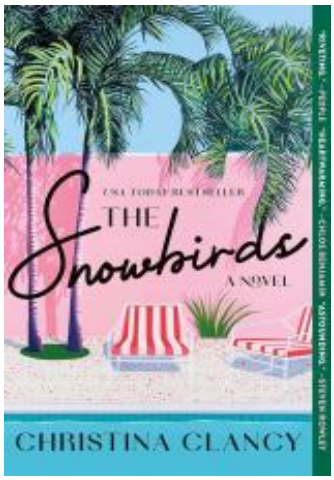
The Snowbirds

by Christina Clancy



About the Book

THE LAST THING HE TOLD ME meets FLEISHMAN IS IN TROUBLE in this page-turning story of a couple who flees winter in the Midwest for Palm Springs, where they find their relationship at a crossroads.

Kim and Grant are at a turning point. A couple for 30 years, their "separate but together" partnership is running up against the realities of late middle age: Grant?s mother has died, the college where he taught philosophy was shuttered, and their twin girls are grown and gone. Escaping the bitter cold of a Midwestern winter for the hot desert sun of Palm Springs seems as good a solution as any to the more intractable problems they face.

When they arrive at Le Desert, a quirky condo community where everyone knows everyone?s business, Kim immediately embraces the opportunity to make new friends and explore a more adventurous side of her personality. Meanwhile, Grant struggles to find his footing in this unfamiliar landscape, leaving Kim to wonder if their relationship can survive the snowbird season. But when Grant goes missing on a hike in the Palm Springs mountains, Kim is forced to consider two terrifying outcomes: either Grant is truly lost, or this time, he?s really left her.

Is it ever too late to become the person we wanted to be --- and is there still time to change into someone better? The exhilarating but often confusing transitions of midlife are pitched against the promise and glamour of Palm Springs in this tender, honest story of what it takes to commit to someone for a lifetime. With compassion and humor, Christina Clancy explores the redemptive power of finding ourselves, and of being found.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the structure of the novel, specifically its alternate timelines. How did this reading experience affect your perspective on each character? Did your opinion of whether Grant was lost, or that he had left Kim, change over the course of the narrative?

2. Compare and contrast Kim?s and Grant?s respective mindset and approaches towards aging, retirement and being called snowbirds.

3. ?It was both sexy and disconcerting to discover that he had a deep well of knowledge he?d never shared with me before. What else hadn?t he told me? What else didn?t I know?? (page 78) Have you ever felt similarly about someone you felt close to? Do you think it?s possible to ever fully know another person, or yourself?

4. ?You each have individual healing work to do before you can come together.? (page 192) What do you think the novel suggests about the importance of self-care as a way of nurturing your long-term relationships? How can outsiders? perspectives, such as Cassie?s in this instance, provide clarity at times?

5. For most of the novel, Kim doesn?t want to "need? Grant. And Grant loves hiking because it requires self-sufficiency. How do they each evolve around this topic over the course of the novel? In your mind, is a healthy relationship defined by how independent each person is or how mutually dependent they are on each other?

6. ?We outsourced our emotional needs to our exes, never fully showing the messiest parts of ourselves to each other.? (page 97) Discuss Kim?s relationship with Basil and Grant?s with Sasha. What are the impacts of each ex?s presence in their lives as a couple? In what ways do these past relationships fuel and restrict Kim and Grant?s present relationship?

7. At times, Kim and Grant both feel their parents? past judgments and harsh words creep into their inner dialogue. How does this affect the way they operate in the world and the way they see themselves, even as adults? What does this say about the lasting impressions of our formative years?

8. ?Hiking is teaching me how not to think. I?m learning how to simply exist in the world with the wind between my ears, not a thought in my head.? (page 203) Does hiking change how Grant experiences both the external world and his own internal life? Is there an activity that has this kind of effect on you?

9. Consider the different types of people Kim and Grant encounter in Palm Springs: a widow, a gigolo, a gay couple, an elderly husband and wife, a bitter ex, a new age healer. How do they inform the way that Kim and Grant see each other? If no relationship exists in a vacuum, what sort of impact do other people have on your relationships?

10. How does the concept of ?home? change for Kim and Grant over the course of the novel? After reading THE SNOWBIRDS, what do you think defines a ?home??

11. Some people describe getting lost as a liberating experience that opens you up to being in the moment and having new experiences, while the thought of becoming disoriented fills others with fear and confusion. How do you handle situations where you don?t know where you are --- in a place, a relationship, and in life? Do we have to be lost to be found?

12. Kim says she hates winter, but Grant doesn?t mind the cold. Since weather is inextricably tied to place, what happens

when couples can?t agree on where to live? Is weather a trivial or legitimate reason for couples to have issues?

13. If Kim and Grant hadn?t gone to Palm Springs, do you think they would have made it as a couple? Do relationships benefit from a change of scenery and habits?

14. Near the beginning of the novel, Kim wonders if it was too late to start over. Later, Melody tells Kim that she?s experiencing a renaissance. Are there certain junctures in our lives when we can experience a revival or rebirth? If so, how can we be open to them?

Author Bio

Christina Clancy is the author of THE SECOND HOME, SHOULDER SEASON and THE SNOWBIRDS. Her work has also appeared in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, *The Sun* magazine, and in various literary journals. She splits her time between Madison and Palm Springs.

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