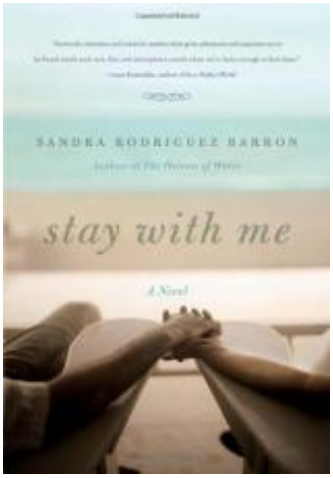
Stay With Me

by Sandra Rodriguez Barron



About the Book

In 1979, five toddlers were found alone in a luxury boat tied to a dock in Puerto Rico after a devastating hurricane. No one knew who they were or where they came from. Raised by different families, they remained connected by a special bond --- always considering themselves siblings, despite their unknown blood relations.

Now adults, Taina, Holly, Adrian, and Raymond have been summoned by the fifth, David, to an island off the coast of Connecticut and the family home of David's ex-girlfriend, Julia. But along with the joy of reuniting comes the exposure of raw places, jealousy, and childhood sorrows. Having been diagnosed with an aggressive form of brain cancer --- and experiencing flashbacks to the time before the hurricane --- David believes that healing his relationship with Julia and discovering his origins will strengthen his ability to endure and survive. David pushes the people he loves the most to their emotional breaking points in order to uncover the truth about the mystery that both unites and divides them.

Intensely gripping and lyrically written, **Stay with Me** is a magnificent blend of romance, suspense, atmosphere, and intrigue that brilliantly explores the true meaning of family and the remarkable ways a personal history can paint a future.

Discussion Guide

1. The ball player in the prologue predicts that one or more of siblings will become curious about their biological roots, while admitting that he himself was afraid of what he might discover. Do you think that it's always healthy for adopted children to know their origins or can it be a "Pandora's box" that might do more harm than good?

2. In the very first chapter, we see both David and Julia interacting with dead people. Julia prepares the tea table to please her Victorian-era aunts, and the house's male spirits begin to populate David's imagination. In what ways do you or your family include the departed --- by the power of memory and imagination --- in your everyday life? Are there particular practices you partake in?

3. Genealogy research has increased in popularity since the advent of the Internet. The Griswolds are one of those rare families who know exactly who they are and where they came from. Have you ever considered how you might permanently preserve your family's history from this day forward? What events from your life might be interesting to your descendants one hundred years from now? And lastly, would it change your view of yourself if you were to suddenly know your family's role or connection to a century or more of human history?

4. Body art goes back to ancient times. People get tattoos to telegraph their "tribal" membership, to express their individuality, or just for fun. If you have a tattoo, how did you choose the words, symbol or drawing? Do you feel that it still defines who you are today? If you don't have a tattoo but were to get one, what symbol(s) would you choose?

5. Brain tumors, injuries and dementia can give us a glimpse at how the brain processes and stores memory and language. What inaccessible moments of from your infancy or childhood would you most like to access?

6. Julia and Adrian are described as perfect opposites: she is cool, classic, and anchored in New England history, whereas Adrian is a rootless citizen of the South Beach netherworld. How do these difference make them a good match (or not)? Do you think that someone like Adrian can be faithful for a lifetime?

7. If you were in Julia's situation, would you continue to devote so much of your time to a dying ex-boyfriend or would you make a clean break? Would you feel guilty about falling in love with his brother?

8. Ray is a teddy-bear type who just wants to be loved. Holly is the most stable sibling, having discovered early on that she was born to be a mother. Taina is the complicated one --- both bold and deeply insecure. Of the five, which of these characters did you sympathize with the most? The least?

9. How do you feel about the decision that Kathy Cooper and Sister Juana made for the children? Do you think it was a risk worth taking? How did the events surrounding these unaccompanied minors change or confirm your views on the laws governing immigration?

10. David knows that he has a small window to build his final legacy. He wants to leave behind the gift of resolution, so that his siblings will be emotionally unencumbered and free to grow. How does each sibling eventually get what they were missing in life?

Author Bio

Sandra Rodriguez Barron is the author of **The Heiress of Water**, winner of the International Latino Book Award for debut fiction. The recipient of a Bread Loaf Fellowship and a National Association of Latino Arts and Culture Grant, she was born in Puerto Rico, lived in the Dominican Republic and El Salvador, and now lives with her family in Connecticut.

Stay With Me

by Sandra Rodriguez Barron

Publication Date: November 30, 2010
Paperback: 384 pages
Publisher: Harper Perennial
ISBN-10: 0061650625
ISBN-13: 9780061650628