The Good Left Undone

by Adriana Trigiani



About the Book

From ?a master of visual and palpable detail? (*The Washington Pos*t) comes a lush, immersive novel about three generations of Tuscan artisans with one remarkable secret. Epic in scope and resplendent with the glorious themes of identity and belonging, THE GOOD LEFT UNDONE unfolds in breathtaking turns.

Matelda, the Cabrelli family?s matriarch, has always been brusque and opinionated. Now, as she faces the end of her life, she is determined to share a long-held secret with her family about her own mother?s great love story: with her childhood friend, Silvio, and with dashing Scottish sea captain John Lawrie McVicars, the father Matelda never knew.

In the halcyon past, Domenica Cabrelli thrives in the coastal town of Viareggio until her beloved home becomes unsafe when Italy teeters on the brink of World War II. Her journey takes her from the rocky shores of Marseille to the mystical beauty of Scotland to the dangers of wartime Liverpool --- where Italian Scots are imprisoned without cause --- as Domenica experiences love, loss and grief while she longs for home.

A hundred years later, her daughter, Matelda, and her granddaughter, Anina, face the same big questions about life and their family?s legacy, while Matelda contemplates what is worth fighting for. But Matelda is running out of time, and the two timelines intersect and weave together in unexpected and heartbreaking ways that lead the family to shocking revelations and, ultimately, redemption.

Discussion Guide

1. How do shifts in Italian culture create tension between Matelda and Anina? Why was it so important to Matelda to tell her family stories from the past? How do the secrets she shares help heal and strengthen her family bonds?

2. Were you familiar with the history of British Italians during World War II and the Arandora Star? What surprised you

most about the story?

3. ?Love, it turned out, can shelter the banished and lift the broken spirit.? How does love --- both romantic and platonic and, most importantly, self-love --- change the course of the characters? lives? How do their decisions about who to love and when to follow their hearts affect generations to come?

4. ?A family is only as strong as their stories.? How do you see the Cabrelli family?s story changing over the years?

5. Women from different generations are at the heart of this novel. Despite history changing around them, do these women feel different in the way they react to life circumstances to you? Why or why not?

6. In addition to stories, heirlooms are passed down in this family. Did the book make you think about relics in your own family? What ending do you imagine for Anina? How did you experience her character?s evolving over the course of the novel?

7. How did you understand the title, THE GOOD LEFT UNDONE, upon finishing the novel?

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.

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