rivalries and the power of forgiveness, in this richly written and powerful novel.

Catherine Banner has written an enthralling, character-rich novel, epic in scope but intimate in feeling. At times, the island itself seems alive, a mythical place where the earth heaves with stories—and this magical novel takes you there.

## Advance praise for *The House at the Edge of Night*

“My admiration for *The House at the Edge of Night* is boundless. Catherine Banner’s writing is preternaturally mature, distinct, clear, and strikingly beautiful. As I read on, I felt the resonance of classic legend and myth, the stuff of Homer, building around this world that is timeless, yet utterly its own. A gorgeous, deeply moving novel of life across a sweep of time and generations.”—**Peter Nichols, author of *The Rocks***

“To the long, eclectic tradition of the island novel, Catherine Banner has made a sparkling addition. She has created a vast world unto itself of the fictional island of Castellamare, intricately compressed and marvelously textured. Her storytelling evokes the rural tales of the great Sicilian author Giovanni Verga, the Abruzzian Ignazio Silone, and the multifarious *Italian Folktales* compiled by Italo Calvino. But this is very much a modern story by a young Englishwoman, beautifully written, spanning over a century, framing and interweaving the fates of countless characters while conjuring a fictional chronicle that merges with, and enhances, history as we know it—a feat reserved for the most ingenious and intuitive of writers. That this is Catherine Banner’s first adult novel makes it all the more remarkable.”—**Nicholas Christopher**

## **The House at the Edge of Night Details**

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## From Reader Review The House at the Edge of Night for online ebook

### Dianne says

This was a real "fishes and loaves" book for me. No matter how much I read, when I went to pick it up again it seemed like there was still infinity pages to go! The book that kept on giving, even when I didn't want it to.

The multi-generational saga follows a young doctor who settles on a remote island off the coast of Sicily called Castellamare. The doctor falls in love with the island and its inhabitants and marries a local widow. Their tale leads to their daughter's tale, to her son's tale, to her granddaughter's tale. Along the way, the island and its inhabitants provide local color and charm. In the background, world events - World War I, fascism, the world economy - provide additional layers of depth. The "House at the Edge of Night," referred to in the book's title, is a beloved bar owned by the doctor's family through the years and is the heart of the story.

I liked it but it was too long and meandering for me. I am the outlier on this one, so perhaps I was just not in the right mood for a leisurely story spanning almost 100 years. If you enjoy family sagas and lovely settings and don't mind a slower pace of story-telling, you will probably really enjoy this.

I liked it, didn't love it. I did, however, love the book's cover! Beautiful.

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### Angela M says

I loved everything about this book from the first to the last page. It's not mind bending, earth shattering, or gut wrenching, and I didn't walk away with any big message . It is however , an engaging multigenerational family saga spanning almost a century and I found that I didn't want to put it down. There was not one minute that I wasn't interested in Amedeo Esposito , his family and their life on Castellamare , a five mile island off the coast of Sicily, so small that your neighbors know things about you before you do .

Amedeo, was an orphan , a foundling who was helped along the way in Florence by a caring doctor. He comes to the island in 1914 when he is 40 years old to take the position of island Doctor, but more importantly seeking a place he could call home and the life he has longed for. He finds that home and that life when he marries Pina and together they build a family and a business in the cafe/bar The House at the Edge of the Night. But life on the island is not always idyllic. People are not perfect and it is Amedeo himself who creates some scandal on the island. There are wonderful characters you will love with a couple of exceptions among the inhabitants of Castellamare . A place isolated from the modern world, immune to most of what happened outside of but not the changing tides in Italy. The outside world creeps in in the form of the fascisti as the island becomes an out post for Il Duce's prisoners and the sons are called to war.

An integral part of the story is Amedeo's love of stories - stories of saints and miracles, of fantasy and curses and real stories of the past. He makes a practice of recording in a red notebook , the stories he's told from when he was a child through his adult life. This beautiful collecting and telling of these stories which the author tells us in a note are based on Italian folklore.

You don't have to believe in miracles or magic, you only have to believe in the people of this island , the

Esposito family over the decades and the townspeople because it's their humanity that made the everyday miracles in this story. It's a story of a family legacy - The House at the Edge of the Night and the red notebook of stories they pass on. Catherine Banner clearly has a talent as a story teller and has created a beautiful story with an amazing sense of place and characterizations . Highly recommended.

Thanks to Random House Publishing Group - Random House and NetGalley.

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### **Aditi says**

*"The island is ours. Here, in some way, we are young forever."*

----E. Lockhart

Catherine Banner, an English author, pens a breathtaking yet poignant tale about an Italian family saga spun over a century and through three generations in an unknown island in her debut book, *The House at the Edge of Night* that revolves around the life of a doctor who after completing his studies in Florence, travels off to an Italian island, where he sets up his practice and eventually he also grows his own family through generations by buying the old house at the edge of the island where he opens a bar and runs it with the help of his wife. This book basically unfolds the stories of the people living on this island, thereby narrating the story of this island as a whole, which goes through war and many changes from the year 1914 to 2009.

### **Synopsis:**

*On a tiny island off the coast of Italy, Amedeo Esposito, a foundling from Florence, thinks he has found a place where, finally, he can belong.*

*Intrigued by a building the locals believe to be cursed, Amedeo restores the crumbling walls, replaces sagging doors and sweeps floors before proudly opening the bar he names the 'House at the Edge of Night'. Surrounded by the sound of the sea and the scent of bougainvillea, he and the beautiful, fiercely intelligent Pina begin their lives together.*

*Home to the spirited, chaotic Esposito family for generations, the island withstands a century of turmoil – transformed in ways both big and small by war, tourism and recession. It's a place alive with stories, legends and, sometimes, miracles. And while regimes change, betrayals are discovered and unexpected friendships nurtured, the House at the Edge of Night remains: the backdrop for long-running feuds and the stage for great love affairs.*

Amedeo Esposito, an Italian foundling, arrives at the island of Castellamare, off the coast of Italy, after getting appointed as a local physician in that island, on the day of Sant'Agata festival, who became the patron saint of the island after saving the island from weeping(*for that you really need to read the book!*) Besides his medical practice and getting introduced with the local island folks, he began to collect the stories

of this island, mainly folklore, into his red leather dairy that was gifted by his foster father. But despite of earning a good name, his bad reputation due to his past mistakes and his liaisons, the doctor is banished from further medical practices by the count of the island. And soon Amedeo marries the most intelligent widow on the island, Pina, along with whose help he reopens the old bar, *The House at The Edge of Night*, and through three generations, the Espositos serve coffee, wine, rice balls, limoncello and other Italian drinks and cakes, devoid of the bad gossips about Amedeo's past errors, the World War I and II, the great depression, the fascism era and many other challenges. From Amedeo's children to great grand children to their offspring, for three straight generations, the house stands strong and tall by providing as a strong pillar to all those stories of the people who pass through it.

Can family sagas be interesting? Heck yeah, read this book, you will know that family sagas can not only interesting, but they can be riveting, mind blowing, heart-touching and extremely addictive. Before further penning my review, I would like to give a standing ovation to the author, for penning such an extraordinary story that is actually a historical fiction about an Italian family, which generally sounds boring and midway through the story, the readers begin to yawn a lot, unlike this one. This novel is a rare gem found in the ocean of so many diverse historical fiction, that is part literary fiction, and part historical fiction. From the very first page, itself, the story hooked me right into its very core and depth where I simply lost myself into the island of Castellamare and with its stories.

The author's writing style is crisp and clear and is laced with myriad emotions that will make the readers either laugh or cry or feel sad or anger as per the story's flow. The narrative style of the author is emphatic and extremely interesting, that is not only inspired from the local dialect but can also be easily comprehended by the readers. The story is addictive and will easily keep the readers frantically turning the pages of this 470 pages long book till the very last page and surprisingly for not even once, the story will either bore the readers or make them feel meaningless. And with a fantastic prose, the story has a moderate pace as the story is laced under so many layers and with so many underlying stories, but the author peels away each layer gently and cleverly throughout the course of this story.

The author's backdrop painting of Castellamare, which is basically a fictional island, off the Italian coast, is magnificent, vivid, colorful and extremely eye-catchy. Surrounded by the vast blue ocean, this island definitely stands as a strong rock to the author's beautiful family saga. The author has strikingly captured the bluish-green landscape of the island with its old traditional architecture, monuments and pathways. Apart from this island, *The House at The Edge of Night* plays a pivotal role in the story line, which the author arrests with extreme beauty by depicting as the only standing two-storeyed house surrounded with bougainvillea plant, by the edge of the island that have withstand many stories and sorrows through ages. And with an instant the readers can visualize this old house right before their own eyes, apart from the salty breeze, the sweet smell of limoncello and the rusty smell on the pavements.

From the historic point of view, the author includes so many major historical changes like the First World War, followed by the second world war and the invasion by the English troops, the fascist movement and the recession that are projected with evocatively, reading which the readers can easily feel the pain of the local folks undergoing the effects.

The characters in the book are very much realistically crafted complete with their flaws, shortcomings, defects, wishes, goals and determination. While reading about these characters, the readers are bound to feel a connection as well as their down-to-earth warmth of the characters. There is no such main character, as the story moves from one central character to another, its more like passing down through generations. Hence each and every character from this book play a major role that without whom, the story will be left incomplete. The people of the island are very much superstitious, a big believer in miracles and are very

gossipy in nature, yet their unmatched charm will make the readers fall for them. And yes, they are so well developed, that they will imprint on the minds of the readers.

In a nutshell, this compelling story left me allured and enthralled with its vastness, diversity, beauty and emotional depth. I strongly recommend this novel to all the historical fiction readers.

**Verdict:** *A captivating family saga through generation set across a small Italian island.*

**Courtesy:** *Thanks to the author, Catherine Banner, for giving me an opportunity to read and review this novel.*

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## Victoria says

### Sparkling Sicilian Saga...

*Her life seemed to her an odd thing, a thing that had dragged all the time when happiness still seemed far off...and at last, when happiness had been afforded her, seemed to have rushed over at a breathless speed, leaving no room for thought.*

Good old-fashioned storytelling, vivid characters and lyrical prose, I was swept away by this book to another shore, another time. While a story set on a small island off the coast of Sicily with only its small cast of inhabitants could have felt claustrophobic, instead Banner creates for us a magical place with heroes and villains; comedy and tragedy; and folk tales woven throughout. In scope and tone, it reminded me of Trigiani's *The Shoemaker's Wife*, though I found this to have more complexity with a touch of the mythical.

Sometimes a gal just wants to read a wonderful story, beautifully told with a touch of Fellini-like fantasy. Viva la dolce vita!

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## Dem says

**What a beautiful Reading Experience..... an enchanting and sweeping story set over four generations. Sometimes a book just needs to tell a story and that is exactly what The House At The Edge Of Night does.**

I love books set on Islands and Catherine Banner's story set on the tiny, idyllic island of Castellamare is beautifully written with an extremely likable cast of characters that stay with you long after you have turned the last page.

This is a quite novel, no major dramas or twists or turns, just a beautiful well written story with interesting characters. A story where very little happens and yet everything happens over a span of four generations. The people of Castellamare are transformed by two world wars and a great recession, by the threat of fascism and their deep bonds of passion and friendship, and by bitter rivalries and the power of forgiveness.

I loved following the lives of the Esposito family and the other islanders and really got a sense of time and place of Castellamare.

I ordered the Hardback edition of this Book and so happy to have this one on my bookshelf.

I had a rating of 5 stars in my head through the first 350 pages of the Novel but I did find the last 100 pages ran out of steam and hence the reason for my 4 star rating.

Having said that I really enjoyed the read, great writing and interesting characters.

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### **Linda says**

I received a copy of The House at the Edge of Night through NetGalley for an honest review. My thanks to Random House Publishing and to Catherine Banner for the opportunity.

Sometimes, just sometimes, we wish to lay with elbows bent in front of a fire encased in the warmth of a sage storyteller who leans mind-to-mind into our cozy space. Because, dear reader, it is all in those simple words.

Catherine Banner presents a story set in the Mediterranean island of Castellamare. The ancient isle is surrounded in rugged volcanic rock, the ruins of earthquakes of long ago, tiny fisherman boats bobbing in the waves of the bay, and landscaped with people who bear the fine honing of those who came before them.

One of those well-sculpted people is Amedeo Esposito. Amedeo knows abandonment first hand as a foundling. He is taken under the wing of the town's doctor and whittled into a medico through deep trial and error. Amedeo surrounds himself with his collection of artifacts and his ability to touch deeply into the heart. He meets the stoic Pina and they soon marry. And slowly the stories pour out upon the page as Castellamare is affected by world wars, disease, birth, and death. "For his own spirit these days could be precisely divided - half of it light and fathomable, half as dark and deep as the ocean."

The House at the Edge of Night is just that.....the rising of the sun in one's life and the eventual darkness at the end of life's day. Banner writes beautifully and describes so well the inner workings of a simple life complicated by the intrusions of the world. The characters will stay with you long after the last page. Involved and yet uninvolved. Simple and yet complicated. Banner leans into the story and you will as well.

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### **Jen says**

I love stories within stories - stacked inside each other reminds me of those Russian dolls and how they all fit together. This is such a story.

In the Mediterranean, between Africa and Sicily, lies the small island of Castellamare. A remote place where it is said to have had weeping curse put on it from centuries past.

This is a sweeping saga of 4 generations of a family, the Espositos. The secrets, the relationships, the flawed

characters and the links that brought them together as well as separated them. Spectacular imagery, an air of mystery, rich with folklore stories, this was divine read. 5\*

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### **Esil says**

I loved reading The House at the Edge of Night. It's not great literature or particularly deep, but it was a lovely absorbing story. Spanning the 20th century and early 21st century and 4 generations, it focuses on a few characters on a small island at the very southern tip of Italy. They go through world events, but with the buffering that necessarily comes from being part of a tight knit community on an island. Old tensions fester and pass through the generations. New generations try to change old ways, with mixed success. There are strong women and idiosyncratic characters. There are superstitions that prove a little false and a little true. In other words, it has all the ingredients I like in this kind of historical family saga -- good characters, some original plot twists and really good sense of place and history -- without the elements I don't tend to like -- too much sentimentality and melodrama. I wouldn't want to mislead anyone -- this is definitely a book that plays on your heart strings, but it hit the right chords for me. A good summer read for lazy vacation days -- I wish! Thanks to the publisher and Netgalley for a chance to read an advance copy.

A note on the cover: Yuck! I don't like this cover. I never would have considered reading this book based on the cover. It looks like a 6th grader's art project. Thankfully, I read Angela's excellent review and was convinced to read this lovely book despite the tacky cover.

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### **Diane S ? says**

Once upon a time there was an enchanted island, called Castellamare, located off the coast of Sicily. Within the island was an enchanted place, a home but also a meeting, eating and drinking place for the islanders, call the House at the edge of night. The island people worshipped their patron saint, Santa' Agata and on her name day celebrated with parades and great feasts. Families lived on this island for generations and many of them we as a reader are fortunate to meet. It begins with the arrival of a young giant of a man, Amedeo, a doctor who after a few missteps will find a home and love on this island. Will create a family and collect the stories, the folklore that the people cherish.

What a wonderful and fun read. This is a place, only the second after Three Pines of the Louise Penney books that I wish I could visit. Feel like I could walk up to these quirky wonderful characters, recognize each one and feel right at home. From this island we experience the war, the depression, marriages, deaths, happiness and sadness. The birth of new generations, the heartbreak when one decides to leave and make their home away from the island. The sights, the sounds, the beautiful scenery, the fishing boats, the old men and women, the young. Loved the way this was told and wish I didn't have to leave, think quite possibly like many on the island I too would have happily stayed.

ARC from netgalley and Random House.

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### Lori says

This novel was so good in so many ways, but what I loved most was the pure and simple way it was told. The story wraps you up like a warm embrace. You can't read this without falling in love with Castellamare, the Esposito family, and the quirky islanders. A wonderful family saga that really captures the art of storytelling. 4.5 stars.

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### PattyMacDotComma says

4★

A leisurely story of a tiny, enchanting isle and the people it has captivated for centuries. I won't attempt to summarise much, just give examples of the style and the writing.

In Florence, sometime at the end of the 19th century, a baby boy is passed through the window of the foundling hospital, as were a third of all children born then in Florence. What a startling bit of information that is!

Amedeo is eventually fostered by a kindly bachelor doctor, and he grows up to be a doctor himself, struggling to find a permanent position somewhere, anywhere. Finally, one mayor invites him to his island, Castellamare, a long way from home.

*“The island was a crumb between the pages of his foster father’s atlas; south and east of Sicily, it was the furthest Amedeo could possibly have ventured from Florence without reaching Africa.”*

He arrives at night on a small boat, no lights, little idea of where he is to go, and just keeps walking uphill until he arrives in the middle of the yearly festival of Sant’Agata. A perfect introduction to these wild, passionate people.

*“For now, it seemed only a wondrous, magical disorder unlike anything he had witnessed.*

*Into this disorder, as into a warm sea, stepped Amedeo. He passed through the scents of jasmine and anchovies and liquor, through snatches of dialect and accented Italian and high lamenting songs whose language he did not recognise, through the light of fires and torches and the hundred red candles that illuminated the ghostly saint.*

*“At last, emerging from the crowd with his suitcase clutched to his chest, he found himself before an extraordinary house.*

*A square building, in faded amber, it seemed balanced on the very side of the hill, between the light of the piazza and the dark of the hillside and the sea. Its terrace was draped in great profusions of bougainvillea. At little tables, among the flowers, the islanders drank limoncello and arancello, fought and swore over card games, swayed to the whirling songs of an ‘organetto.’ A sign in fanciful script proclaimed the words ‘Casa al Bordo della Notte’: House at the Edge of Night.”*

Amadeo settles into life there, and we meet all the island families, hear their folk tales and myths, learn about their faith in Sant'Agata's powers and the magic of the caves by the sea.

The people live in each other's pockets, and everyone knows everyone's business—or rather, thinks they do. The island is alive with rumours, passions, ancient grudges and unlikely relatives. They are remote and pretty much untouched by the mainland. There is a fisherman's donkey cart and one motor car, belonging to Il Conte, the Count, who is treated like royalty and behaves like the boor that he is. No power, no mod cons, and always the risk of disease.

When WW1 arrives, Amedeo is more concerned about draining the swamps to prevent malaria, but eventually he is called up and sent to the trenches.

*"It seemed a world composed of elements, where men were divided into their component pieces, men frothed, men screamed. At the surgical school of Santa Maria Nuova, he had received no training in how to put men back together."*

Later, the story wends its way through his affair, his marriage (different woman!), his several children and eventually their children. Kids grow up, many desperate to leave, but when they do, they feel drawn back home.

The island offers up some terrific characters, and the island itself is unique, as is the House of the title. It becomes a bar and a centre of activity for the town, which gives us a good excuse to meet everyone. There are particularly powerful women here, and the men challenge them at their peril.

It's a fishing village, so of course there are seafaring tales and beliefs.

*"Sant'Agata is angry. A storm like this comes over a fishing boat when someone on board as a guilty soul."*

When WW2 arrives, the island can't avoid hearing about it, now that they have radio and regular news reports. Amedeo's family suffers badly, as do many.

One returned soldier feels

*"to go about the business of daily life was to only half inhabit the world, for in a deeper chamber of his mind the war was playing and replaying, sapping his energies as though he were still fighting it. It came over him quite suddenly. For example, he would smooth out the sheets on his bed before sleep, and before him instead the desert would ripple, the wind scouring its surface. Or he would raise his hand to shave and see instead a slick of blood – feel again how his guts had curled when he raised that same hand in the dark to find one finger, two fingers, three fingers gone, shot away entirely."*

But another finds love.

*"If he knew she had passed on the stairs, he would rush to stand in the air she had breathed, gasping for a trace of her perfume (which was dry and a little like oranges). If she touched something on the bar's counter he would surreptitiously pick it up, for the simple pleasure of touching it too."*

Do we learn everything about everyone? Does anyone, ever?

*“Strange it was, that in this island where everybody knew your business before you knew it, where the widows burdened you with prayers and the elderly scopa players scolded and the old fishermen knew you by name before you were even born, it was possible still for a person to be as deep as the ocean, as unfathomable as the dark beyond the bar’s four walls.”*

Interesting, long, lots of bougainvillea (scented, unlike mine), lots of coffee and arancello and various local foodstuffs. And did I say long? Yes, I did. It did feel long. So does my review. :)

Thanks to NetGalley and Random House UK/Cornerstone for a copy for review.

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### **Julie says**

The House at the Edge of Night by Catherine Banner is a 2016 Random House publication.

This book came highly recommended by several of my Goodreads friends who described the book as a family saga, so I knew I had to check it out.

This story is centered around the Esposito family living on the island of Castellamare in Italy. The island is remote, but has its own fiefdoms, power struggles, and is fraught with personal family dramas and scandals.

Beginning with Amedeo Esposito, who arrives on the island as the first doctor the island ever welcomed, but eventually opens ‘The House at the Edge of Night’, a bar/café which becomes a center point of the island where the residents gather for fellowship, communication and of course gossip.

The story follows Amedeo, his wife, Pina, and their children as they go through wars, conflicts, financial fallouts, and personal issues within marriages and families, which entails sibling rivalry, jealousy, love won and lost, and found again.

I absolutely love, love, love, family sagas! Sadly, sweeping sagas are far and few between these days, but perhaps wonderful stories, like this one will inspire more interest in them.

This is a beautiful story, rich in details with incredibly well drawn characters which makes it so easy to become immersed in the story and to care for the Esposito family. I found myself completely wound up in their dramas, the amazingly beautiful setting, the culture, and the realistic portrayal of human beings with all their foibles and strengths.

This is a powerful and lush story filled with charm and enhanced with folk tales and tradition. I never wanted the story to end, but was so happy with the family’s perseverance in the face of adversity, the way they came together and remained committed despite the challenges they faced.

I was impressed with the storytelling here and believe this is a story anyone can enjoy. I wish there were many more novels like this one!!

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### **Karen says**

I just loved this novel of four generations of a family on a Mediterranean island off the coast of Italy, starting with Amedeo a foundling from Florence who arrived here as a doctor for the island. He with his book of stories spanning many years, along with his personal indiscretion and what became of it for his family. I just loved the story and reading about the island life and their house and bar named " The Island at the Edge of Night.

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### **PorshaJo says**

I loved this book. I loved the beautiful cover which initially drew me to this book. I loved the story, the sweeping saga over many generations of the Esposito family. I loved the audio narration, Edoardo Ballerini is an amazing narrator and he adds so much to the story. I loved the House at the Edge of Night, surrounded in bougainvillea. I want to go there, sit in the cafe, and drink limoncello.

The House at the Edge of Night is a magical story told over many, many years about a small island called Castellamare. One day, a young man arrives on the island to be the island doctor. He is Amedeo Esposito and at some point, he purchases the House at the Edge of Night and restores the cafe for himself and all of the islanders. He eventually marries and has children. The story told is about his life, his children and their lives, and his children's childrens lives. But more importantly, it tells the story of all of those that live on the island and at times, visit the island. There are so many wonderful characters in this story. The House at the Edge of Night seems to be the heart of the island, the gathering place for the locals, and the place at which many generations of Espositos live and work.

When I saw the cover, I was intrigued. I read a few GR friends reviews and sought out the book. I love, love, love Edoardo Ballerini as a narrator so I knew I had to listen to this one via audio. He does such an amazing job with all the voices, the pace is perfect, and his voice lends to that magical quality of this entire book. I saw many lists of the 'best covers of 2016' and was sadly shocked to see this book did not make the list. Nor, did it make many top read's lists - except by many on GR. I could have had more of this wonderful story, tell me more about the next generation of Espositos. A highlight for year end 2016 and first 5-star read for 2017. And one I will read again in the future.

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### **Margitte says**

From the blurb:

A sweeping saga about four generations of a family who live and love on an enchanting Mediterranean island off the coast of Italy—combining the romance of *Beautiful Ruins* with the magical tapestry works of Isabel Allende.

Louis de Bernières (Captain Corelli's Mandolin), Elena Ferrante (The Neapolitan Novels - series), Isabelle Allende (Eva Luna, The House of the Spirits): they all have some things in common - atmosphere, magic realism, and authentic tales.

*The House at the Edge of Night* by Catherine Banner fits into this group of excellent tales about history, families and legacies. I am an enormous fan of all these authors and loved Catherine Banner's book. It is fine addition to this outstanding group of stories and authors.

The book starts out with the tale that would set the tone, intention, and theme of the story:

*Once the whole of the island of Castellamare was plagued by a curse of weeping. It came from the caves by the sea, and because the islanders had built their houses from that rock, which had been the liquid fire of the volcano itself, very soon the weeping rang in all the walls of the buildings, it resounded along the streets, and even the arched entrance of the town wailed at night like an abandoned bride.*

Doctor Amedeo Esposito left Italy in 1914 to become the first doctor on this island and for the next four generations they would live the tale of the people entrenched in its pathos, history, folklore, politics, and mysteries. Amedeo used his red book to write all the tales down but did not have enough time in his often tempestuous life to record them all. His daughter, Maria-Grazia was one of the inhabitants who listened to his stories with which he made friends, win confidence, and healed the sick. Yet, at his death, some of their own generation's stories were not recorded.

Maria-Grazia: "Someone should have written down all the other stories," she said. For after her father, Amedeo, who had remembered to do it? What about Agata-the-fisherwoman's rescue from the ocean? What about Robert's own appearance? The day of the ships, when she and her father had witnessed them arrayed on the horizon like raindrops on a wire? The ghost of Pierino? The taming of Enzo; the building of the great hotel; the miracle of the bundles of money appearing after dark at the islanders' doors? What about all the tales that had gone unrecorded? Someone should have made remembrance of these things.

The most important mystery of the island was the House Of Death in the caves down at the beach, where thousands of corpses were buried at the same time, and nobody knew how, or why, it happened. Archaeologists excavated, the site became world famous, tourists flogged in to see, yet, the mystery, an enigma to everyone, remained.

Amedeo Esposito, traveling on the fisherman's boat, with the prophetic name *God Have Mercy*, from Naples, arrived on the island in a hail of flowers during the annual festival of Sant'Agata. It was the first encounter with the islanders and Sant'Agata and would also after four generations, finally conclude the saga of his life and descendants at the end of the tale. Through his observations and meticulous notes, he would also finally resolve the mystery of the House of Death.

For each festival the women of the island collected millions of flowers, and throughout the tale this gathering of flowers for the festival kept the islanders connected to their own life stories, memorial events, relationship issues, their island and each other. Starting out with WWI, going through WWII and finally the economic crunch of 2007, Sant'Agata remains the center of all heartbreak and miracles. She divided and conquered. She destroyed and healed, but without her, there would not have been an island Castellamare, or Amedeo Esposito's story to tell.

Although the Espositos were the protagonists, the two main characters in this riveting saga, were Castellamare - the island itself, and Sant'Agata.

The Esposito ('esposito' - meaning 'banned') family, from *dotorre* Amedeo Esposito as the patriarch and first one on the island, to his great-granddaughter Lena, taking over their legacy, changed the path of history for the islanders and their descendants.

Throughout the ages, even long before the Espositos became the owners, everything always happened in the restaurant and pub *The House At The Edge Of Night*. Lena would become the next owner, as well as the earthly muse of Castellamare's fate and fables. Who else could protect the old customs, traditions, language, cooking and soul of Sant'Agata's Castellamare better?

Maria-Grazia: *She understood now that Lena would go on returning to this place all her life. As Amedeo had, and Pina the schoolmistress, and Maria-Grazia herself—all of them, living and dead. Lena would return always, to walk the same goat paths her great-grandfather Amedeo had walked, with his medical bag in one hand and his head full of stories, foundling, founder, drainer of swamps, healer of sicknesses, sworn protector of this place.*

This book enchanted and captured me completely. The last book I have enjoyed so much, about an island and its people, covering more or less the same historical period, and also spanning over several generations, was *The Book of Ebenezer Le Page* by G.B. Edwards and John Fowles, which I would **recommend wholeheartedly** as another good read in the island genre. In fact it became one of my all-time favorite reads.

However, in the spirit of De Bernières, Ferrante and Allende, *The House at the Edge of Night* by Catherine Banner, just became a confirmed favorite as well. The beautiful, picturesque prose nailed it to my Favorite's List.

RECOMMENDED!

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