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All the Stars in the Heavens

by Adriana Trigiani



About the Book

Adriana Trigiani, the *New York Times* bestselling author of the blockbuster epic THE SHOEMAKER'S WIFE, returns with her biggest and boldest novel yet, a hypnotic tale based on a true story and filled with her signature elements: family ties, artistry, romance and adventure. Born in the golden age of Hollywood, ALL THE STARS IN THE HEAVENS captures the luster, drama, power and secrets that could only thrive in the studio system --- viewed through the lives of an unforgettable cast of players creating magic on the screen and behind the scenes.

In this spectacular saga as radiant, thrilling and beguiling as Hollywood itself, Adriana Trigiani takes us back to Tinsel Town's golden age --- an era as brutal as it was resplendent --- and into the complex and glamorous world of a young actress hungry for fame and success. With meticulous, beautiful detail, Trigiani paints a rich, historical landscape of 1930s Los Angeles, where European and American artisans flocked to pursue the ultimate dream: to tell stories on the silver screen.

The movie business is booming in 1935 when 21-year-old Loretta Young meets 34-year-old Clark Gable on the set of *The Call of the Wild*. Though he's already married, Gable falls for the stunning and vivacious young actress instantly.

Far from the glittering lights of Hollywood, Sister Alda Ducci has been forced to leave her convent and begin a new journey that leads her to Loretta. Becoming Miss Young's secretary, the innocent and pious young Alda must navigate the wild terrain of Hollywood with fierce determination and a moral code that derives from her Italian roots. Over the course of decades, she and Loretta encounter scandal and adventure, choose love and passion, and forge an enduring bond of love and loyalty that will be put to the test when they eventually face the greatest obstacle of their lives.

Anchored by Trigiani's masterful storytelling that takes you on a worldwide ride of adventure from Hollywood to the shores of southern Italy, this mesmerizing epic is, at its heart, a luminous tale of the most cherished ties that bind. Brimming with larger-than-life characters both real and fictional --- including stars Spencer Tracy, Myrna Loy, David

Niven, Hattie McDaniel and more --- it is it is the unforgettable story of one of cinema's greatest love affairs during the golden age of American movie making.

Discussion Guide

1. What made the Golden Age of Hollywood and the films it produced so alluring? Why were the films particularly popular during the Great Depression?

2. What qualities does Gladys Belzer --- the mother of Loretta and her three sisters --- have that make her such a successful matriarch?

3. Loretta is drawn to the movies at the age of four when she first appears in one. What compels her to such work? What characteristics make her such a successful actress even well beyond the age when women usually struggled to work in Hollywood, make her ?more than the sum total of her beauty?? In what ways is Loretta the ?modern woman? Alda believes her to be?

4. Why was there such a double standard in Hollywood that allowed men like Clark Gable to continue to appear in films well into his 50s but women --- even a star like Loretta --- were considered done long before 40? Why might such a double standard still exist?

5. Examine the powerful and extensive relationship between Loretta and Clark Gable. What is each drawn to in the other? In what ways is their romance typical of or different from many in Hollywood at the time? What limits the relationship? What might explain the longevity despite these limits?

6. Chemistry is said to be essential in relationships both on screen and off. What *is* chemistry between two people? What might Loretta mean when she thinks that, ?it?s in the bubble of vulnerability that chemistry is born??

7. Of what symbolic significance to Loretta?s relationship with Clark is the film *The Call of the Wild*?

8. Loretta believes romantic love requires surrender, blind faith, and that it is ?something a woman has to ?get through,? as though it?s an illness, not something that enriches a life and sustains life over time,? as Alda does. What might explain why each feels this way? In what ways is each correct about the nature of love?

9. Gladys, Loretta and even Judy end up ?unlucky in love? and divorced. How does each explain this? What might explain the phenomenon of being attracted to someone who causes disappointment or even heartbreak?

10. How is each of the men significant to Loretta --- Spencer Tracy, Clark Gable, David Nivens --- similar or different? Why are there so few good husbands and fathers among the men of Hollywood?

11. How do Alda?s challenging times, first in Padua and then in the convent, prepare her or not for her experience working for Loretta Young in Hollywood? What of value does she eventually take from each profound and very different part of her life?

12. In what ways does Alda?s relationship with Luca differ from many romances in Hollywood at the time, including

that between Loretta and Clark Gable? What important changes must Luca make to prove his love to Alda?

13. Considering Clark Gable, Loretta believes ?a man?s relationship with his mother determine[s] his point of view about women.? In what ways might this be true or not?

14. Luca introduces Alda to the experience of art and she finds that it ?changed everything: mood, climate, perception,? and feels like ?total freedom.? How does it do this?

15. Consider the complex and often hypocritical morality of major film studios, one that often overlooked or even whitewashed bad behavior but also referred to the Hays Code to banish people. What other factors played a part in such permissive and condemning behavior?

16. In what ways are religion and a spiritual life important to Loretta? To Alda? What particular challenges did their lives in Hollywood pose to such a dedicated faith?

17. After years in the business, Alda observes that often, for actors, ?their working world of heightened emotion and perfection was an illusion that fed their unworthiness.? In what ways might this be true? What other professions are similarly challenging?

18. What?s the nature of being a fan of a movie star? What does such a relationship provide despite its one-sided nature? At what point might being a fan be unhealthy?

19. What?s the nature of gossip that makes it so compelling to hear or pass along and yet so often harmful?

20. Considering Loretta?s long, successful career, how are the mediums of film, radio and then television different for both the actor and the fan?

21. Why is fame so compelling to so many? In what ways is this healthy or not? Of what particular significance is it in the contemporary, technological world of Alda?s great niece Roxanne Chetta?

Author Bio

Adriana Trigiani is the *New York Times* bestselling author of 21 books of fiction and nonfiction. Her work has been published in 38 languages around the world. An award-winning playwright, television writer/producer, and filmmaker, Trigiani wrote and directed the major motion picture of her debut novel, BIG STONE GAP; adapted her novel, VERY VALENTINE, for television; and directed the documentary, *Queens of the Big Time*, among others.

In 2023, President Sergio Matterella of Italy awarded Trigiani the *Cavaliere dell?Ordine della Stella d?Italia*. The Library of Virginia bestowed their highest honor, the *Patron of Letters* degree, to Trigiani in 2024. She received the 2025 Ellis Island Medal of Honor for her significant contributions to literature, culture, and communicty.

Trigiani grew up in Appalachia, in the mountains of Virginia, where she co-founded The Origin Project, a year-round, in-school writing program that has served over 25,000 students since its inception in 2014. Trigiani is proud to serve on the New York State Council on the Arts. She lives in Greenwich Village with her family.

Critical Praise

?Trigiani?s newest fictionalizes Loretta Young?s life, both through her eyes and those of an invented personal secretary, whose closeness with the actress ties the narrative threads together. The author?s (THE SHOEMAKER?S WIFE) impeccable research and lush writing style recreates a plausible day-to-day look into the actress?s life as a staunch Catholic living and working in Hollywood, beginning in the days of the Hays Code of 1930, which imposed strict moral rules on film content. The focus is on Young?s close relationship with her mother and sisters, her affair with Spencer Tracy, her close friendship with David Niven, and most of all, her rumored romance with the married Clark Gable while shooting *The Call of the Wild* on location, as well as the extraordinary measures she went through to hide the subsequent pregnancy at a time when adultery and a child out of wedlock destroyed careers. Trigiani mines her own Italian roots with the character Alda Ducci, a young woman with her own secrets, who, as Loretta?s secretary and friend, navigates the trials of love and fame with her. Eminently readable and richly imagined, Trigiani?s latest will thrill her fans and surely collect new ones.?

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