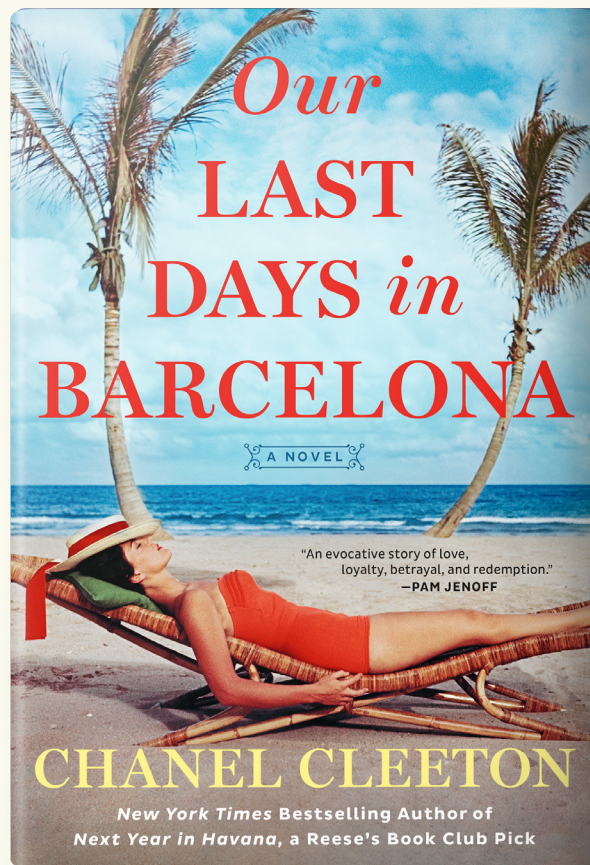




Book Club Kit





Dear Reader,

After *When We Left Cuba* was published, I thought it would be the last chapter in the Perez sisters' stories. Honestly, when I started writing *Next Year in Havana*, I had only intended to tell Elisa's story, but then Beatriz came to me in all her glamour and intrigue, and I couldn't resist the opportunity to let her have her moment in the spotlight. Perhaps because I had spent so much time with Beatriz and she and Isabel were so often at odds in *Next Year in Havana* and *When We Left Cuba*, it was difficult for me to envision writing a book about Isabel. But then I began receiving messages from readers asking me if I had plans to tell the other sisters' stories, and as time went on, I found myself intrigued by the idea of exploring what happened to the Perez family—and Isabel—after *When We Left Cuba*.

If Beatriz pushed her way into my mind with a dramatic entrance, Isabel snuck up on me. The more I thought about her character, about her life and the experiences she'd been through, the more my curiosity grew until I knew I had to tell her story, too. As soon as I began writing *Our Last Days in Barcelona*, I fell in love with Isabel. Her courage, her loyalty, her conviction, and the sense of responsibility she carries with her won me over, but it was the passions that she kept hidden from everyone that led me on an unforgettable adventure.



Once I'd finished drafting *Our Last Days in Barcelona*, I knew I'd found a new favorite Perez sister, and considering how unsure I initially was about telling her story, I have all of you to thank for it. Your messages and curiosity moved me to take the story in a direction I never anticipated. As I dove beneath the layers of Isabel's personality, I found a heroine I rooted for, related to, and felt ultimately inspired by. In *Our Last Days in Barcelona*, you'll get not only Isabel's story, but also her mother Alicia's and their cousin Rosa's, and in the family secrets Isabel uncovers, she gains an understanding of the true meaning of the legacy she carries on her shoulders as she fights for her family and to follow her heart. It's an incredible journey.

Writing this novel felt like a reunion of sorts as I was able to revisit so many characters from my previous books who have such a special place in my heart. As I wrote each one, I thought about all the enthusiasm and support I have received from all of you for this family and these books. It truly has meant so much to me and I hope that you enjoy this next chapter in the Perez family's life as much as I loved writing it. Thank you so much.

Thanks for reading!

*Best,
Chanel Cleeton*



Discussion Questions

1. *Our Last Days in Barcelona* alternates between Isabel's story in the 1960s and Alicia's and Rosa's stories in the 1930s. Which heroine did you identify with more? What differences did you see in their characters? What similarities?
2. Each of the Perez siblings handles exile differently. Which sister do you identify with more? Whose experiences and perspectives could you relate to? What traits do the sisters share and how are they different?
3. How does her exile from Cuba impact Isabel? How do her feelings change throughout the novel?
4. Of all the Perez siblings, Isabel is the most like her mother, Alicia. What similarities did you see in their personalities? How did their life experiences impact their choices? What differences do you see between them?
5. Both Isabel and Diego are influenced by the impact war and exile have played on their families and lives. How have those experiences shaped their decisions and personalities? How does that affect their relationship?
6. What parallels do you see between the political histories of Spain and Cuba? What differences?

7. Family loyalty and expectations play a large role in the novel. How does each heroine grapple with the expectations that are placed on them? Do you agree with their choices? How would you have handled them?
8. Alicia and Nestor have a history together and she often wonders what might have happened if things had turned out differently between them. What do you think of the choice Alicia made to return to her husband? Do you think she should have explored her feelings for Nestor?
9. How did your perspective of Alicia and Isabel change from the previous novels once you read *Our Last Days in Barcelona* from their points of view? Did this novel help you to understand their behavior in *Next Year in Havana* and *When We Left Cuba*? Was there anything new you learned about them? Did anything surprise you?
10. Many of the characters make sacrifices for their families and for those around them. What examples of sacrifice did you see in the novel? How do you think you would have acted in similar situations?



Discussion with Chanel Cleeton

Q Tell us about *Our Last Days in Barcelona*! What inspired you to write this story?

A I am so grateful to all the readers who have embraced the Perez family and followed their stories throughout history. Readers had been asking me what was next for the Perez sisters, and if I'd ever tell Isabel's or Maria's story, and it was those lovely notes and questions that inspired me to write *Our Last Days in Barcelona*. In writing Isabel's story, I was able to revisit the characters that have found such a special place in my heart since I first wrote *Next Year in Havana*, and I am so excited to continue the family's legacy as we pick up where we left off at the end of *When We Left Cuba*. I can't wait to share this next chapter in their lives with all of you as we follow Isabel on a journey to save her sister Beatriz in 1960s Barcelona and as we travel back in time to the 1930s where we learn a bit more about their mother, Alicia Perez; meet a new Perez family member; and uncover a family secret that changes Isabel's life.

Q The Perez sisters are back in your latest novel—tell us about the characters in your novel, and what they have been up to since we last read about them.

A When we left the Perez sisters in 1963 in *When We Left Cuba*, the family was in exile in the United States





following the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Each sister was adapting differently, and Beatriz Perez had set out for a new life for herself in Spain. *Our Last Days in Barcelona* begins as *When We Left Cuba* ends with Beatriz in danger and Isabel desperate to repair the rift in their relationship—so much so that she travels to Barcelona in search of her sister.

Q Why did you choose to set this novel in Barcelona? Did you travel to Spain to inform the story?

A While I was writing and researching my previous novel *The Most Beautiful Girl in Cuba*, I came across mentions of the Cuban support and involvement during the Spanish Civil War. As a Cuban-American writer with Spanish ancestry, I wanted to explore more about this relationship and to learn more about this time period in history that was previously unknown to me.

Unfortunately, I was unable to travel to Spain while drafting the novel due to the pandemic, but I have been to Spain before and was able to visit some of the places in the novel years ago.

Q What inspired you to write a story about a woman involved in espionage?

A In *When We Left Cuba*, Beatriz Perez's time in exile and her desire to avenge her brother's death inspired her to become involved with the CIA to overthrow Fidel Castro. This has always been a conflict with her sister Isabel given Isabel's fears for Beatriz's safety, and it seemed like

a natural conclusion given Beatriz's trajectory at the end of *When We Left Cuba*.

Q In *In Our Last Days in Barcelona*, both Isabel and her mother Alicia must make difficult decisions between familial and societal expectations and their own convictions. What did you want to reveal in comparing and contrasting Isabel's and Alicia's experiences navigating the expectations placed upon them as mother and daughter?

A In *Our Last Days in Barcelona*, I really explored the family legacy that is passed down and that each Perez sister has grappled with differently. Isabel has always been the one who chose a different path from her sisters and tried her best to fulfill her family's expectations for her. In *Our Last Days in Barcelona*, I wanted Isabel to have an adventure of her own as she discovers her passions. In doing so, she learns some important lessons from her mother's past.

Like Isabel, we've seen a great deal of Alicia Perez in the other novels, but I really wanted to get to know her as a person apart from her role as the matriarch of the family. Going back in time helped me to understand her character better, and I hope readers will feel the same way as they learn of how she has navigated the expectations and challenges she has faced in her own life.

Q Which Perez family member do you think is most like you?





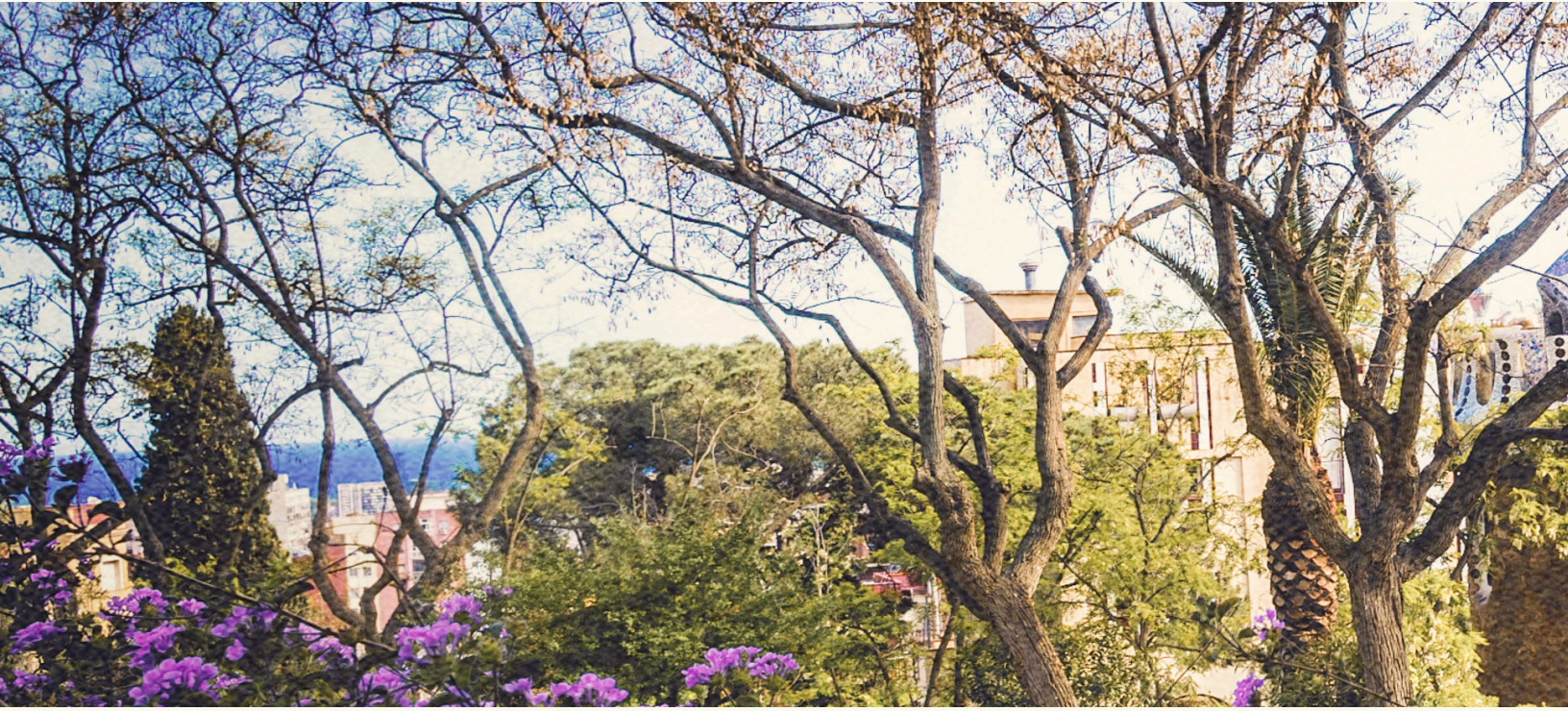
A I definitely see parts of myself in all of the family members. As a writer, I'm often looking for ways to connect with my characters and often that means finding similarities between us and putting little parts of my personality into the characters.

Q Which Perez family member has been your favorite to write? Which Perez family member has been most challenging to write?

A It's so hard to pick a favorite! They all have such a special place in my heart. I'll admit that when readers asked me if I would ever tell Isabel's story, I struggled a bit because while I was writing *When We Left Cuba* from Beatriz's point of view, she was so often at odds with Isabel. It really had me rooting for Beatriz in their sisterly conflict. That said, the more I thought about who Isabel is and what she has been through in her life, I found myself really invested in her character and suddenly seeing things from her perspective. I had a whole new opinion of her. I think she's my favorite Perez heroine now!

Q What do you hope readers take away from *Our Last Days in Barcelona*?

A I hope readers enjoy revisiting the Perez family and embarking on this new chapter in their lives.

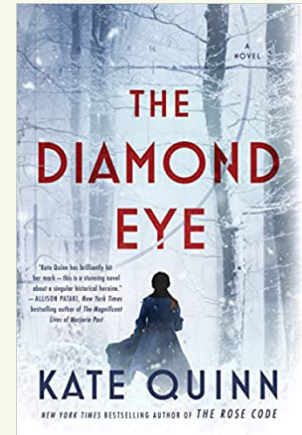


Summer Reading Recommendations

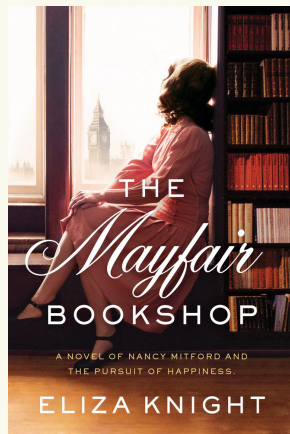
If you're looking for an amazing book to read this summer, here are some of my favorite recent reads.



THE LAST ROSE OF SHANGHAI
by Weina Dai Randel



THE DIAMOND EYE
by Katie Quinn



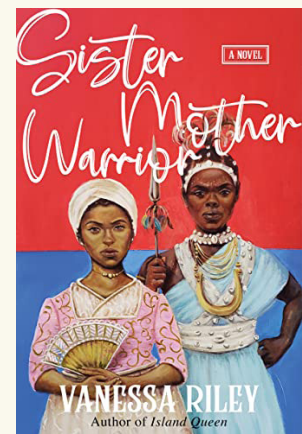
THE MAYFAIR BOOKSHOP
by Eliza Knight



MADMOISELLE REVOLUTION
by Zoe Sivak



A CARIBBEAN HEIRESS IN PARIS
by Adriana Herrera



SISTER MOTHER WARRIOR
by Vanessa Riley



The
Perez Family



ELENA SANCHEZ *m.* ANTONIO PEREZ

