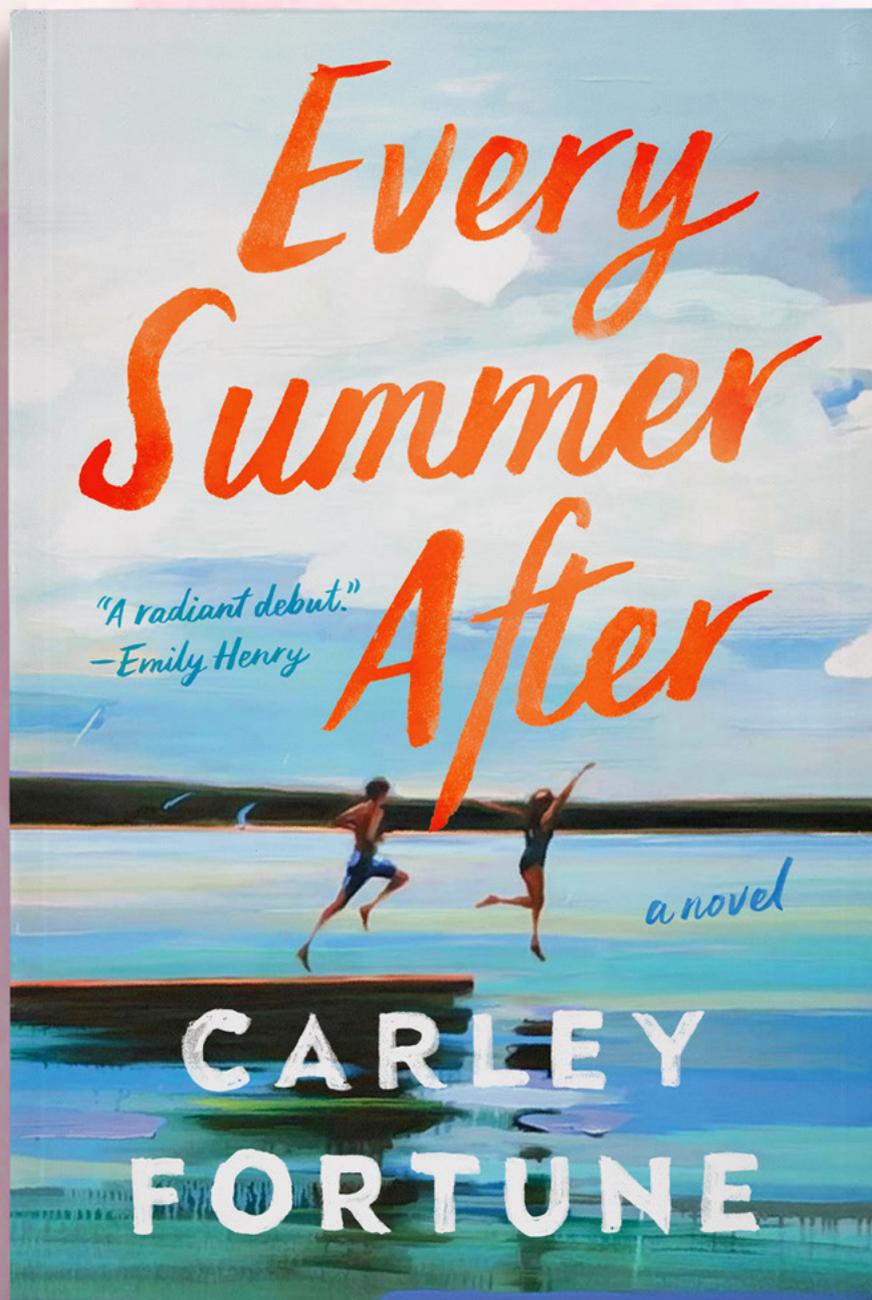


# Book Club Kit



# *A conversation with* **CARLEY FORTUNE**

## **How would you describe *Every Summer After*?**

The book with ALL THE FEELS! It's a sweeping love story that spans six summers in the past and one weekend in the present. It's not a rom-com—although it's definitely a rom and I tried to inject it with plenty of com, but the overall vibe is more angsty and emotional. Because we see Percy and Sam (her childhood best friend turned crush turned boyfriend) grow up together and then fall apart, it's partly a coming-of-age story. We also watch Percy and Sam reunite after more than a decade of not speaking, grappling with the fallout of their relationship in the aftermath of Sam's mother's death. The book tackles the kind of big, juicy themes women's fiction tends to delve into.

## **Why were you personally inspired to write this book?**

I always wanted to write a novel—I just never thought I would. But in the summer of 2020, a number of things happened that set *Every Summer After* into motion. Like Sam, I grew up on Kamaniskeg Lake, in Barry's Bay, and because of



the pandemic, my husband, son, and I were able to leave our home in Toronto and squat in a friend's cottage in the area. I was nostalgic for the summers of my childhood, and at the same time, I was trying to increase my running distances so I could run out to the house I grew up in—I hadn't been back since my family sold it a decade earlier. The day I did felt like I was running back in time, to another part of my life, and I literally ran into an old friend I hadn't seen in years. A while later, after a particularly stressful work call, I threw up my hands and said, "That's it, I'm writing my book!" I didn't know what that book was exactly. But I hadn't done any creative work for myself as an adult, and in 2020, it felt urgent to do so. *Every Summer After* started taking shape that day.

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**Did any real-life experiences inspire the story or parts of the story?**

Parts of it, yes. My parents owned an inn and restaurant, which—like Sam and Charlie—my brother and I worked at. My dad and brother were in the kitchen, and my mom and I served tables. (If a family can survive running a restaurant together, they can survive anything.) There's so much of the setting that's pulled from my memories of summers on Kamanisseg Lake—the jumping rock really does exist. Like Percy, I sat on the dock, staring at the far shore, imagining swimming across. Unlike Percy, I never did it.

**What was it like writing a story with both past and present timelines?**

So fun! (Everything about writing this book was joyful—it got me through 2020.) I'm a huge fan of young adult fiction, and I admire how much empathy and respect YA authors have for the adolescent experience. I knew I wanted to explore teenage friendship and love but through adult eyes—both Percy's and the reader's—and I knew I wanted to go back and forth between timelines. In



hindsight, there were a couple of unexpected benefits to this. One, it gave me a clear structure to work with: very helpful for my first book! And two, I think it keeps the pace moving swiftly. I wrote the book the way you read it, switching between the present and past.

***Every Summer After is an irresistible combination of summer nostalgia, first crushes and teenage hormones morphing into first love and serious chemistry, and rash decisions made in the heat of the moment. Did you find yourself feeling nostalgic for your own coming-of-age days while writing it?***

My high school years had 99 percent less kissing than Percy's! But crushes: absolutely. So maybe this element of the book is less about nostalgia for me and more like wishful thinking!

***How would you describe Percy and Sam as individuals but also as friends and partners?***

There's a marked difference between Percy as an imaginative, attention-seeking adolescent and Percy as an adult, when she's become closed off, self-critical, and anxious. Percy's aware enough to have sought out therapy, but in many ways, her past has stunted her. Sam is ambitious, hyper-focused, self-assured (except when it comes to his brother), and responsible as both a kid and an adult—but his strengths are often his failings. Percy's parents buy the cottage as a respite from the city and the bullying she faces at school—but her friendship with Sam becomes her real sanctuary. When they first meet, Sam's father has recently died, and Percy is the first person who Sam can talk about his dad with. As they grow older, she pushes him to not let his studying come at the

expense of his friendships and he encourages her writing. Their flaws are most evident when their relationship turns romantic: Percy's insecurity and need to be loved and Sam's tunnel vision and drive to succeed at his new school couldn't come at a worse time.

**Did you know how Percy and Sam's story was going to progress and end from the moment you started writing?**

I did. I didn't know exactly how it would all play out, but I knew the premise of the book, I knew what Percy's betrayal would be, and I knew Percy and Sam would have a happy ending.

**What challenges did you face while writing *Every Summer After*?**

I was determined to finish the book by the end of the end of 2020, but because I had a full-time job as the executive editor of Refinery29 Canada, I wrote mostly between the hours of five and eight in the morning as well as on weekends. I became pregnant with my second child during the course of writing, and the pregnancy came with a prolonged bout of insomnia and a never-ending migraine, but I pushed through it because writing was my happy place. The biggest challenge was all I wanted to do was write!

**What was your favorite part about writing the book?**

I've been a journalist for sixteen years, and this is going to make me sound like a simpleton, but there was a moment when I got stuck on something that I realized I could just MAKE IT UP!!! What a novelty! The freedom that came with fiction was so liberating. I'd begun to lose a sense of play in my work as an editor, and rediscovering it was so rewarding.

**What are you hoping readers take away from *Every Summer After*?**

An uncontrollable urge to visit the gorgeous, totally underrated Ottawa Valley region of Ontario, Canada, where you'll find Barry's Bay. But mostly I hope the book gives readers the same escape it provided me as its author.

# Movie & Book Recommendations

## PERCY'S MOVIE LIST

*Blair Witch Project*

*What Lies Beneath*

*Misery*

*The Great Outdoors*

*13 Going on 30*

## SAM'S MOVIE LIST

*Gross Anatomy*

*Awakenings*

*Blue Jay*

*My Girl*

*Jiro Dreams of Sushi*

## PERCY'S READING LIST

*The Push* by Ashley Audrain

*When the Reckoning Comes*  
by LaTanya McQueen

*Summer Sons* by Lee Mandelo

*Summer Sisters* by Judy Blume

*28 Summers* by Elin Hilderbrand

## SAM'S READING LIST

*Saturday* by Ian McEwan

*This Is Going to Hurt:  
Secret Diaries of a  
Junior Doctor* by Adam Kay

*Words in Deep Blue*  
by Cath Crowley

*Dirt* by Bill Buford

*A Life in the Bush:  
Lessons from My Father*  
by Roy MacGregor

# Playlist

**SUMMER GIRL**

Haim

**CRANES IN THE SKY**

Solange

**ISLAND IN THE SUN**

Weezer

**INVISIBLE STRING**

Taylor Swift

**HOW DO I KNOW**

Here We Go Magic

**OLD MEMORIES**

Alicia Keys

**I REALLY LIKE YOU**

Carly Rae Jepsen

**IF I COULD TURN**

**BACK TIME**

Cher

**BOOM CLAP**

Charli XCX

**I MISS THOSE DAYS**

Bleachers

**SUMMER RAIN**

Leon Bridges  
(feat. Jazmine Sullivan)

**I WILL ALWAYS**

**LOVE YOU**

Dolly Parton

**HEAT WAVES**

Glass Animals

# Three Updates

**In the book, Percy and Sam create a game called “three updates,”** and they would play this when they went for long stretches apart. And whenever they would see or talk to each other again, they would tell each other their three biggest pieces of news in rapid-fire.

For example, Percy once told Sam: *I have a new draft of my story for you to read. I'm training for the four-hundred-meter freestyle. I got a B on my algebra exam.*

What are three updates you will share with your best friend the next time you see or talk to them?



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Sam and Percy are fast friends. What do you think each gets from their relationship?
2. Have you had an important relationship—either platonic or romantic—that ended in a way that you wish you could get a do-over?
3. Sam and Percy's romantic relationship began when they were very young. Do you think it would have survived had they not broken up? Did they need the time apart to ultimately end up together?
4. How do you think Charlie feels about Percy in the past and present?
5. What did you think of Delilah and her friendship with Percy? Do you see Delilah as a good friend? What about Percy?
6. How did Percy's betrayal change your opinion of her? Do you sympathize with what she did? Do you think her act is forgivable?
7. As a teenager, Percy looks up to Sue, perhaps even more so than her own parents. Why do you think that is?
8. The story is told from Percy's point of view. What moments do you wish you could have peeked inside Sam's head?
9. In the final chapter, Sam tells Percy, "Betrayals don't cancel each other out. They just hurt more." Do you agree with him? Or do you think "getting even" has merit?
10. The lake is Percy's happy place, where she feels most creative and alive. What's yours?