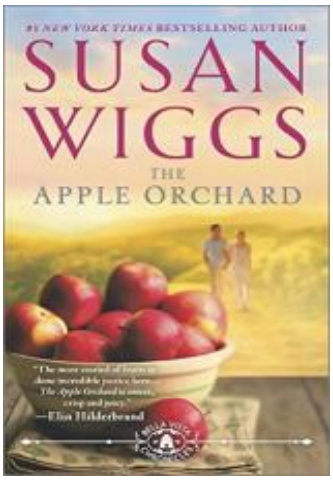
The Apple Orchard

by Susan Wiggs



About the Book

Tess Delaney makes a living returning stolen treasures to their rightful owners. She loves illuminating history, filling the spaces in people?s hearts with stories of their family legacies.

But Tess?s own history is filled with gaps: a father she never met, and a mother who spent more time traveling than with her daughter.

Then Dominic Rossi arrives on the doorstep of the San Francisco shop Tess hopes to buy, and he tells her that the grandfather she never knew is in a coma. Tess has been named in his will to inherit half of Bella Vista, a 100-acre apple orchard in the magical Sonoma town called Archangel.

The rest is willed to Isabel Johansen. A half sister she hadn?t heard of.

Isabel is everything Tess isn?t: all softness to Tess?s hard angles, warm and nurturing where Tess is tightly wound. But against the rich landscape of Bella Vista, with Isabel and Dominic by her side, Tess begins to discover a world filled with the simple pleasures of food and family, of the warm earth beneath her bare feet. A world where family comes first and the roots of history run deep.

Discussion Guide

1. The author uses nonlinear story structure (present day interspersed with scenes from the past) for several of her books. Here, she takes us back to WWII Denmark where we see Magnus Johansen as a young boy. Can the past, particularly one?s ancestry, influence the present? What are some examples of this in the book?

2. How would you feel if someone told you had a half sister you never knew about? Neither Tess nor Isabel ever had the

chance to meet their father, Erik. Do you think this paternal tie is what pulls them together, or do you think the bonds of sisterhood go much deeper than a shared father?

3. Tess and Isabel couldn?t be more different. One is a brash, deal-making, world-weary redhead who can?t slow down and pursues lots of seemingly superficial friendships, and the other is a calm brunette who?d rather stay at Bella Vista creating farm-to-table meals with her extended family than venture out. This picture would certainly support the theory of nurture vs. nature. Yet, if you look more closely, you?ll find that the two sisters have more in common than meets the eye. What characteristics do they share?

4. The main character, Tess Delaney, is a provenance expert. She has an uncanny ability to find things, valuable things, from the past. At one point Tess even says, ?I guess you could say finding treasure is in my blood.? When she finds the pink topaz lavaliere necklace that belongs to Annelise Winther --- a necklace that could allow Annelise to live in the lap of luxury for the rest of her days --- she?s disappointed that Annelise will not sell the necklace, but she?s not*devastated.* Is there some part of Tess that wishes she had such a powerful connection to someone that no amount of money could replace it?

5. When did you know that Dominic Rossi was the right man for Tess? Was it right away, when he brushes the powdered sugar from the doughnut off her nose at work, or in the E.R., when he stays in the waiting room to help out Tess, a near-stranger? Or was there another moment?

6. Tess is very tightly wound. Why do you think she?s so keyed up all of the time? She?s very controlled in certain aspects of her life, but appears to have no control or organization at all over other parts. Sometimes people create their own obstacles to happiness, whether it?s out of a belief that they don?t deserve happiness or because they?re just not ready to be happy. Have you ever felt this way?

7. As writer Elin Hilderbrand says of this book, ?The most storied of fruits is done incredible justice here...THE APPLE ORCHARD is sweet, crisp and juicy.? The apple has been a symbol of temptation, it has been known to keep one healthy and it?s the thing to give when currying a teacher?s favor. How does the author bring the themes of temptation, health and seeking acceptance into the book?

8. At the beginning of the story, Tess doesn?t appear to have a maternal bone in her body. And yet she?s surprisingly comfortable around Dominic?s kids. Do you think Tess will be a good stepmother and mother?

9. The author writes about the German occupation of Denmark during WWII, in particular the resistance movement known as the Holger Danske. Nearly 8,000 Jews found safe harbor thanks to Danish citizens like the fictional Magnus Johansen. Were you aware that such heroic efforts were taking place during that time? The more serious subject matter helps to put the struggles and conflicts of the present-day story into perspective. Did you enjoy how the author uses a historical event to frame a fictional narrative?

10. Susan Wiggs is an animal lover who has three dogs at present. In this story, Dominic has rescued a dog, Charlie. Do you think pet owners are more compassionate people? Would this be an instant check on the list of ?things to look for in a partner? for you?

Author Bio

Susan Wiggs is the author of more than 50 novels, including the beloved *Lakeshore Chronicles* series and the recent *New York Times* bestsellers THE LOST AND FOUND BOOKSHOP, THE OYSTERVILLE SEWING CIRCLE and FAMILY TREE. Her award-winning books have been translated into two dozen languages. She lives with her husband on an island in Washington State?s Puget Sound.

Critical Praise

"Wiggs, who is known for her insightful, emotion-filled women's fiction, has again written a tale with universal appeal. The background story of the Danish resistance as well as recipes from that part of the world are a nice touch, and add depth and atmosphere to Tess' story."

?*Booklist*

"This is classic Wiggs, with its emphasis on the strength of family and friends, and a landscape integral to the plot."

?*Publishers Weekly*

"The most storied of fruits is done incredible justice here?Susan Wiggs's novel THE APPLE ORCHARD is sweet, crisp and juicy."

?Elin Hilderbrand, bestselling author of BEAUTIFUL DAY

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