



Big Cherry Holler

Adriana Trigiani

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BIG CHERRY HOLLER, the extraordinary sequel to BIG STONE GAP, takes us back to the mountain life that enchanted us in Adriana Trigiani's best selling debut novel. It's been eight years since the town pharmacist and long time spinster Ave Maria Mulligan married coal miner Jack MacChesney. With her new found belief in love and its possibilities, Ave Maria makes a life for herself and her growing family, hoping that her fearless leap into commitment will make happiness stay. What she didn't count on was that fate, life, and the ghosts of the past would come to haunt her and, eventually, test the love she has for her husband. The mountain walls that have protected her all of her life can not spare Ave Maria the life lessons she must learn.

BIG CHERRY HOLLER is the story of a marriage, revealing the deep secrets, the power struggle, the betrayal and the unmet expectations that exist between husband and wife. It is the story of a community that must reinvent itself as it comes to grips with the decline of the coal mining industry. It is the story of an extended family, the people of Big Stone Gap, who are there for one another especially when times are tough—including bookmobile librarian and sexpert Iva Lou Wade Makin, savvy businesswoman Pearl Grimes, crusty cashier Fleeta Mullins, and Rescue Squad captain Spec Broadwater, who faces the complications of his double life. Ave Maria's best friend Theodore Tipton, now band director at the University of Tennessee, continues to be her chief counselor and conscience as he reaches the pinnacle of marching band success.

When Ave Maria takes her daughter to Italy for the summer, she meets a handsome stranger who offers her a life beyond the Blue Ridge Mountains. Ave Maria is forced to confront what is truly important: to her, to her marriage, and to her family. Brimming with humor, wisdom, honesty, and the drama and local color of mountain life from Virginia to Italy, BIG CHERRY HOLLER is a deeply felt, brilliantly evoked story of two lovers who have lost their way and their struggle to find one another again.

From the Hardcover edition.

Big Cherry Holler Details

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From Reader Review Big Cherry Holler for online ebook

Laura says

For all the enjoyment I got out of the first book in the series, I was looking forward to this second installment. Wow, talk about taking the series in a very different direction. I would describe the first book as "light, quirky, fun, silly, and relate-able in a goofy way." I would describe this book as "sad, depressing, and filled with heartache."

My main problem with this book is the base assumption of the author. Namely:

- 1) All unhappy men will cheat if given the chance
- 2) All marital problems are because the wife isn't doing right by her man. It is her duty to keep her husband happy. If he isn't happy, she is failing him and the marriage.
- 3) With 1 & 2 being true, when a man cheats, it is his wives fault. If she was a better wife, he wouldn't have done it.

Several characters in the story are involved in a cheating plot line and all of them have the same moral (see 1, 2 and 3 above).

The first half of the book describes the slow process of a marriage decaying. It was totally depressing and tedious. The second half picks up a bit, mostly because the two main characters (Jack and Ave) are apart so the reader can't be slowly killed by hearing how things are not working for them. There is a happy ending for them (which is why it got a 2 stars instead of a 1 star), but the ending was only happy because Ave pretty much realized that ALL their problems were completely her fault and she would be better.

Some women may feel empowered by the story because of the concept that marital happiness is completely controlled by the wife alone, but I was pretty offended by that. I am pretty sure my husband can make his own choices beyond simply reacting to mine.

Overall a total disappointment. Finished the book mostly out of respect for the first. I checked out book 3 in the series at the same time as book 2, but I am not sure if I will give it a chance. The reviews on Goodreads seem to indicate that book 3 is back to how book 1 was, so that gives me hope.

Raya says

Sequel to *Big Stone Gap*, the second in this series focuses more on the relationship between Jack and Ave Maria eight years into their marriage. There was a slight departure from the light-heartedness of the first novel, the fluffiness replaced with a seriousness that made this novel more affecting. The writing is much improved and the characters still quirky and charming. It was painful and slightly distressing at times, but there was something beautiful and tender in Ave's grief, which is why I thought this was a better novel than the first. With that said, I had a few issues.

I was turned off by Ave Maria's self-flagellating. Sure, this is told from her perspective, and I understand that her character makes it only natural that she blame herself for the state of her marriage. Her voice would

lose some of its authenticity without it. What kills me is that this idea seems to be validated over and over. Ave can't get over her son's death. Ave is too independent. Ave is cold and detached. And the list goes on...and on and on. Is she completely blameless? Absolutely not, but it seems as though Jack's misgivings and his part in the slow demise of their marriage is attributed to Ave, and that is what I have a huge problem with.

Still, it was a great novel and I look forward to reading the next in this series.

Bryn Clegg says

DNF. I hate when we get a couple together in the first book, and they are struggling and bratty to each other in the next one. I got sick of the main character and her negativity, and I don't like cheating husbands.

Laura says

This was so different from the first book... All the marriage drama had my avoiding it a bit..

Joanne says

A deeper book than its predecessor in some ways. Ave Maria and Jack have been married for eight years and have lost a child, and it's taken a toll on their marriage. What got me were several moments where Ave Maria comes to some painful realizations about herself and Jack. Trigiani can have you laughing out loud one moment and reaching for the tissues the next. Wonderful.

Cheryl, The Book Contessa says

What a great follow up to Big Stone Gap. These are my favorite kind of books, where I am drawn right in to the characters lives--joys and struggles, mundane and exciting. I have new friends and neighbors and coworkers in this story. I have watched Pearl grow up. I wish Ava would confide in me. Theodore is one of my best friends too! I love Etta's entrance into tween years. There are characters I want to toss off a cliff; the author wrote the frustrating & "love to hate" characters so well. Beautiful novel all the way around. Milk Glass Moon here I come!

Nikki says

I didn't love this sequel as much as I loved Big Stone Gap and as much as I usually love Ms Trigiani's storytelling. Slight spoiler alert... The problem for me was I wanted to jump into the book and throttle Ave for tiptoeing around Jack's "ego". Why do women feel they have to do that?? Anyone with common sense would see she made the right decision to help support the family in a time of need. They have a child that has

to come before his "ego". She should have told him right away, but she shouldn't need his permission. Then her best friend Theodore, who is now out of the closet, take's her husbands side and gives her a lecture. (Is everybody blind in this book?) Next thing, Jack is carrying on with another woman, or at least putting himself in a pretty good position for a another women to stroke his "ego". The book ends in a nice neat bow, but I can't buy it. I know there are more books in the series, I will have to debate them. Better books to read by Ms. Trigiani are Very Valentine, Brava Valentine and Lucia Lucia.

Denise says

Although I loved Big Stone Gap, I didn't enjoy this one quite as much....although it was still very good. It still has the same witticisms and characterizations you expect from this writer (personally, I think Fleeta is a scene-stealer, as is Iva Lou!) but as some other reviewers have stated, I didn't quite care for the way Ave Maria handled her marital tension. Everything worked out to my satisfaction at the end, but some of her choices in this book were, to my monogamous mind, a bit questionable!

Christine says

My favorite thing about this book is that it takes a real look at feelings within the marriage. Nothing is sugar coated or not dealt with. The main character is far from perfect, and the author deals with that but not by making light of the situations. There are places where I think a lot of other authors would make the story about revenge. Adriana does not. Looking forward to book three in the series!

Michelle says

This book is sexist. They have troubles in their marriage, the woman blames everything on herself and tries everything she can to fix it, even when it appears her husband might be looking at other women. And yet, he still says everything she is doing isn't enough and she needs to do better. And her job advancement makes him mad, but he can start a company and it is fine and dandy. Worst of all, the author buys into all this crap instead of using the story to vindicate all the women who are carrying the full weight of making a marriage work, making a home, a career, and being a perfect wife, mother, friend, and community member. This book pissed me off- it was like you fall in love, you get married, then you become a slave to your husband and children, never have time to think about yourself again, and nothing you do is good enough. Also, the writer doesn't even do a good job of showing the main character doing all the things that she is later accused of doing.

Mahoghani 23 says

Everyday life interrupts marriage and eventually the couple becomes redundant and in a cycle. Take Ava Marie & Jack McChesney; After 8 years of marriage, there's a strain between them that causes them to sway in different directions. Ava Marie is worried about another woman attempting to take Jack from her but soon realizes that there are things about herself that has placed a rift in her marriage with the biggest issue of not allowing Jack to be the head of household and understanding that he's a man and not super man.

It's funny, inspiring and reveals life without seeming unrealistic and full of boring extra wording. The author invites you into the lives of the close knit community and how they look out for one another. Sometimes they're nosy and a little overbearing but since I didn't grow up there, it bothers me more than them so their interaction is normal to them.

Marisa says

The pros of this book:

I love her storytelling ability and I also couldn't put this book down. I wish that I could live in Italy and loved the descriptions of this area. I love the sense of community in Big Gap and love all the quirky characters.

The cons:

I really had a hard time with how Ave was the only one who seemed to take any responsibility for the issues in their marriage. I hated that she knew her husband was straying and chose to stay quiet about it. I hated that she thought that even his affair was her fault and never even made him explain himself once she gets back from Italy and even still thinks it was all her fault and that she can fix everything for a marriage where it takes two people. I really had a hard time with the second half of the book for this reason. She just bugged me and so did Jack Mac at this point. I would've liked to see them work through their issues together instead of her taking all the fault and blame.

Donna says

I loved this one. I could relate to the MC in more ways than I'd like to admit. I think the author spoke my language through the MC. I also enjoyed the humor; it had such charm. BUT....the one thing I loved the most was her descriptive strokes. She has a way with words that elevated characters, setting, and relationships. I loved that and really, sometimes that is all it takes to get 5 stars from my stingy fingers.

This book is chick lit and the second installment to a series. I haven't read the first book in this series, but I have read the third one and gave that one 4 stars. The author narrating her own book bugged with the that one, but it didn't even cross my mind once with this one. I think I was just in the mood for this today. So, 5 stars.

♥ Sandi ♡ says

This series is read by the author and her emphasis is obviously made in the places that she deemed important. She has mastered the "down-home" dialog that is needed for this series. This is #2 in the series and takes place 8 years after the first book (or audio) ended.

You don't expect someone from the back hills of Virginia - where Big Stone Gap is supposedly located - to be a descendant of an Italian family. However Ava Maria has her extended family living in Italy. This book

of the series takes Ava Maria and her daughter Etta across the pond for a month to visit. Her husband Jack was supposed to go also, but family discord kept him from going. After eight years of marriage, the birth of their daughter, the death of their son Joe, and the loss of Jack's mining job, Jack does not believe that Ava Maria is still in love with him. Ava meets Pete in Italy. Is she still in love with Jack? How important is her marriage? Does she want to save it?

Other than loving the author's voice as she narrates this book, I believe that I enjoyed book #1 in the series a bit better than book #2. On to book (audio) #3 in the series to see where this will be going.

Florence (Lefty) MacIntosh says

The 1st half is a little tedious & depressing but it pulls up its socks, so persist. Not as light & funny as the 1st novel, Trigiani's writing style has matured and so have the characters in Big Stone Gap, be prepared for a lot of soul searching. The main character Ave Maria is someone I'd like to meet in real life and have a heart to heart with! All marital problems are not the wife's fault alone; Ave Maria's character clearly champions this mindset. There is no getting around it, this book is sexist. Still a good read though.
