

Liz Smith: Kiss Me, Kill Me!

By **Liz Smith**



Here are my two favorite books of the moment and they both just happen to be about our favorite dynasty – the Kennedys. They are: *The Importance of Being Kennedy* written by Laurie Graham, a novel from Harper. And the next one is titled *Mona Lisa in Camelot*, written by Margaret Leslie Davis, a history from Da Capo coming in November.

Coming soon is *Mona Lisa in Camelot* – the incredible story of how Jackie Bouvier brought “culture” to a White House that hadn’t had any since Thomas Jefferson left it. This is a true and accurate tale of how the new First Lady charmed the French Minister of Culture, André Malraux, how her flawless speaking of French enhanced her husband’s prestige with General de Gaulle and how she managed, against all scientific odds, to get the Mona Lisa lent to the United States back in 1962.

Margaret Davis is known for her fascinating histories and this is a recent one with a gloss, chock-full of glamour, big rich names, super philanthropy, a dedicated woman who was willing to trade her charm for a few Cézannes in the White House and the most famous painting in the world for the National Gallery. (The Mona Lisa also went to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and for 52 days, the U.S. was swept by da Vinci fever.)

All this was Jackie's triumph over the naysayers at the Louvre and in France. The scientific studies, the security and the effort to see that no harm came to the Mona Lisa are just great. I had no idea it had been such an epic struggle. The First Lady managed to change this country's cultural profile by her willful insistence.

An engaging and dynamite story that I had never known and, of course, I thought I knew everything. This is a really important little addition to American museum and art history.