



THE SECOND FOOTMAN

Jasper Barry's historical fiction has a gay twist

JASPER BARRY has always been keenly interested in European history and literature. His most recent title, *The Second Footman*, is a 19th century novel with a contemporary twist: a love affair between two men.

'I enjoy the length and complexity of 19th century fiction,' says Jasper Barry, 'and when I began to run out of new novels to read I decided to write my own.'

'I hope *The Second Footman* will appeal to the reader of literary fiction who likes something a bit lighter now and then,' adds Barry, who has set the story in the 1880s, in the aristocratic hotels and chateaux of Paris, Bordeaux and the Loire. The novel is the first part of a planned trilogy: Barry is working on the second.

About the book:

France, 1880 – despite nearly a century of social upheaval, the aristocracy are still firmly entrenched in their hôtels and châteaux. Nineteen year-old Max is second footman to the duchesse de Claireville. But he does not intend to endure the indignities of service for long. He has a plan – to find an aristocratic patron who will become his unwitting accomplice in a spectacular fraud. Yet it is one thing to devise this plan and another to execute it: the noble guests who attend Mme de Claireville's Paris Thursdays or spend the summer with her in Bordeaux naturally pay little regard to the servants. But then a chance encounter with the marquis de Miremont changes Max's luck. The middle-aged marquis, who has spent the last two years struggling with the discovery that he is attracted to his own sex, is easily seduced. A shy man, uncomfortable in society despite his distinguished lineage, Armand de Miremont is unfashionably preoccupied with honour, integrity and truth. Max, who sees himself as above conventional morality, views him as an innocent. Yet he proves far from easy to manipulate. And Max finds that obeying his own ruthless code is not so easy either.

About the author: Jasper Barry lives in London, with one partner, three hooligan cats and too many books.

PUBLICATION DATE 1st February 2013

ISBN: 9781780883656 (pb) / 9781780887579 (eBook)

PRICE: £9.99 (pb) / £4.99 (eBook)



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