



BOOK CLUB KIT

Dear reader,

I didn't set out to write a novel, much less one about a woman I'd never heard of. But one night in London at the Savoy Hotel's legendary American Bar, I spotted a footnote on the menu about Ada Coleman, the world's first celebrity female mixologist.

Intrigued, I tried to learn more but found...almost nothing. Ada's name had been nearly erased, despite the fact that she was inventing some of the world's most iconic cocktails at a time when women weren't even allowed inside the bar. From that injustice (and a few martinis for liquid courage) *Last Call at the Savoy* was born.

Told through the eyes of a contemporary NYC party girl (write what you know!), *Last Call at the Savoy* weaves Ada's story back into the fabric of the hotel's glittering past. My hope is that you'll raise a glass and let the pages transport you to London and the Savoy's storied halls.

Here's to strong cocktails and even stronger women.

Cheers!
Brisa



MORE ABOUT BRISA

Brisa grew up in the Pacific Northwest before moving to Midtown Manhattan to turn her passion for musicals and “flair for the dramatic” into an award-winning career as a Broadway producer. Three Tony’s later, she’s worked on numerous productions including *Hamilton*, *Beautiful*, and *Moulin Rouge*. In 2019 at the request of HSH Prince Albert of Monaco Brisa joined his foundation to lead philanthropy efforts in theater, dance and film on behalf of his mother, Princess Grace Kelly. Most recently she turned her entrepreneurial spirit to actual “spirits,” launching Literati Spirits, a premium vodka created by book lovers for book lovers. She now spends her days traveling to literary destinations with a martini in one hand and a manuscript in the other, collecting stories with her husband Mark and her long-haired chihuahua, Mister Big.



@brisacarleton

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. At the start of the novel, Cinnamon is a party girl—she lives for the moment. What parallels and contrasts do you notice between the cast of characters frequenting the Savoy hotel during the early 20th century and the lifestyle of Cinnamon, Kit, Piper, and Lisa 100 years later? Do you have any other favorite books, movies, or TV shows that show characters in lavish, decadent settings?
2. Cinnamon is not only grieving her parents but haunted by guilt over the circumstances of their death. Have you ever been held back from pursuing a dream because of something in your past? Or can you think of an example of a negative experience that you've successfully overcome, enabling you to pursue a new goal?
3. Ada's story is one for the history books, and yet, not much is written about her. Instead, her legacy was overtaken by a man, and this is a common occurrence in history, and even still today. Have you ever felt like your accomplishments were overshadowed by someone else or credit wasn't properly given? What did you do about that?
4. Cinnamon flies to London to be with her sister Rosemary in the final days of a difficult pregnancy, but she finds plenty of distractions once she arrives at The Savoy. What are the sources of conflict between the sisters? And how do they ultimately show up for each other?
5. Kit is a historian in search of cold hard facts about the Savoy Hotel for his book, while Cinnamon is enthralled with the mystery of Ada Coleman and the *Savoy Cocktail Book*. At the end, she tells Kit, "Perhaps it's not about finding the clues but finding the holes." In what ways do you think historical fiction plays a role in re-introducing women's stories even when scant facts have been previously document in the history books? Can you think of other books or movies that re-introduced formerly forgotten female figures?
6. If you could go back in time to any decade, which would you choose and why? What is it about the culture, the fashion, or the famous figures of that era that appeal to you the most?



A CONVERSATION WITH BRISA CARLETON

How did you first learn of Ada Coleman and what inspired you to write a story uncovering the truth about the important role she played in the Savoy's history?

I first learned about Ada Coleman during a solo business trip to London. Much like Cinnamon, I found myself at the American Bar in the Savoy, enjoying a book and a cocktail. At the time, I was reading *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo*, which had just come out. The cocktail menu mentioned Ada Coleman's creation, the Hanky Panky, and I was intrigued—perhaps influenced by the Evelyn Hugo story that was fresh in my mind - by the idea of a female bartender inventing new cocktails and at a men's-only bar!

Curious, I tried to look up Ada's history, but I found maddeningly little beyond the fact that she had invented the delicious Hanky Panky cocktail that I was drinking. I immediately tracked down a copy of the *Savoy Cocktail Book*, only to be shocked and disappointed to discover her name was nowhere to be found. I was working a million hours a week back then, so I simply logged the curiosity in my mind and moved on. Yet every time I returned to the Savoy, I wondered if someone would tell her story. No one ever did.

I'm not a historian, so I knew I couldn't unearth her past through traditional research. But as a lover of historical fiction, I understood, as Cinnamon says, that sometimes history is found in the spaces between the facts. That's what led me to this story. I wanted to craft a narrative that might intrigue true history buffs while also honoring the emerging facts we know about her. And, ultimately, I wanted to bring Ada's legacy into the light, even if it meant filling in the gaps with imagination and storytelling.

How has your work as a Tony award-winning Broadway producer influenced your own writing?

It's no exaggeration to say that being part of the smash hit musical, *Hamilton*, changed my life. A key theme in *Hamilton* is how the person who tells the story can shape its legacy—sometimes even more than the facts themselves. That idea stayed with me. Over the years, I've been fortunate to have conversations with both Lin-Manuel Miranda and Ron Chernow, whose biography of Alexander Hamilton inspired the show. It's fascinating to hear Lin talk about his decisions to take significant creative license in order to craft the most compelling story possible—a goal he wildly achieved.

(cont.) How has your work as a Tony award-winning Broadway producer influenced your own writing?

A key theme of *Last Call at the Savoy* is "never let the truth stand in the way of a good story" and Lin did this beautifully with Alexander Hamilton's story while also giving Chernow's book full credit and accepting and even encouraging people to enjoy the musical version of history in counterpoint to the true history.

Thinking about all this led me to create Kit, a historian obsessed with facts, and to create tension by contrasting his approach with Cinnamon's more...intoxicated approach to collecting material. I liked the idea of Ada's tales being passed down as barroom lore—stories that naturally warp and evolve over time. Since so much is known and documented about the goings on at the American Bar during Ada's tenure, it really did feel like I was simply filling in the Ada shaped hole in the volumes of history books already written about the iconic bar.

As I note in the book, I hope someone feels inspired to dig deeper into Ada's actual history. Whatever the truth is, I suspect it will be a doozy.

What was your process for writing for your first novel? Did anything surprise you?

I fell into novel writing accidentally. For the past five years, I ran the Princess Grace Foundation, working with H.S.H. Prince Albert of Monaco to support performing artists and honor Princess Grace's legacy. It was a surreal, high-gloss chapter of my life—full of beauty, travel, and the occasional palace intrigue. But, like many seemingly glamorous jobs, it came with its own kind of burnout. I was constantly "on," managing delicate relationships, supporting artists facing mounting challenges, working between time zones and language barriers, and rarely off the clock.

Over the holidays, I found myself craving something that would take my mind off work. I've always loved reading (audiobooks are my lifeline on long-haul flights), but I never imagined I might write one. I stumbled across The Novelry's 90-Day Novel course and was immediately hooked. The founder, Louise Dean, had this wonderfully bracing approach to writing: no mysticism, no hand-wringing, just the daily discipline of sitting down and telling a story.

One of her first pieces of advice? Don't tell anyone you're writing. Keep it private. Keep it sacred. It became like a secret affair with my imagination. I started writing for one hour each morning—no expectations, no audience—and those sixty minutes quickly became my favorite part of the day. For once, I could create a world where everyone said what I wanted them to say, did what I needed them to do. How refreshing!

At the end of the course, you can submit your work for feedback. I figured, why not? I was shocked—and thrilled—when they told me I might actually have something worth pursuing. A million drafts later... here we are.

When you're not writing, how do you like to spend your free time?

At the theater! I try to see every new Broadway show and there's truly nowhere I'd rather be than in a dark theater surrounded by people who love it as much as I do. I still remember coming to New York as a teenager, dreaming of seeing just one Broadway show. Now I'm at the theater multiple times a week, and honestly, it never gets old. When not at the theater, or writing, or raising a glass at my favorite pre/post theater bar, Sardi's, I'm probably hosting a party at my house. My husband and I and our long-haired chihuahua, Mister Big, love to entertain. Singing around the piano is often involved, more so when we break out our Literati Spirits vodka line and the martinis start flowing.

What was the most interesting thing you learned throughout your research of the Savoy?

One detail that stood out the most was that the entire Savoy empire—and arguably the birth of London's luxury hotel market—was funded by profits from musical theater. As a theater producer myself, I love that it was the runaway success of Gilbert & Sullivan's productions at the Savoy Theatre that sparked it all. Once those shows were consistently selling out, the producers realized they needed somewhere for theatergoers to dine—and why not stay overnight too?

Given how often the arts are undervalued as economic drivers, I love that London's first luxury hotel, which set the standard for others to follow, was built and thrived because of the theater.

Writers commonly draw from their lives and experiences for inspiration when writing fiction. Are there any real-world influences that you wove into your novel?

Like Cinnamon, it's not unusual to find me alone at an elegant cocktail bar when I'm traveling for work. Over the years, I've come to see the barstool as the great equalizer —status, money, and titles fade when you're elbow to elbow with someone, each of you sipping something strong. From bartenders to billionaires, everyone's just another character.

A good bar makes you feel like you belong, even when you're a thousand miles from home. Whether chatting with the bartender or simply eavesdropping on the conversations around me (bad author habit!), I'm always in my element while also enjoying the adventure of being immersed in somewhere new.

Anything else you'd like your readers to know?

Thank for reading *Last Call at the Savoy*. I love meeting new people and would be delighted to raise a glass at your next book club if you're reading my book. Please visit my website brisacarleton.com and let me know the date and time of your book club and I would be happy to zoom in!

I love hearing from my readers. Feel free to reach out to me via brisacarleton.com or through Instagram [@brisacarleton](https://www.instagram.com/brisacarleton).

Cheers!

DRINK FROM THE BOOK!

If you'd like to get a taste of the many cocktails mentioned in the book, I encourage you to order these at your favorite cocktail bar or try your hand at mixing them up at home. Cheers!

HANKY PANKY

1 1/2 ounces gin
1 1/2 ounces sweet vermouth
2 dashes Fernet-Branca
Garnish: orange twist

Add the gin, sweet vermouth and Fernet-Branca into a mixing glass with ice and stir until well-chilled. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with an orange twist.



LADIES BLUSH

2 oz. gin
3/4 oz. lemon juice
1/2 oz. crème de noyaux
1/4 oz. rich simple syrup (2:1)
1 dash absinthe
1 dash Angostura bitters

Rub the lip of a chilled cocktail glass with the cut edge of a lemon, and dip the rim into a saucer of superfine sugar to create a sugared rim. Combine ingredients in a shaker, fill with ice and shake to chill; strain into sugar-rimmed glass.

CHAMPAGNE COCKTAIL

1 sugar cube
2-3 dashes Angostura bitters
brut champagne

Place a sugar cube in a chilled champagne flute, lash it with 2 or 3 dashes of bitters, fill the glass with brut champagne, and squeeze a lemon twist on top.

MANHATTAN

2 parts bourbon
1 part sweet vermouth
2 dashes Angostura bitters
Garnish: Luxardo cherry

Combine all ingredients over ice in a mixing glass. Stir and strain into a chilled cocktail glass neat or on the rocks. Garnish with a cherry.



GRAND
CENTRAL

DRINK FROM THE BOOK!

And for a non-alcoholic drink, here's a recipe for a virgin Manhattan perfect for fall.

VIRGIN MANHATTAN MOCKTAIL



2 ounces cranberry juice
2 ounces orange juice
1 tsp maraschino cherry juice
1 tsp lemon juice
2 dashes bitters
2 Maraschino cherries

Add all of the ingredients, except the cherries to an ice-filled cocktail shaker. Cover and shake well. Strain into two martini glasses. Garnish with the cherries and enjoy cold.