The Clockmaker's Daughter

A Novel

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Also by Isabelle Marchetti
The Glassblower's Wife
Winter in Trieste

The Clockmaker's Daughter
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For my grandmother, who kept every clock in the house five minutes fast.

— 1 —

Sofia Bellini had inherited three things from her father: his stubborn jaw, his workshop on the Via degli Orologi, and a clock that would not keep time no matter how many times she took it apart.

She turned it over in her hands one more time before setting it back on the bench. Outside, Trieste was waking up in its usual unhurried way, fishing boats easing out past the breakwater, the smell of roasting coffee drifting up from the café below.

The letter had arrived that morning, sealed with wax the colour of dried blood. She recognized the crest before she broke it: the Contessa's household, the one that had not written to her family in eleven years.

— 2 —

The villa on the hill had not changed. Sofia remembered the gate, the gravel drive, the particular green of the cypress trees against a sky that never seemed to make up its mind about rain.

What had changed was the silence. No dogs barking. No servants in the courtyard. Just a single clock, visible through a ground-floor window, its pendulum frozen mid-swing.