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The Lost Painting by Jonathan Harr, Random House
Trade Paperbacks, 2006

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Recommended Readings



The Lost Painting

by Jonathan Harr, Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2006

Reviewed by Jim Keating

You needn't be an art expert to appreciate Jonathan Harr's book, *The Lost Painting*. In fact, if you like mystery and suspense this will be as enjoyable a book as you will find. This book tells the story of a lost master-work by the Italian Renaissance painter, Caravaggio, and includes a fascinating little biography of the hot-headed artist and his personal misadventures. But the real story is about detective work done by a young Italian, an art historian, Francesca Cappelletti. She set out looking for clues about "The Taking of Christ," a painting disappeared mysteriously and without a trace in 1904. Encouraged by Caravaggio-expert Sir Denis Mahon, she methodically searched private libraries, Italian family archives, and auction house records. Each discovery brought her closer to the painting, but the canvas itself was elusive.

Coincidentally, at the same time an Italian restorer, Sergio Benedetti, working at the National Gallery in Dublin was called upon to restore a sooty old painting from a local monastery—one that the Fathers assumed was a well-respected copy of Caravaggio's painting, for it was labeled as such. But, upon examination, Benedetti, realized the copy might be the real thing! He worked secretly to attempt verification without letting others know what he suspected about the priceless masterpiece in his workshop. It's a story of intrigue and adventure...wonderful and uplifting, skillfully told, and suitable for anyone who likes a good mystery and the history of art.

- Jim Keating is an instructor of English at Butler University.