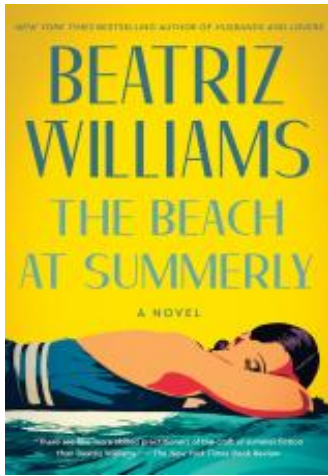


The Beach at Summerly

by Beatriz Williams



About the Book

A ravishing summer read from *New York Times* bestselling author Beatriz Williams, sweeping readers back to a mid-century New England rich with secrets and Cold War intrigue.

June 1946. As the residents of Winthrop Island prepare for the first summer season after the sacrifice of war, a glamorous new figure moves into the guest cottage at Summerly, the idyllic seaside estate of the wealthy Peabody family. To Emilia Winthrop, the daughter of Summerly's year-round caretaker and a descendant of the island's settlers, Olive Rainsford opens a window into a world of shining possibility. While Emilia spent the war years caring for her incapacitated mother, Olive traveled the world, married fascinating men and involved herself in political causes. She's also the beloved aunt of the two surviving Peabody sons, Amory and Shep, with whom Emilia has a tangled romantic history.

As the summer wears on, Emilia develops a deep rapport with Olive, who urges her to leave the island for a life of adventure, while romance blossoms with the sturdy and honorable Shep. But the heady promise of Peabody patronage is blown apart by the arrival of Sumner Fox, an FBI agent who demands Emilia's help to capture a Soviet agent who's transmitting vital intelligence on the West's atomic weapon program from somewhere inside the Summerly estate.

April 1954. Eight years later, Summerly is boarded up, and Emilia has rebuilt her shattered life as a professor at Wellesley College, when shocking news arrives from Washington --- the traitor she helped convict is about to be swapped for an American spy imprisoned in the Soviet Union, but with a mysterious condition only Emilia can fulfill. A reluctant Emilia is summoned to CIA headquarters, where she's forced to confront the harrowing consequences of her actions that fateful summer, and a choice that could destroy the Peabody family --- and Emilia's chance for redemption --- all over again.

Discussion Guide

1. At her father's funeral, a neighbor says to Emilia, "Do you know what your trouble is, Emmie?...You've always wanted to be one of *them*. You think you're too smart for us." Is that fair? What do you make of the social hierarchy of Winthrop Island? Does Emilia successfully bridge the separate communities of the summer people and the year-rounders?
2. Was Emilia's father wrong not to take the Peabodys up on their offer to send Emilia to college? How would that have affected the dynamic between the two families? Why does Olive tell Emilia she'll revive the offer and even help send Emilia to college herself?
3. How does Emilia reckon with the shocking discovery of her father's affair with Aunt Benedita? What would you have done in her shoes?
4. How does Sumner Fox convince Emilia to participate in uncovering Olive's espionage? What did Emilia sacrifice in order to collaborate with the FBI? Do you think she would have done it if she had known what she was setting in motion?
5. Olive repeatedly tells Emilia, "You reminded me of myself," and Emilia recalls Shep saying, "You always reminded me of [Olive]." What similarities do the two women share? How do they differ?
6. Emilia's father chides her: "You think the world's changed and maybe it has. But people are the same. People don't change." Do you agree? Do the characters in this book evolve as the narrative unfolds? Is the Emilia of 1954 different from the Emilia of 1946?
7. What did you make of the revelation that Emilia's mother had chosen her father because she mistakenly thought he was from a wealthy summer family instead of a working-class year-rounder? How did learning that truth affect Emilia's perception of her family?
8. When Olive confesses to murdering Emilia's mother, she tells Emilia, "One day you'll understand. One day you'll thank me for all of this." Why would Olive say that? Do you think there is any truth to her Marxist-influenced belief that the end always justifies the means?
9. Olive is ultimately traded to the Soviets in exchange for the American spy Sasha Digby, whose story features prominently in Beatriz Williams' previous novel, *OUR WOMAN IN MOSCOW*. Have you read that novel? Did you recognize the continuation of that story *THE BEACH AT SUMMERLY*?
10. Who do you think sent the mysterious package that Emilia receives at the end of the novel? What is the significance of the enclosed speech titled *On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences*?
11. What do you think will happen to the characters in this book in the years after it ends? What does the rest of the 20th century hold for them?

Author Bio

Beatriz Williams is the *New York Times*, *USA Today* and internationally bestselling author of *HUSBANDS & LOVERS*, *THE SUMMER WIVES*, *THE SECRET LIFE OF VIOLET GRANT*, *A HUNDRED SUMMERS*, the *Wicked City* series, and several other works of historical fiction, including five novels in collaboration with fellow bestselling authors Karen White and Lauren Willig.

A graduate of Stanford University with an MBA in Finance from Columbia University, Beatriz worked as a communications and corporate strategy consultant in New York and London before her first novel was published in 2012. Beatriz's books have won numerous awards, have been translated into more than a dozen languages, and appear regularly in bestseller lists around the world. Her essays have appeared in magazines such as *Real Simple* and *Southern Living*, among others, and she regularly reviews fiction for the *New York Times Book Review*.

Born in Seattle, Washington, Beatriz now lives in southeastern Connecticut with her husband and four mostly grown children.

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