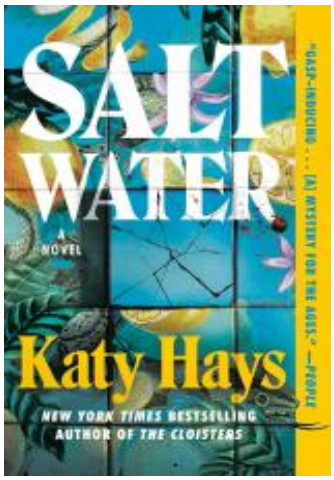
Saltwater

by Katy Hays



About the Book

On glittering Capri, anything can be a mirage. And no one holds a grudge like family.

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE CLOISTERS comes an electrifying thriller about an opulent family retreat to Italy that is shattered by the resurfacing of a decades-old crime.

In 1992, Sarah Lingate is found dead below the cliffs of Capri, leaving behind her three-year-old daughter, Helen. Despite suspicions that the old-money Lingates are involved, Sarah?s death is ruled an accident. And every year, the family returns to prove it?s true. But on the 30th anniversary of Sarah?s death, the Lingates arrive at the villa to find a surprise waiting for them --- the necklace Sarah was wearing the night she died.

Haunted by the specter of that night, the legendary Lingate family unity is pushed to a breaking point, and Helen seizes the opportunity. Enlisting the help of Lorna Moreno, a family assistant, the two plot their escape from Helen?s paranoid, insular family. But when Lorna disappears and the investigation into Sarah?s death is reopened, Helen has to confront the fact that everyone who was on Capri 30 years ago remains a suspect --- her controlling father, Richard; her rarely lucid aunt, Naomi; her distant uncle, Marcus; and their circle of friends, visitors and staff. Even Lorna, her closest ally, may not be who she seems.

As long-hidden secrets about that night boil to the surface, one thing becomes clear: Not everyone will leave the island alive.

Discussion Guide

Spoilers ahead! If you have not - finished the novel, please return to these questions later.

1. The Lingates repeatedly return to Capri to ?prove? that Sarah?s death was an accident. Do you think their annual visits help or harm their reputation? How do you interpret their motivations for returning? If you were in their position, would you return to the scene of the crime or stay away, and why?

2. The Lingates rarely speak openly about Sarah?s death or their suspicions of one another. How does this culture of silence affect their ability to connect and heal as a family? What does this collective guilt suggest about the underlying toxicity and mistrust within the Lingate family?

3. Among the Lingates, who do you think holds the most in-fluence within the family, and how do they use it to maintain control?

4. In the scene where the yacht captain is injured, the Lingates hardly notice, while Lorna is seemingly horrified. How do the different reactions illuminate their personalities and values? What does this moment reveal about power and responsibility?

5. Discuss the relationship dynamic between Helen and Lorna. Though they are aligned by their friendship and common goals, their starkly different positions and backgrounds drive a wedge between them, leading to shocking betrayals. How much of their friendship do you think was genuine? What does their dynamic reveal about trust and betrayal?

6. Throughout the book, Lorna expresses disdain and fascination with wealth. How does her decision to embrace a wealthy persona align or con-flict with her previous views? Do you view her reinvention as empowering or morally questionable? Why?

7. How does Capri --- in its beauty and isolation --- re-flect the emotional and physical traps faced by the characters? How does the island itself become a character in the story?

8. Which plot twist surprised you the most? Did you see any of them coming? Why or why not?

9. After living as Renata for years, Sarah Lingate finally comes out of hiding at the end of the novel and begins to live a somewhat normal life. Do you think this could ever work in real life? Why or why not?

10. All of the Lingates end up playing a part in Renata?s death. Whose role do you think is most unforgivable? Why?

11. Do you believe justice was ultimately served by the end of the story? How do the Lingates? wealth and privilege shape their ability to evade consequences or face accountability? How does this contrast with Lorna?s relationship to consequences, both throughout her life and at the end of the novel?

12. If SALTWATER became a movie or TV show, who would you cast as each character?

Author Bio

Katy Hays is the *New York Times* bestselling author of THE CLOISTERS and SALTWATER. She is an art history

adjunct professor and holds an MA in art history from Williams College and pursued her PhD at UC Berkeley. Having previously worked at major art institutions, including the Clark Art Institute and SFMOMA, she now lives with her husband and their dog in Olympic Valley, California.

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