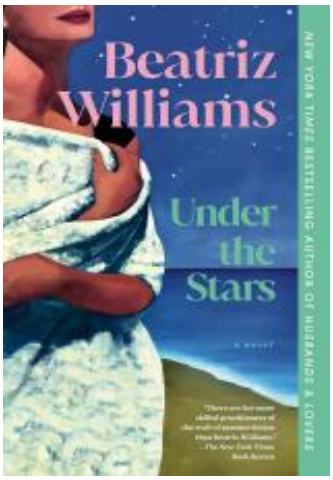
Under the Stars

by Beatriz Williams



About the Book

When a daughter and her famous mother return to Winthrop Island to confront their complicated past, they discover a secret trove of paintings that connect them to a mysterious woman who vanished on a luxury steamship two centuries earlier.

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of HUSBANDS & LOVERS comes an epic tale of family legacy, love and truths that echo down generations.

Audrey Fisher has struggled all her life to emerge from the shadow of her famous mother by forging a career as a world-class chef. Meredith Fisher?s glamorous screen persona disguises the trauma of the tragic accident that haunts her dreams. Neither woman wants to return to the New England island they left behind and its complicated emotional ties, but Meredith has one last chance to sober up and salvage her big comeback. And where else but discreet, moneyed Winthrop Island can a famous actress spend the summer without the intrusion of other people?

Until Audrey discovers an old wooden chest among the belongings of her estranged bartender father, Mike Kennedy, and the astonishing contents draw the women deep into Winthrop?s past and its many secrets?attracting the interest of their handsome neighbor, Sedge Peabody. How did a trove of paintings from one of America?s greatest artists wind up in the cellar of the Mohegan Inn? And who is the mysterious woman portrayed on every canvas?

On a stormy November night in 1846, Providence Dare flees Boston and boards the luxury steamship *Atlantic* one step ahead of the law?.or so she believes. But when a catastrophic accident leaves the ship at the mercy of a mighty gale, Providence finds herself trapped in a deadly game of cat and mouse with the one man who knows her real identity --- the detective investigating the suspicious death of her employer, the painter Henry Irving. As the *Atlantic* fights for her life and the rocky shore of Winthrop Island edges closer, a desperate Providence searches for her chance to escape?before the sea swallows her without a trace.

In UNDER THE STARS, the destinies of three women converge across centuries, as a harrowing true disaster at the dawn of the steamship era evokes a complex legacy of family secrets in modern-day New England. Beatriz Williams has written a timeless epic of mothers and daughters, of love lost and found, and of the truths that echo down generations.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel opens with a death, which apparently involves Audrey and Meredith. Did that plotline resolve the way you expected? Did it hook you immediately?

2. The sea is a looming character of its own in this novel. How did you interpret each woman?s relationship with the island and the water around it?

3. Guilt and personal responsibility are common themes throughout the narrative, especially for Providence and Meredith. How did the various characters feel about their power to change the course of their own lives, and the decisions they made?

4. Audrey quotes Queen Elizabeth II when she says, ?Grief is the price we pay for love.? How do you think that relates to each woman?s journey in the novel? Does that phrase resonate with you?

5. If you could assign the concept of ?doubt? to one character --- Providence, Meredith or Audrey --- who would it be, and why?

6. Why do you think the novel is called ?Under the Stars?? Which of the three women?s journeys do you think that theme develops most powerfully the most?

7. All three women make decisions out of desperation at certain times. Do you think those decisions, and their outcomes, were inevitable? How much control do we have over our own destiny?

8. Secrets play an important role in all three women?s lives, but which reveal was most shocking for you? What is your understanding behind each woman?s decision to keep the secrets she did? Do you think any of them owed their secrets to the people in their lives?

9. Who do you think was the rightful owner of the paintings found at the Mohegan Inn?

10. In your opinion, which love story was the most impactful in this novel? Who did you root for? Was there anyone you didn?t root for?

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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Publication Date: April 7, 2026
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 384 pages
Publisher: Ballantine Books
ISBN-10: 0593724275
ISBN-13: 9780593724279