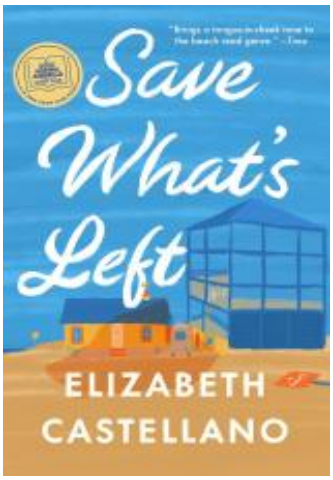
Save What's Left

by Elizabeth Castellano



About the Book

An outrageously funny debut novel about a woman who moves to a small beach town looking for peace, only to find herself in an all-out war with her neighbors.

When Kathleen Deane?s husband, Tom, tells her he's no longer happy with his life and their marriage, Kathleen is confused. They live in Kansas. They?ve been married 30 years. Who said anything about being happy? But with Tom off finding himself, Kathleen starts to think about what she wants. And her thoughts lead her to a small beach community on the east coast, a town called Whitbey that has always looked lovely in the Christmas letters her childhood friend Josie sends every year.

It turns out, though, that life in Whitbey is nothing like Josie?s letters. Kathleen?s new neighbor, Rosemary, is cantankerous, and the town?s supervisor won't return Kathleen?s emails. But worst of all is the Sugar Cube, the monstrosity masquerading as a holiday home that Kathleen?s absentee neighbors are building next door to her quaint (read: tiny) cottage. As Kathleen gets more and more involved in the fight against the Sugar Cube and town politics overall, she realizes that Whitbey may not be a fairy tale, but it just might be exactly what she needs.

SAVE WHAT'S LEFT can best be described as the ?un-beach read.? It pulls back the curtain on life in a beach town, revealing the true cost of a pretty view. Told from the candid and irreverent perspective of a newcomer turned local, this is a story of forgiveness, fortitude and second chances.

Discussion Guide

1. What was your biggest takeaway from SAVE WHAT'S LEFT? Talk about the thematic meaning and importance of the title, from simple bumper-sticker slogan to full-fledged existential crisis. What was most compelling to you about this fish-out-of-water story? How, if at all, did you identify with Kathleen?s journey?

2. ?Everyone thinks these small rural towns are sleepy and charming and simple,? says Kathleen of Whitbey. But what is life in the slow lane *really* like for her --- and why, in the end, does she stay against her better judgment? You may choose to discuss how Kathleen?s experience in Whitbey is different than longtime local Rosemary?s, recent transplant Josie?s, and, ultimately, Tom?s as well.

3. The Sugar Cube is at the center of the action in SAVE WHAT'S LEFT. Talk about how this modern marvel of architecture, which stands in contrast to Kathleen?s oyster shack, is a character in and of itself in the novel. Also, just for fun: If you had to choose between the two beach homes, which one would it be, and why?

4. Kathleen?s estranged husband lives in her driveway, then on the water. Josie and Dan renewed their wedding vows only after a scandalous infidelity was revealed. What does a ?normal? marriage and family look like in the world of this novel? What does SAVE WHAT'S LEFT have to say about the nature of love, betrayal and forgiveness?

5. ?Do people ever stop asking you what you do,? Kathleen wonders, ?or is that a question that just crops up your entire life?? Talk about how SAVE WHAT'S LEFT addresses the issues of aging, retirement and the pursuit of the American Dream. What are the risks and rewards of following your heart and finding your passion? Is it ever too late to discover who you are or what you?re meant to be?

6. Discuss the novel?s narrative structure. Did you enjoy its epistolary elements (i.e., Kathleen?s letters to Supervisor White)? What other storytelling techniques, from foreshadowing to cliffhanger chapter endings, kept you turning the pages? You may choose to share some of your favorite aha or gotcha moments, too.

7. Kathleen jokes, ?Every day, I hope that I will wake up with amnesia and forget why I?m here.? Later, she confesses, ?I love this town or, at the very least, I love to hate it.? Do you think that each of these sentiments can be true at once? Also, how do you feel about these and other for-readers?-ears-only asides? Do they make you feel closer to Kathleen? What are some of her most memorable remarks?

8. There are two sides to every story, right? Talk about which characters you rooted for in SAVE WHAT'S LEFT and why. Take this opportunity to reflect on Kathleen?s newspaper article and the nature of ?fake news? at the neighborhood level as well.

9. If you had the chance to ask the (young, first-time) author one question about SAVE WHAT'S LEFT --- about the writing process, the (mature) characters, or the plot --- what might it be?

10. What kind of future do you imagine for Kathleen in Whitbey beyond the final chapter of this book? You may choose to answer the same question for Tom, Rosemary, Josie, Hattie and even newcomer Cindy Schwartz as well.

Author Bio

Elizabeth Castellano is the author of PROOF OF PROGRESS and SAVE WHAT'S LEFT. She lives in New York.

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