

The Unraveling of Julia

by Lisa Scottoline



About the Book

Internationally bestselling author Lisa Scottoline crafts a gothic thriller with dashes of romance and excellent twists! (Karin Slaughter, *New York Times* bestselling author) in which a young widow inherits a Tuscan estate from a mysterious benefactor and finds herself thrust into the crosshairs of a dangerous conspiracy. Twisty, transportive and haunting, this is suspense with a passport.

Lately, Julia Pritzker is beginning to think she's cursed. She's lost her adoptive parents, then her husband is murdered. When she realizes that her horoscope essentially foretold his death, she begins to spiral. She fears her fate is written in the stars, not held in her own hands.

Then a letter arrives out of the blue, informing her that she has inherited a Tuscan villa and vineyard --- but her benefactor is a total stranger named Emilia Rossi. Julia has no information about her biological family, so she wonders if Rossi could be a blood relative. Bewildered, she heads to Tuscany for answers.

There, Julia is horrified to discover that Rossi was a paranoid recluse with delusions of grandeur, who believed herself to be a descendant of Duchess Caterina Sforza, a legendary Renaissance ruler. Julia is stunned by her uncanny resemblance to Rossi, and even to Caterina. Then she unearths eerie parallels between them, including an obsession with astrology.

Before long, Julia suspects she's being followed, and strange things begin to happen. Not even a chance meeting with a handsome Florentine can ease her disturbed mind. When events turn deadly, she breaks with reality. Julia's harrowing struggle becomes a search for her identity, a race to save her sanity, and ultimately, a question of her very survival.

Discussion Guide

1. In the beginning of the book, Lisa Scottoline included the quote "I look quiet and consistent, but few know how many

women there are in me,? from Anaïs Nin. How do you think this applies to THE UNRAVELING OF JULIA? Do you resonate with this?

2. THE UNRAVELING OF JULIA contains various settings in Italy and includes a lot of Italian history, primarily with Caterina Sforza. Were you familiar with any of the locations and history prior to reading? Did anything stand out to you about these locations and history after reading this book?

3. In the beginning of the novel, Julia describes the cyclical nature of depression and grief: ?Julia?s memories would keep her in bed, where she was most miserable, and the more she remembered, the more miserable she?d be and the more stuck in bed.? Have you ever related to this? What helped you navigate it?

4. Astrology is a prevalent component in the novel. Do you believe in astrology? How much would you let it dictate/influence your decision making?

5. Courtney and Julia can often be seen throughout the book with opposing viewpoints even though they?re best friends. What about their dynamic do you think makes their friendship work? Do you have a Courtney in your life?

6. Analyze the various situations and locations where Julia either struggled to feel or strongly felt a sense of belonging. Do you think she still struggles with belonging by the end of the novel?

7. When visiting Caterina?s castle, Julia feels a familiarity as she?s walking through the grounds she?s never visited before. And while talking on the phone with Courtney about the villa, Julia tells her that it is ?giving up its secrets.? Have you ever felt spiritually connected to a location?

8. Have you seen any spirits? Do you think they exist? Discuss.

9. In a conversation with Julia, Gianluca says that ?Love connects us to the divine. We talk about soulmates, but I believe it, literally and everything has a soul?? And Julia replies: ?That?s what I like about astrology. The connection, to everything.? Do you have a belief or practice that helps you connect with the world and aid in your understanding of it?

10. When confessing his feelings to Julia, Gianluca says, ?Maybe that?s what love at first sight is, two souls recognizing each other.? Do you agree with this? Why or why not? Do you believe in love at first sight?

11. Julia felt guilty of ?missing Mike and wanting Gianluca at the same time.? How much time do you think is enough time to move on? Do you think Julia was ready to start a new relationship with Gianluca when she did?

12. Helen, Julia?s medium, introduces Julia to the existence of thin places. Were you familiar with the concept of thin places prior to reading this book? Do you think they?re real, and have you experienced a thin place before?

13. Originally, Julia had thought that Mike?s death was a senseless act of murder until she found out the truth. Do you think it?s easier to cope with loss when you know the reason behind it? Why or why not?

14. Towards the end of the novel, the spirit of Caterina Sforza helps Julia evade an untimely death. Do you believe in the power of adrenalin to provide someone with unnatural strength in moments of grave danger, or would you consider a

more spiritual energy as the source of strength? In your opinion, was Caterina able to protect Julia?

15. Examine the different types of love and protection Fiamma and Julia experienced from their mothers. How does that impact the child?

16. ?Not everything was knowable, whether for good or for ill.? Do you believe there?s a certain unknowability to life? Does one have to be open to other explanations to experience them?

Author Bio

Lisa Scottoline is a #1 bestselling and Edgar Award-winning author of 37 novels. She also wrote and a series of humorous memoirs, co-authored with her daughter, novelist Francesca Serritella. Lisa is President of Mystery Writers of America, and she reviews fiction for the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

A former trial lawyer, Lisa graduated magna cum laude in three years from the University of Pennsylvania and cum laude from its law school, where she taught Justice & Fiction. There are 30 million copies of her books in print, and she is published in 35 countries. She lives on a Pennsylvania farm with an array of disobedient pets, and she wouldn?t have it any other way.

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