

All the Stars in the Heavens

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By Adriana Trigiani

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Introduction

In this spectacular saga, as radiant, thrilling, and beguiling as Hollywood itself, Adriana Trigiani takes us back to Tinseltown'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.

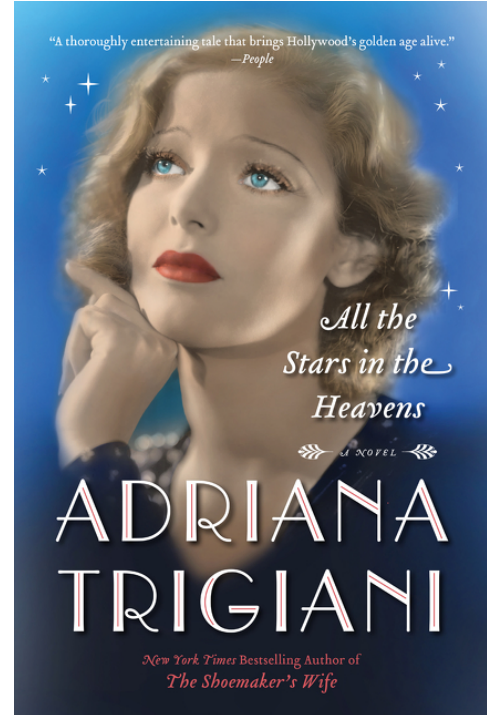
The movie business is booming in 1935 when twenty-one-year-old Loretta Young meets thirty-four-year-old Clark Gable on the set of *The Call of the Wild*. Though he's already married, Gable falls for the stunning and vivacious young actress instantly.

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, which 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 the unforgettable story of one of cinema's greatest love affairs during the golden age of American moviemaking.

Questions for Discussion

1. What characteristics make Loretta so successful beyond the typical "life-span" of an actress in this age of Hollywood? In what ways is she the "modern woman" that Alda considers her to be?



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2. What are the different art forms addressed throughout the story? What makes each one important? How do they differ from one another?
 3. How does the time and place—the Golden Age of Hollywood—affect Loretta’s relationship with Clark Gable? What are the standards that are set and why? What is it this setting that makes it so compelling? How would the circumstances change if their relationship took place in modern times? Would a story like this be as spellbinding and compelling in Hollywood today? How does the allure of mystery and secrets factor into that?
 4. Spencer Tracy and Clark Gable play very different roles in Loretta’s life, despite both being her love interests. How does each of them affect Loretta’s personal growth? To what degree does her relationship with Spencer influence her later relationship with Clark? Loretta says her biggest regret is not marrying Clark Gable. Do you agree or disagree?
 5. Though Alda and Loretta come from very different backgrounds, they work well together. How does Alda’s upbringing and history prepare her for a life as Loretta’s secretary? What values do they share? Are there parts of their individual upbringings that teach universal lessons? In contrast, how does Loretta’s view on the nature of love differ from Alda’s? What factors can be attributed to their differing views?
 6. Despite their feelings for one another, Loretta and Clark can’t make their relationship work. What stands in their way? What do you think draws Loretta to Clark, even though she knows she shouldn’t let herself get involved? Do you think that Clark’s love for Loretta was something more meaningful to him than any of the other romances/marriages he indulged in? If so, at what moment did you realize that?
 7. In Padua, Loretta experiences the making of grappa with Signore Ducci. He says to her, “Grappa is life. You use everything to make it, all the things that no one wants, that no one can use, we use. Everything in life, whether sweet or bitter, ends up in the glass – a mix of.” How would you apply this metaphor to Loretta’s life, specifically?
 8. “Loretta” is a stage name; her given name is Gretchen. Only those closest to her call her by her given name, and as a public figure, she has somewhat of a double persona. How is her true self different from how she is perceived by the masses?
 9. Do you think following all the different storylines is crucial for the plot? Can it be considered a story about Loretta and Clark, or really a story about Loretta and Alda? How does one story lend itself to the other?
 10. Loretta is a devout Catholic. How does her faith inform her major life decisions? What role does her faith play in her romantic, familial and platonic relationships?

11. Clark doesn't have a relationship with Judy, but there are many factors involved. To what degree is this Loretta's choice, Clark's choice, or eventually Judy's choice? What are the circumstances for each of them that lead to this end? Discuss how this turn of events transpires from each character's point of view.

12. Why do you think Alda felt the need to tell Luca about her past, despite Loretta's advice? Do you think it was presented as a sort of test? Do you find Alda's outlook on the hypocrisy of the standards of men and women in relationships to be more modern?

13. There's a colorful cast of supporting characters in this novel—David Niven, Carole Lombard, Enrico, Loretta's sisters, Mother Superior, Tom Lewis, and more. Is there a particular character that you feel is more significant than others? How do they further the plot?

14. Motherhood plays a significant role in this story. How does Loretta's relationship with Gladys influence her choices as a mother to Judy? Why do you think Alda never adopted children? Do you think Loretta's pregnancy and role as a mother herself contributed to Alda's decision to that end?

15. The novel begins and ends in modern times in South Bend, Indiana. Why do you think the author book-ended the novel in this way? What is Roxanne's role in the main story that takes place before her time? Overall, how does the past inform the future, and vice versa?