Under the Tuscan Sun Book Summary, by Frances Mayes

by Allen Cheng

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1-Page Summary of Under the Tuscan Sun

Frances Mayes is a writer who moved to Italy and renovated an abandoned villa. The book she wrote about the process was called Under the Tuscan Sun: At Home in Italy (1996). She also wrote a memoir, several poetry books, and served as editor of Best American Travel Writing 2002.

The book starts with Frances waiting for news about her bank transfer. She is trying to buy an old house in Tuscany, Italy. The name of the house was Bramasole which means "yearning for the sun."

Though the house is old, it's not cheap. Frances and Ed are nervous about buying it because they know they will be putting all their savings into it. The process of buying a house is long, but once they're allowed to move in, they can begin renovating and making the place into a home again. Once Frances and Ed own the house, though, there are more red tape hurdles to jump through before they can start renovating.

Weeds grow around the home's terraces, and Frances sets to work clearing them out. She hires a local man to repair a wall that has collapsed. She also meets some Polish workers who are willing to help her with the project.

The couple encounters several issues with language barriers and the local contractors. The Italian language is not perfect, so they have trouble communicating effectively. Moreover, their vocabulary isn't extensive enough to communicate well. Frances and Ed find that local contractors take a more relaxed approach to work than what they expected. When one contractor gets sick and bows out of the project,
another contractor does not show up as scheduled.

As summer ends, they begin renovations. They're both professors at a university and are returning to Italy for the next summer. A well has been dug providing fresh water for their new home. Permits have finally been approved, so now they can start building their villa. Frances hopes that it will be ready by Christmas so she can spend the holiday with her daughter Ashley there.

However, when the workers fix up Villa Cimbrone, they find more problems. Frances is not happy to see that someone has scribbled a phone number on an expensive fresco in her home. The family must spend Christmas at another friend's house instead of their own.

During their renovation, Frances and Ed discover a spring that runs under the house. They also find out that the building used to be a chapel during its history.

Frances often thinks about what the previous owner of her villa would say or do if she were alive today. The previous owner was elderly and had a lot of grandchildren, so Frances imagines that she loved to cook for them and take care of plants.

By the next spring, Frances is happy to move into her new house. She and Ed build a table outside so they can enjoy dinner outdoors and entertain friends on warm days.

Frances goes on to describe her visits to the villa in Tuscany and that she eventually became a resident of Italy. She travels around with Ed, buying wine and touring old tombs. They also host a friend's destination wedding at their home. In winter they collect olive oil from their trees and spend Christmas there as well.

The book Under the Tuscan Sun rose to number one on the New York Times Best Seller list. It stayed there for two years. The author later wrote two other books about her experiences in Italy, Bella Tuscany: The Sweet Life in Italy and In Tuscany. A movie was made based on Under the Tuscan Sun, starring Diane Lane.

**Full Summary of Under the Tuscan Sun**

**Overview**

Under the Tuscan Sun is a memoir about Frances Mayes, who bought her home in Tuscany. She describes how she and her husband renovated it and enjoyed its gardens while discovering the sights of Italy. This book will leave readers feeling excited about life no matter where they live.

Frances and Ed were excited about their new house, Bramasole. They had been waiting for the completion of this purchase for a long time. Frances was worried that they would lose all their savings on this property but once they moved into the home, she began to relax because she could start planning how to renovate it. She and Ed cleaned out some old bottles from the many rooms in the house which helped her feel better about the purchase.
Frances and Ed are waiting for permits before they can start major renovations. In the meantime, Frances and Ed hired a man to fix their stone wall. They also met some Polish men who would become friends and handymen. The process of fixing the wall also introduced them to Italian contractors' work ethic, as well as language barriers with other workers.

Frances and Ed had to return from Italy earlier than they would have liked because of their jobs. When Frances and Ed returned the following summer, they discovered that a new well had been dug for them, relieving them from the disappointment of having a dry well during the previous summer. They also learned that their permits were approved and work could soon begin on building their house. They hoped to be able to spend Christmas at Bramasole with Frances' daughter, Ashley. However, this did not happen due to delays in construction.

When Frances and Ed returned to Bramasole, they found that the workers had not cleaned up after themselves. They wrote a phone number on a fresco in the dining room with permanent ink. As a result, Frances, Ed and Ashley ended up spending Christmas at their friend's house in Cortona. The work was finally finished the following spring when Frances was happy with it. She looked forward to moving into Bramasole because she had wanted to have long meals outside under trees since seeing Bramasole for the first time.

Ed and Frances travel to Tuscany frequently, but they don't stay in the same place for very long. One summer, Ed and Frances go on a trip through Tuscany, visiting many Etruscan tombs and collecting wines for their wine cellar at Bramasole. Friends of theirs come to visit them during that time as well. One winter, Ed and Frances make it back home to harvest their olive trees so they can have oil made from those fruits. They invite friends over to share the holidays with them at Bramasole.

When Frances wrote this memoir, she didn't expect it to sell as well as it did. Later, when Disney decided to make a movie based on the book, Frances was thrilled. She read through the script and found that it kept intact the spirit of the book, which was her main concern. Frances and Ed arrived in Tuscany just in time to watch filming for a movie that had been adapted from her book. It was fun watching them film because everyone in town seemed excited about being an extra on set.

Section 0 Summary ("Bramare: (Archaic) To Yearn For and A House" and "The Land It Takes Two Oxen Two Days to Plow")

Frances Mayes had recently gone through a divorce and was now involved in new relationship with her lover, Ed. Frances had been to Italy several times and loved the simplicity of life there. For the past few years, Frances and Ed would visit together looking for a house to buy because they were always forced into renting when they visited.

Frances and Ed purchased a house in Tuscany. They had seen the house on their first trip to Italy, but they didn't have enough money at the time to purchase it. When they returned, Frances called about the house and found out that it was still available. She made an offer immediately because she knew how much her husband wanted the place. After waiting for what seemed like forever, Frances started getting discouraged because she thought that maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all; however, soon after that, she got word from the bank letting her know that their offer had been accepted and that they could
move into Bramasole (the name of their new home). The only furnishings in their new home were two beds and one kitchen table; everything else was covered with dust or broken or both.

Frances and Ed immediately began to clean up the house when they bought it. They removed spiders, scorpions, and other insects that had made the house their home for thirty years. They hired a geometra (a person who prepares plans of buildings) to make plans for renovations on the three floors of the house, as well as an apartment in back that was inaccessible from the front of the house. Frances and Ed planned to add a bathroom on second floor bedroom and tear down walls in order to open up first floor rooms. However, they were warned that taking down those walls would compromise structural integrity causing them to revise their plan by adding central heating instead while waiting for permits from local government which could take many months or even years before being approved.

Frances and Ed interview three contractors, looking for someone they could trust to do the work while they were back in the United States. The language barrier proved to be a small problem, but they eventually picked the man they wanted to use. Shortly before Frances and Ed had to leave Italy for good, there was an issue with their well that wasn't deep enough. They needed a new well so that water would be available when it was time for them to go home.

This passage is about a woman who purchases an old house in Italy. The author describes the purchase and her first summer spent there. She also talks about how this house was a turning point for her life, helping to move forward after going through a bad divorce and starting something new with someone else.

The couple's plan to renovate their house seems easy at first. They imagine doing most of the work themselves, with some help from friends and family for bigger projects like building a bathroom. The couple is excited about this project because it will be a chance for them to spend time together in their new home while also creating an oasis away from the stress of everyday life.

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