ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

"There Are Things I Want You to Know" About Stieg Larsson and Me

Eva Gabrielsson with Marie-Françoise Colombani



About the Book

There is only one person who can tell Stieg Larsson's story other than himself, and that is his lifelong companion Eva Gabrielsson. This is her book.

The keys to the "Stieg Larsson phenomenon" all lie with Stieg Larsson the man. No one knew him like his Gabrielsson. Here she tells the story of their 30-year romance, of Stieg's lifelong struggle to expose Sweden?s Neo-Nazis, of his struggle to keep the magazine he founded, Expo, alive, his difficult relationships with his immediate family, and the joy and relief he discovered writing the *Millenium Trilogy*. Above all, this is a love story, and we come to understand, reading "THERE ARE THINGS I WANT YOU TO KNOW" ABOUT STIEG LARSSON AND ME, that if there was another secret besides Larsson?s own imagination and convictions, it was his absolute love for his companion and her nurturing of their privacy and shared passions.

"THERE ARE THINGS I WANT YOU TO KNOW" is told as a series of short vignettes, with titles ranging from "Speaking of Coffee" and ?Stieg?s Journalistic Credo? to ?Goodbyes? and ?The Fourth Volume.? She speaks with rare candor and dignity, inspired only by the truth as she knows it. The book is thus short and to the point, poignant in its account of two soulmates and the life they shared, deeply insightful into the man everyone wants to know better, about whom so little is known.

?I would have preferred to have never written this book. It speaks of Stieg, of our life together, and of my life after his death,? writes Gabrielsson early in her book. It was written because she alone can tell this story.

Discussion Guide

1. Gabrielsson opens the book with I-Ching hexagram 51, which represents shock and thunder. How does it set or fit

with the tone of the rest of the book?

2. In Gabrielsson?s introduction to the paperback edition, she says her intentions are to remind people that: ?great plans are not required for great success,? ?laws must change to respect people and their life work,? ?it?s always right to speak out,? and ?we must stay true to ourselves? (page xii). Choose one of these ideas and discuss how it is explored in the book.

3. In Colombani?s foreword, she notes that Larsson?s trilogy ?is an allegory of the individual?s eternal fight for justice and morality, the values for which Stieg Larsson fought until the day he died? (page xiv). How do we see these values expressed in his life with Gabrielsson?

4. Much of Gabrielsson?s remembrances are structured throughout the book as vignettes. What is that meant to convey? Do you think it?s successful?

5. Drinking coffee held a strong place in Gabrielsson and Larsson?s relationship. What do you think coffee represented to them? Do you have a seemingly benign activity in your life that also holds as much meaning?

6. On page 27 Gabrielsson writes regarding finding her soul mate, ?How can anyone calmly accept that his or her life and very *self* should be completely challenged and changed? It was an anguishing feeling, like the realization that the universe is infinite.? What do you think she means by this? What do you think finding a soul mate should feel like?

7. What do you learn about Larssons?s and Gabrielsson?s journey as writers? How are they the same? How are they different?

8. On page 63, Gabrielsson reveals that Larsson believed there should be a ?legally responsible publisher? for the Internet overseeing the type of content one can access online, and that it should be held to the ?same level of accountability demanded of all other media.? Do you agree or disagree with his point of view? Why or why not?

9. The original title of the first volume of the *Millennium* series was **The Men Who Hate Women**, which Larsson strongly insisted on for the Swedish edition. English editions use the title **The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo**. Why do you think Larsson felt so strongly about the original title? How do you think Larsson would have felt about the new one?

10. The actress Rooney Mara, who plays Lisbeth Salander in the David Fincher film of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, has publicly been taken to task by Gabrielsson for saying Lisbeth Salandar is not a feminist. What do you think?

11. On page 77, Gabrielsson says Larsson ?never forgave?an affront? and quotes him as saying, ?To exact revenge for yourself or your friends is not only a right, it?s an absolute duty.? How do you think this mindset informs the *Millennium Trilogy*? And in what way could it be part of its appeal?

12. How do the following themes in the book intersect or complement each other: being an artist, loving and living with an artist, losing a loved one, inspiration and creativity, and the idea of injustice or betrayal on a personal and sociological level?

13. After Larsson died, Gabrielsson researched and wrote a book about the Swedish legal system and common-law

marriage. Gabrielsson contends that for such a progressive country, Sweden wrongly holds onto antiquated laws that offer no protections for domestic partners. In the United States, domestic partner laws vary from state to state. Do you know the laws of your home state? Do you think domestic partners should have the same legal protections as married spouses for reasons of inheritance, guardianship of children, etc?

14. Gabrielsson's memoir has been compared to Joan Didion's **The Year of Magical Thinking**, in which she describes the year after her husband, John Gregory Dunne, died. How would you compare the two? Why do you think Gabrielsson wrote the book: as a declaration of love, a cathartic remembrance, a statement of ideals, or all of these reasons?

15. In 1977, when Larsson was 22 and traveling to Africa, he wrote Gabrielsson a farewell letter because he didn?t believe he would return to Sweden alive (page 140). In what way do the contents of that letter still hold meaning, and possibly even more so, 27 years later?

Author Bio

Eva Gabrielsson is an architect, author and political activist. As an author, in addition to working with Stieg Larsson on his writing projects, she is the coauthor of several books, including a monograph on the subject of cohabitation in Sweden, a Swedish government study on how to create more sustainable housing, and a forthcoming study on the Swedish urban planner Per Olof Hallman. She has also translated into Swedish Philip K. Dick?s THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE. As an activist, she works to stop violence against women. Eva Gabrielsson and Stieg Larsson met in 1972, when they were both eighteen, and lived and wrote together from 1974 until his death in 2004. Their struggle together for social justice was the basis for the books in Larsson?s *Millennium Trilogy*.

"There Are Things I Want You to Know" About Stieg Larsson and Me

Eva Gabrielsson with Marie-Françoise Colombani

Publication Date: January 24, 2012
Genres: Biography, Nonfiction
Paperback: 224 pages
Publisher: Seven Stories Press
ISBN-10: 1609804104
ISBN-13: 9781609804107