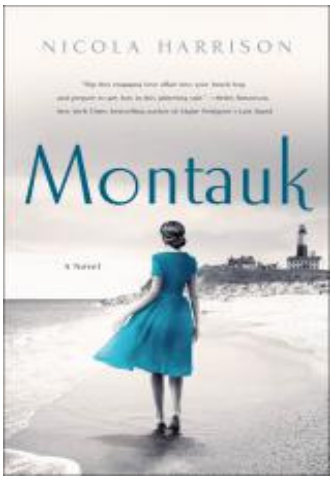
Montauk

by Nicola Harrison



About the Book

An epic and cinematic novel by debut author Nicola Harrison, MONTAUK captures the glamour and extravagance of a summer by the sea with the story of a woman torn between the life she chose and the life she desires.

Montauk, Long Island, 1938.

For three months, this humble fishing village will serve as the playground for New York City?s wealthy elite. Beatrice Bordeaux was looking forward to a summer of reigniting the passion between her and her husband, Harry. Instead, tasked with furthering his investment interest in Montauk as a resort destination, she learns she?ll be spending 12 weeks sequestered with the high society wives at The Montauk Manor --- a 200-room seaside hotel --- while Harry pursues other interests in the city.

College educated, but raised a modest country girl in Pennsylvania, Bea has never felt fully comfortable among these privileged women, whose days are devoted not to their children but to leisure activities and charities that seemingly benefit no one but themselves. She longs to be a mother herself, as well as a loving wife, but after five years of marriage she remains childless while Harry is increasingly remote and distracted. Despite lavish parties at the Manor and the Yacht Club, Bea is lost and lonely and befriends the manor?s laundress whose work ethic and family life stir memories of who she once was.

As she drifts further from the society women and their preoccupations and closer toward Montauk?s natural beauty and community spirit, Bea finds herself drawn to a man nothing like her husband --- stoic, plain spoken and enigmatic. Inspiring a strength and courage she had almost forgotten, his presence forces her to face a haunting tragedy of her past and question her future.

Desperate to embrace moments of happiness, no matter how fleeting, she soon discovers that such moments may be all she has, when fates conspire to tear her world apart.

Discussion Guide

1. What was your initial reaction to Beatrice, and how did your perception of her evolve throughout the book?

2. Do you think Beatrice and Thomas? connection was inevitable, or do you think it was their shared history that solidified it?

3. How do you think Charlie?s death affected Beatrice as a friend and a wife?

4. What does Harry?s intense business interest in developing Montauk?s resort potential reveal about his character when contrasted with Beatrice?s own appreciation of the community, which deepens for very different reasons? What do their attitudes toward this setting tell us about the two of them and about the strains in their marriage?

5. Do you think Harry?s character evolved over the course of the novel, or does he remain the same?

6. The idea for the novel came to the author after spending many years out in Montauk. Discuss the role that the landscape and atmosphere of the town plays in the novel. If it were not set in Montauk, New York, how would the story have differed?

7. Do you think Montauk was inspired by present-day events? How does the novel parallel similar issues happening today in other small towns/resort towns?

8. Social gatherings play a significant part in the story. How do events like the greasy pig contest and the masquerade ball reflect the shared human needs of the participants, and to what extent do they reveal key differences?

9. Initially captivated by her husband and the seductive glamour, wealth and worldly sophistication he offers, Beatrice is later drawn to the enduring values, dignity and steadfast friendships she finds among the inhabitants of the fishing village. Do you think her own family background influences these dynamics and the choices she ultimately makes? Can you relate to this in some way?

10. Beatrice develops loyal friendships with Elizabeth and Dolly, two women from very different backgrounds. What characteristics do the two women share, and how do they differ? What do these friendships tell us about Beatrice?s values?

11. What do you think would have happened if Thomas lived and Harry walked away?

12. Were you satisfied with the book?s ending? What do you think the future holds for Beatrice and her baby girl?

Author Bio

Nicola Harrison is the author of MONTAUK, THE SHOW GIRL, HOTEL LAGUNA and THE ISLAND CLUB. Born and raised in England, she moved with her family to Southern California when she was 14. She is a graduate of UCLA and received her MFA in Creative Writing from Stony Brook University. Prior to writing novels she worked as a fashion journalist in New York City, where she lived for 17 years. Now she resides in Manhattan Beach, California, with her husband, two sons and a high maintenance chihuahua named Lily.

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