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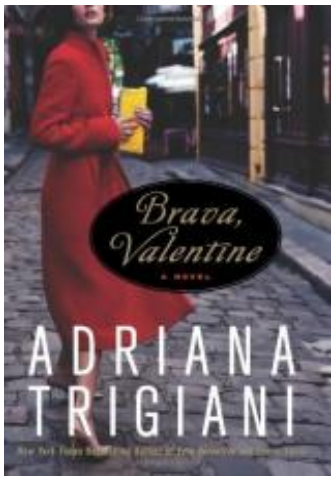
Brava, Valentine

by Adriana Trigiani



About the Book

When Valentine's grandmother begins a new life in Italy, she places Valentine and her nemesis, her brother Alfred, "the Prince," as partners at the Angelini Shoe Company, makers of handcrafted wedding shoes since 1903. A once-in-a-lifetime business opportunity takes Valentine from the winding streets of Greenwich Village to the sun-kissed cobblestones of Buenos Aires, where she unearths a long-buried family secret and finds herself torn between a past love that nurtured her and a new one that promises to sustain her, in this "dazzling" (*USA Today*) follow-up to **Very Valentine** .

Discussion Guide

1. How would you describe Valentine? What's your favorite thing about her?

2. If you read the first novel, how have lost loves, family dramas, and professional opportunities impacted Valentine? How do they affect her over the course of this chapter in her life?

3. Do you think Valentine is like most contemporary American women?

4. What role does Valentine play in the Roncalli family? How do the Roncallis define family? How is their notion of family challenged when they learn about their relatives in Argentina?

5. What does Valentine think about Gianluca, and how does she feel about him? How does she react when she receives his handwritten letters? Over the course of the story, do her feelings for him change --- or her understanding of those feelings? What does Valentine want from love?

6. Speaking of love, June tells Valentine, "The only urgent thing in life is the pursuit of love. You get that one right, and

you've solved the mystery." Do you agree with this? Is love the most important thing in life?

7. Compare and contrast the men in Valentine's life, including her father, her brother Alfred, Brett, Gabriel, and Gianluca. What does each man offer her?

8. Though Valentine misses living and working with her grandmother, she has her beloved employee (and honorary Roncalli) June. How does June influence Valentine? What is your opinion of June?

9. What is the importance of scent in the book? What are Valentine's favorite smells and the associations she has with them? Do you have a favorite smell?

10. One of the novel's themes is trust. Why is trust difficult for Valentine? How do we learn to trust someone? What happens when that trust is shaken? Can it be rebuilt? How are these lessons demonstrated in the various marriages and relationships, from Valentine's parents to Brett's marriage to Mackenzie, Alfred and Pam to Valentine and Gianluca, and even Gram and Dominic?

11. Bret tells Valentine that marriage is a lot of work, but she thinks it should be the easy part. Can it be both? What is your view of marriage? Would you recommend it?

12. Valentine's mother, Mike, built her life upon the philosophy, "One god, one man, one life." What would Valentine's philosophy be? Do you have a personal philosophy?

13. What happens when Val goes to Buenos Aires? How does that trip affect her professionally and personally?

14. Valentine is the "sole custodian of our family history, and not because anyone asked me to be. The truth is, no one else is interested in the contents of these dusty old boxes, nor do they want to store them. I'm the only Angelini who treasures these old documents and is inspired by them." Why is the past important to her? Do you have a family custodian? Why don't Americans seem to care about the past?

15. Gram's move to Italy means Valentine must sort through the furniture, boxes, and documents she left behind. "Our history can only be told through the things she saved, and now that Gram is gone, it's left to me to decide worth saving." How does she learn to decide what's worth saving? What would your things say about your life story? Do you have any special objects you want your children to have and pass down to their children?

16. Forgiveness is a central theme of **Brava, Valentine**. What does forgiveness mean to the person receiving it --- and to the person offering it? Why do some people struggle with forgiveness? Is there any transgression too big to be forgiven?

17. What are Valentina's inspirations for her work? How does she keep her creativity fresh?

18. Gram advises her that the key to creativity is for an artist to leave her comfort zone. How can trying something new be stimulating?

19. Tradition is also very important to Valentine. "Gianluca taught me that tradition isn't something we do, it's the way we are." Explain.

20. What challenges do you think lie ahead for Valentine?

Author Bio

Adriana Trigiani is the *New York Times* bestselling author of 20 books of fiction and nonfiction, including THE SHOEMAKER'S WIFE. Her books have been published in 38 languages around the world. She is an award-winning playwright, television writer/producer and filmmaker. Among her screen credits, Trigiani wrote and directed the major motion picture adaptation of her debut novel, BIG STONE GAP. Adriana grew up in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, where she co-founded the Origin Project. Trigiani is proud to serve on the New York State Council on the Arts. She lives in New York City with her family.

Critical Praise

"A sweet and sexy love story."

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