



A CHAT WITH LISA BERGREN

Q. I understand that you listen to soundtracks as you write.

A. Yes. It makes me feel like I'm watching a movie unfold instead of just pounding away at the keys. For this series, I've been listening to *I Am Legend*, the Chronicles of Narnia soundtracks, *Gladiator*, *The DaVinci Code*, and a mix of medieval songs my husband found for me.

Q. Tell me about working at the library.

A. I wrote most of this book in our local library. I got almost obsessive-compulsive about it. I had My Chair. And My Table. And My Footstool. An outlet close by. Thankfully, I only rarely came across someone else sitting in My Chair. Because when I did, I just sat really close to them until they finally gave up and went away.

Q. Why write at the library? Not at home?

A. It's weird, huh? For the first time in fifteen years, I have an empty house on school days. But all that space and silence just makes me want to fritter away the day rather than get anything serious accomplished. I'm sucked into Twitter and Facebook and email far too easily. I had to separate myself—go to the library, and never, ever,



ever log on to the Internet. I'd slip on my headphones and disappear into medieval Italy for hours at a time. It was perfect.

*Q. You'll go back there to complete **Torrent**?*

A. Oh, yeah. Obsessive-compulsive now, remember?

Q. What impact did your focus group have on these books?

A. They saved me, over and over, from looking like the Dweeb Mom trying to speak to Teen Culture. There is an example right there—they'd never let a word like *dweeb* slip into Gabi or Lia's speech. Moreover, I was encouraged when they fell in love with these characters with me. And they've been a good sounding board for me when I'm trying to figure out a particular plot or character problem. I loved hearing their feedback on the River of Time Series Facebook page or via my surveys.

Q. What happens next for the characters in the series?

A. Can't tell ya. It's between me, God, and the librarians.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Growing up, most of us were taught to go the extra mile in peacemaking and getting along with others. But in this *Us or Them* medieval world, Gabi and Lia come up against this decision over and over again. What would it take to make you draw a line in the sand and refuse to budge? Would it be a societal trend, physical survival, or what? Describe.
2. Gabi goes through extreme physical and emotional trauma in this book. When she's in the cage in Firenze, there is a very real possibility that she might die. Have you ever been on the edge of death? If so, describe. What did you learn about life that you want to remember? If you haven't experienced this, what do you think it would teach you?
3. Would you ever date two different brothers at different times? How about two guy friends? Why or why not?
4. Do you ever wish arranged marriages were still done today? Discuss the pros and cons.
5. Many lives are lost in the battle for borders, property, and power in this book. What land would you fight for? Your family property? Your state? Your country? Other countries? If you wouldn't fight for any land, describe your thoughts on that.



6. When Gabi is in the cage, she hears a voice she identifies as her father's, but she's not entirely sure and isn't thinking clearly ... it might be God's. Who do you think it was? Discuss.

7. If you were in Gabi's shoes, how would you convince your mom and sibling to stay with you? What would be the good parts about living in that era versus living in today's culture?

8. In the end, Gabi risks her relationship with Marcello in order to try and go back and save her dad. Would you have done the same? Why or why not?

9. How would losing a parent change your family? If you have lost a parent, describe what has transpired for your family.

10. What do you think will happen in book three, *Torrent*?



HISTORICAL AND FACTUAL NOTES

I used a good number of research materials to give this series its backbone. A full bibliography can be found in *Waterfall*. While I like to base my novels on historical fact and stick as close to it as I can, I'm a novelist and compelled to write the best, most dramatic story possible. Therefore, I feel free to take liberties! Here are some things to note:

While Siena and Firenze were constantly at odds and often battled, and the lords within them oft battled one another, there was no such “war” as depicted in this book. Significant battles occurred over the centuries. But it wasn't until 1555 that Firenze really took on Siena and forced her to swear allegiance.

Also there were outbreaks of various forms of illness and plague—something every city was worried about—but it wasn't until 1348 that the worst wave of the Black Death ravaged the population of Europe, taking a third of Siena's population alone. I'm assuming there were smaller, earlier waves of illness.

At one point, Gabi and Lia escape through a passageway among an Etruscan necropolis. This locale was inspired by a real place: Sovana, far from where the bulk of this story is set—in the south of Tuscany. The rounded tumuli I've described were inspired by those in Cerveteri, near Rome, but the “igloo” aspect was a figment of my imagination. Most Etruscan tombs are square or rectangular.

I hope you forgive me for playing around with facts and history to best serve the story. Such a power trip, this author gig!



Join other readers and Lisa on the “River of Time Series” Facebook page. There, you’ll find information about the books, discussion with other fans, and contest and prize information.



Use this QR code to join the River of Time Facebook page.