



The Spy

Celeste Bradley, St. Martin's Press 2004

1. In *THE SPY*, Phillipa places all her confidence in a mysterious entry in her missing father's diary. "Watch James Cunnington." Would you bet your life on a single statement from your parent?
2. James feels overwhelmed with guilt for his part in the persecution of his fellow Liars. What purpose does guilt play inside us? At what point does regret, no matter how justified, become self-indulgent and unhelpful?
3. Phillipa's experiences as a man change her perspective entirely. Do you think that posing as a man in our time would be as enlightening? What part of the male world would you most like to investigate? (No locker rooms! Didn't you learn anything from the "hairy arse"?)
4. James adopts Robbie because Robbie needs a home and James needs an heir, although he has no idea how to parent him. Do you think just anyone should be able to have a child, even if they have already proven themselves to be lousy parents? If limits were placed, who would enforce them and how?
5. Unlike many romance novels with a cross-dressing heroine, *THE SPY* does not include moments when James is mysteriously attracted to his "male" friend. Did you miss those moments in the story? What would be the importance of having those moments? (I didn't go there because I simply don't find the notion sexy and I always write to please myself first. That way at least one person will be happy with the book!)
6. Because of her traumatic experiences, Phillipa finds it hard to trust James, although she wants to. James is practically allergic to trust after his affair with a French spy cost the lives of his friends. Wrapping these matters up in a novel is one thing. How is making that leap of faith even more difficult in the real world? Share how you manage it, or share why you can't.
7. When I first wrote about Phillipa's code, the golden ratio, I had never heard of *THE DA VINCI CODE*, although by the time *THE SPY* was published the entire world had read it. Have you ever had an experience with the "collective unconscious" where a notion you had has then shown up somewhere else in some unrelated form, as if someone else was thinking it at the same moment?