



Eight Hundred Grapes: A Novel

By Laura Dave

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Named “Best Book of the Summer” by *Glamour* * *Marie Claire* * *US Weekly* * *Good Housekeeping* * *Cosmopolitan* * *Elle Magazine* * *Wine Enthusiast* * *Health Magazine* * *Metro New York* * *InStyle** *Pop Sugar* * *CBS Local* * *BookTrib* * *AV Club* * and as the #1 Library Reads Pick *

There are secrets you share, and secrets you hide....

Growing up on her family’s Sonoma vineyard, Georgia Ford learned some important secrets. The secret number of grapes it takes to make a bottle of wine: eight hundred. The secret ingredient in her mother’s lasagna: chocolate. The secret behind ending a fight: hold hands.

But just a week before her wedding, thirty-year-old Georgia discovers her beloved fiancé has been keeping a secret so explosive, it will change their lives forever.

Georgia does what she’s always done: she returns to the family vineyard, expecting the comfort of her long-married parents, and her brothers, and everything familiar. But it turns out her fiancé is not the only one who’s been keeping secrets....

Bestselling author Laura Dave has been dubbed “a wry observer of modern love” (*USA TODAY*), a “decadent storyteller” (*Marie Claire*), and “compulsively readable” (*Woman’s Day*). Set in the lush backdrop of Sonoma’s wine country, *Eight Hundred Grapes* is a heartbreakingly funny, and deeply evocative novel about love, marriage, family, wine, and the treacherous terrain in which they all intersect.

In this breakout novel from an author who “positively shines with wisdom and intelligence” (Jonathan Tropper, *This Is Where I leave You*), Laura Dave “writes with humor and insight about relationships in all their complexity, whether she’s describing siblings or fiancés or a couple long-married. *Eight Hundred Grapes* is a captivating story about the power of family, the limitations of love, and what becomes of a life’s work” (J. Courtney Sullivan, *Maine*).

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Editorial Review

Review

“I couldn’t put *Eight Hundred Grapes* down! Laura Dave writes with humor and insight about relationships in all their complexity, whether she’s describing siblings or fiancés or a couple long-married. *Eight Hundred Grapes* is a captivating story about the power of family, the limitations of love, and what becomes of a life’s work.”

—J. Courtney Sullivan, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Maine* and *The Engagements*

“Laura Dave paints Sonoma County and its inhabitants with both warmth and smarts in this delicious novel. *Eight Hundred Grapes* is fun and thought-provoking, and is guaranteed to make you deeply thirsty for some Pinot Noir.”

—Emma Straub, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Vacationers*

“Endearingly quirky...winningly explores the romantic choices we make.”

—USA Today on *London Is the Best City in America*

“Resolutions arrive slowly and often unexpectedly for each of them, giving this satisfying novel legs. A lovelorn winemaker’s daughter seeks the right way to crush sour grapes into a winning blend.”

—Kirkus Reviews

“A charming summer read with depth, just perfect with a glass of California wine.”

—Booklist

“Secrets and love affairs on a Sonoma vineyard mean reading with wine is basically mandatory.”

—Cosmopolitan

“Need a vacation? Dave will transport you with mouthwatering lasagna, breathtaking vistas – and an unforgettable lesson in loyalty.”

—Glamour

“The fabulous Laura Dave is back with another tale of love, marriage, and family.”

—Popsugar.com

“The idyllic life of Georgia Ford is crashing down – oh, and it’s just days before her wedding. Cue cold feet.”

—Marie Claire

“Addictive.”

— US Weekly

“[A] breezy rom-com.”—Us Weekly

“Dave (*The First Husband*) both charms and pulls at the heartstrings in this well-crafted novel... this winning tale will both satisfy on a literary level and encourage oenophiles to pour themselves a glass of a recent vintage to enjoy while reading; it’s a tasty treat for wine lovers and teetotalers alike.”— Publishers Weekly

“This novel’s hero discovers the complexity of human relationships and desires amid the well-researched backdrop of a fictional Sonoma winery.”—*Wine Enthusiast*

“Dave’s tightly woven family drama is best enjoyed with a glass of wine (or two); readers found this one impossible to put down.”

—*Elle* (#1 Reader’s Prize Selection)

“Laura Dave’s latest is just another shining example of her expertise in exploring complex relationships and all the heartache, nuance, and ultimately, joy, that comes with them. ”- goop.com

“*Eight Hundred Grapes* is a quick, fun read, perfect for swallowing in one, delicious gulp rather than careful, measured sips.” -Bustle.com

“Your new escapist summer read.”- Purewow.com

“Reading Dave is like experiencing the sea-salty edge of a Nicole Holofcener movie that you’ve never seen, with set decoration by Nancy Meyer.”

—Lithub.com

About the Author

Laura Dave is the international bestselling author of *Eight Hundred Grapes*, *The First Husband*, *The Divorce Party* and *London is the Best City in America*. Her novels have been published in fifteen countries and optioned as major motion pictures. Dave’s writing has appeared in *The New York Times*, *Glamour*, *Self*, *Redbook*, and *Cosmopolitan*. She lives in New York City.

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Eight Hundred Grapes

Sebastopol, California. Six months ago

My father has this great story about the day he met my mother, a story he never gets sick of telling. It was a snowy December morning and he was hurrying into his co-worker’s yellow Volkswagen bug parked in front of Lincoln Center, holding two cups of coffee and a massive slew of newspapers. (His first wine, Block 14—the only wine in his very first vintage—had gotten a small mention in the Wall Street Journal.) And between the excitement of the article and the steaming coffee, Daniel Bradley Ford didn’t notice that there were two yellow bugs parked in front of Lincoln Center. That his East Coast distributor was not the one huddling for warmth in the yellow bug’s driver’s seat. But, instead, his future wife, Jenny.

He had gotten into the wrong car to find the most gorgeous woman he’d ever seen, wearing blue mittens and a matching beret. Her long, blond curls seeping out from beneath. Her cello taking up the whole backseat.

The legend goes—and knowing my parents I almost believe it—that my mother didn’t scream. She didn’t ask who my father was or what he was doing in her car. She offered one of her magical smiles and said, “I was wondering what took you so long.”

Then she reached out her hand for the cup of coffee he was ready to give her.

Synchronization, my father would say. This was a very big word for him. Synchronization: The coordination of events to operate in union. A conductor managing to keep his orchestra in time. The impossible meeting of light reflection and time exposure that leads to a perfect photograph. Two yellow bugs parked in front of

Lincoln Center at the same time, the love of your life in one of them.

Not fate, my father would add. Don't confuse it with fate. Fate suggests no agency. Synchronization is all about agency. It involves all systems running in a state where different parts of the system are almost, if not precisely, ready.

For my father, it was the basis of how he approached his work: first as a scientist, then as a winemaker. He was one of the first biodynamic winemakers in America, certainly in his little corner of it. He considered not just the grapes themselves, but—as he liked to espouse—the ecological, social, and economic systems that needed to be synchronized in order to properly grow them. My father said that doing it any other way was lazy.

As for me, I had trouble seeing the role synchronization played in my own life. The role it was supposed to play. Until it went and destroyed my blessedly ignorant, willfully optimistic life, in a way I couldn't ignore unless I ran from it.

So, on that fateful Friday, I did just that. I ran from it.

With only the clothes on my back and a hastily packed suitcase, I drove from sunny Southern California—the place that had been my home for the last fourteen years—to the small town in Northern California on the edge of the Russian River Valley. The place that'd been my home for my entire life until then.

Nine hours, five rest-spot stops, two terrible milkshakey coffee drinks (one vanilla, one strawberry), and a roll of Rolos later, I arrived in Sonoma County. I should have felt relief, but as I passed the familiar sign for Sebastopol—its wiry hills visible behind it—I caught a glimpse of myself in the rearview. My hair was falling out of its bun, my eyes were deeply unsettled, and I couldn't escape the feeling that I was about to walk into a new kind of hell.

So I turned around and started driving the nine hours back to Los Angeles.

But it was getting late, and I hadn't eaten (save the Rolos), and the rain was coming down hard, and I was so tired I couldn't think. So I pulled off Highway 12, getting off at the exit for downtown Santa Rosa, knowing where I was going before I admitted it to myself.

The Brothers' Tavern was something of a Sonoma County institution. The original owners—and brothers—had opened the doors seventy-eight years ago with the idea that it would be the place in the county that was open late, and the place that served the best beer. The subsequent owners had stuck with the plan, taking the bar and grill to another level, brewing award-winning beer on site that drew people from all over the state.

Of course, the current owners of The Brothers' Tavern were my brothers. Finn and Bobby Ford. And the jig would be up as soon as they saw me. They would see it on my face. What I had been through.

But when I walked into the bar, Finn was the only one standing there. No Bobby. Bobby was always there on the weekends, so this was the first confusing thing.

The fact that my father wasn't sitting on the corner bar stool having a drink with them was the second.

My father came by every Friday—the only way to start his weekend, he liked to say, was to have a drink with his boys. My heart dropped in disappointment, realizing that this was really why I had shown up, despite the ramifications. So that my father would have a drink with his girl, jig up or not.

But it was only Finn standing behind the bar, looking at me like he didn't recognize me. And, for a minute, I wondered if he didn't. My hair was in a disheveled bun, my smile fake and forced. And it was late. Maybe I looked like another straggler, trying to get a drink before he closed down for the night.

To his credit, Finn didn't call me out on any of this. He walked past the other customers, who stared at me as I took a seat at the end of the bar—the one close to the fireplace. My father's seat.

I sat down, ignoring their pseudo-casual glances, Finn drilling them with looks so they'd stop staring. This was Finn, the perpetual big brother. He was ready to protect me even before he knew what he was protecting me from.

He offered a big smile. "What are you doing here?"

"Took a drive."

"A nine-hour drive?" he said.

I shrugged. "Got carried away."

"Clearly." He paused. "No speeding ticket?"

"No, Finn," I said, knowing Finn thought I was an awful driver. Like running-out-of-gas-while-getting-a-speeding-ticket awful. It's hard to lose that reputation. Even if it only happened once.

"Glad to hear that, at least," Finn said, sincerely.

Then he nodded, trying to decide how hard to push, keeping his eyes on me.

Finn was my good brother. They both were pretty good, but Finn was the truly good one in my book, even if he wasn't the good one in anyone else's. Bobby was more ostensibly impressive: The captain of the high school football team, a local legend, a successful venture capitalist with a full life in San Francisco. A beautiful town house, beautiful cars, beautiful family. He was five minutes younger than Finn, but in every other way he seemed to always come in first.

Bobby had bought the bar as a hobby and to give Finn something to do. Finn believed less in employment. He owned the bar so he could drink for free and so he could keep taking photographs. Finn was a great photographer, but he seemed to only work—weddings, family portraits—when the mood struck him. He was a little like my father in that way, adhering to a code of purity that only he understood.

"I missed Dad?"

"He didn't come in tonight." Finn shrugged, as if to say, Don't ask me. "We can call him. He'll come now, if he knows you're here."

I shook my head, keeping my eyes down, afraid to meet Finn's eyes. Finn looked so much like my father.

Both of them had these dark eyes, with matching piles of dark hair. They were handsome guys, all American. The only obvious difference was that Finn liked to keep that mane of hair under a backward baseball cap. Usually a Chargers cap.

It made it hard to tell him what was going on without feeling like I was about to disappoint my father too.

Finn cleared his throat. “So they don’t know you’re here? Mom and Dad?”

“No, and I’d appreciate if you don’t tell them, you know, the circumstances. It wasn’t planned, obviously.”

“Obviously.”

He paused, like he wanted to say something else, but thought better of it. “They’ll be happy to see you,” he said. “That you came. Whatever the reason. None of us thought you were coming home for the harvest, you know?”

The harvest of the grapes—the most important five weeks in my father’s year. I’d arrived home under duress the very weekend he always held most sacred—the last weekend of the harvest. Every year I came home for it. We all did. We returned to the family house: The brothers slept in their old rooms, I slept in mine. Our various spouses and partners and children filled up the rest of the house. And all of us joined my father to harvest the final vines, to drink the first sips of wine. We all stayed for the harvest party. But this year was supposed to be different. For a variety of reasons, I wasn’t supposed to be there.

Finn, realizing his error in raising this, shifted from foot to foot. “What do you want to drink?” he said.

I pointed at the entire bar behind him. The bourbon and scotch and whisky were like Christmas presents.

Finn smiled. He put a glass of bourbon in front of me, and a glass of red wine. “What you think you want,” he said, pointing to the first. “What you’ll actually take more than two sips of.”

“Thank you,” I said.

“My pleasure.”

I sipped at the bourbon. Then I turned, almost immediately, to the wine.

Finn put the bottle on the table so I could see what he had poured. It was a dark and grippy Pinot Noir. The Last Straw Vineyard. B-Minor 2003 Vintage. One of the wines from our father’s vineyard. My favorite wine from our father’s vineyard, mine and Bobby’s. One thing we had in common.

“This is a great bottle,” I said. “You should take it away and save some for Bobby.”

Finn nodded, tightly. Like there was something he didn’t want to say, not out loud.

Then, just as quickly, he softened.

“You hungry?” Finn said. “I could get the kitchen to fix you something.”

“They’re not closed?”

Finn leaned against the countertop. "Not for you," he said.

It was the nicest thing he could have said, and I gave him a smile so he knew how much I appreciated it. Then he walked back toward the kitchen, taking a sip from the bourbon as he went.

I sat taller on the bar stool, more aware of the looks I was getting, now that Finn was moving away.

Finn turned back for just a second. "Hey, Georgia . . ." he said.

"Yeah?"

"You know that you're still wearing your wedding dress, yes?" he said.

I looked down at the sprawling lace, dirty from the five-hundred-mile drive and the run across The Brothers' Tavern parking lot. And what looked, sadly, like a lost Rolo.

I touched the soft skirt. "I do," I said.

He nodded and turned back toward the kitchen. "All right, then," he said. "One grilled cheese coming up."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Antoinette Holdren:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children right up until adult are different content. As we know that book is very important for all of us. The book Eight Hundred Grapes: A Novel ended up being making you to know about other expertise and of course you can take more information. It is very advantages for you. The book Eight Hundred Grapes: A Novel is not only giving you a lot more new information but also to become your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship with all the book Eight Hundred Grapes: A Novel. You never truly feel lose out for everything if you read some books.

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