



Unsettled: A Novel

In this lyrical historical fiction with alternating points of view, a repressed woman begins an ancestral quest through the prairies of Iowa, awakening family secrets and herself, while in the late 1800s, a repressed ancestor, Tante Kate, creates those secrets.

As Van Reinhardt clears out her dead father's belongings, she comes across hints of an unsettling family history, along with a request penned by her father prior to his death that sends her on a genealogical quest. Examining a 1900 family portrait of her German immigrant ancestors, Van's curiosity grows about one of the children portrayed there.

In the 1870s, Kate is a German immigrant newly arrived in America with only her brother as family. Life changes for Kate when she and her brother split. When she returns, armed with a secret, nothing is the same, for her or her brother. Together they try to forge a life working for farmers in southwestern Iowa and at Kate's urging, her brother takes the farmer's daughter as his wife. And as that family grows, Kate becomes Tante Kate, isolated and separate from the rest of the family—almost a servant—not even appearing in the family portrait.

Van revisits the town and the farm of her ancestors to discover calamitous events in probate records, farm auction lists, asylum records and lurid obituaries, hinting at a history far more complex and tumultuous than she had expected. But the mystery remains, until she chances upon a small book, sized for a pocket—Tante Kate's secret diary—that provides the missing piece.

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By PATRICIA REIS

HISTORICAL FICTION

ISBN: 978-1-7367954- 8-4

Trade paperback, \$19.00

5 3/8 x 8 3/4, 378 pages

Pub Date: 10/10/2023

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Author Patricia Reis is a Midwesterner at heart. In the mid-1800s, her German immigrant ancestors pioneered a farm in southwestern Iowa and their portrait gave her this story. She has lived on both coasts and currently resides in Portland, Maine where she is active in Maine Writers and Publishers. She spends six months of each year in Nova Scotia. Reis holds a BA in English Literature from the University of Wisconsin, an MFA from UCLA and a degree in Depth Psychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute in Santa Barbara. She also maintains a private practice of psychotherapy for women. Reis's memoir, *Motherlines: Love, Longing, and Liberation* (SheWrites Press, October 2016) won a gold medal for memoir from Independent Press Publishers. Along with numerous essays and reviews, she has published several nonfiction books.



"Unsettled is an old-fashioned novel, filled with characters as familiar as family pictures, as touching and as terrifying. Reis writes with assurance about the kinds of secrets that destroyed families generations ago — and maybe still do."

—Jacquelyn Mitchard, Author of *Deep End of the Ocean*



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AN IMPRINT OF ALL THINGS BOOK, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES | DISTRIBUTED TO THE TRADE BY PUBLISHERS GROUP WEST

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