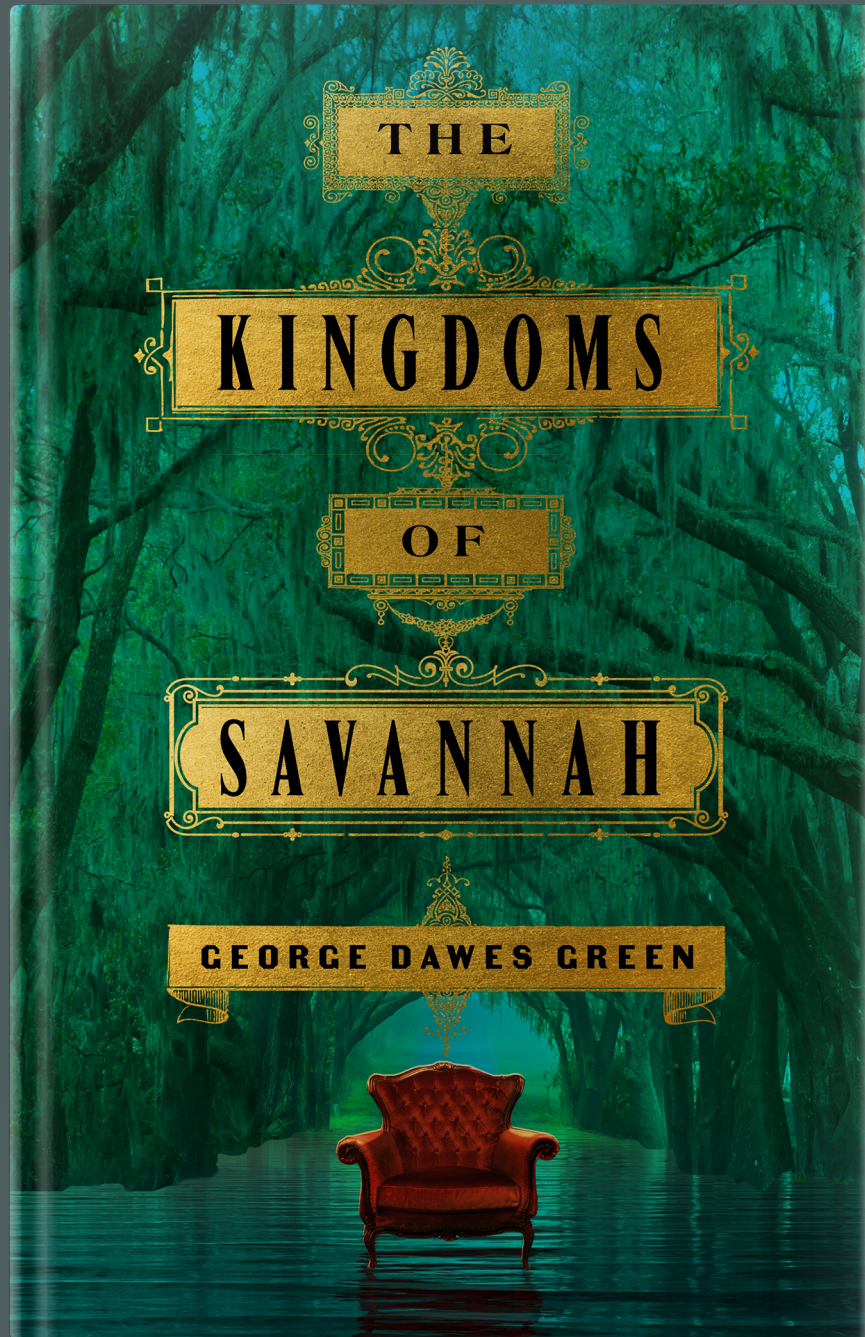


BOOK CLUB KIT



“A wonderfully atmospheric novel that takes the reader on a journey into the underbelly of Savannah while providing interesting new perspectives that were great for discussion!”

—THE BOOK WORMS (KANSAS CITY, MO)

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE DAWES GREEN

Although *The Kingdoms of Savannah* is fictional, you wove in a lot of details about the true and disturbing history of the city. How did you go about conducting your research?

Mostly I listened to friends' stories. For example, one night over a glass of Madeira, years ago, my friend John Duncan told me what he knew about the fortress of "the soldiers of the King," a settlement of Black families who had escaped slavery and gone to live in the Savannah River swamps. My friend Brenda Mehlhorn, homeless for many years, told me about living at the "Truman Marriott," an encampment under the Harry S Truman Parkway—and about the grisly murder she witnessed there. Another friend told me of the horror when the sugar refinery blew up. Furthermore, I spent many days in the beautiful, somber library of the Georgia Historical Society, that towering collection of crime stories.

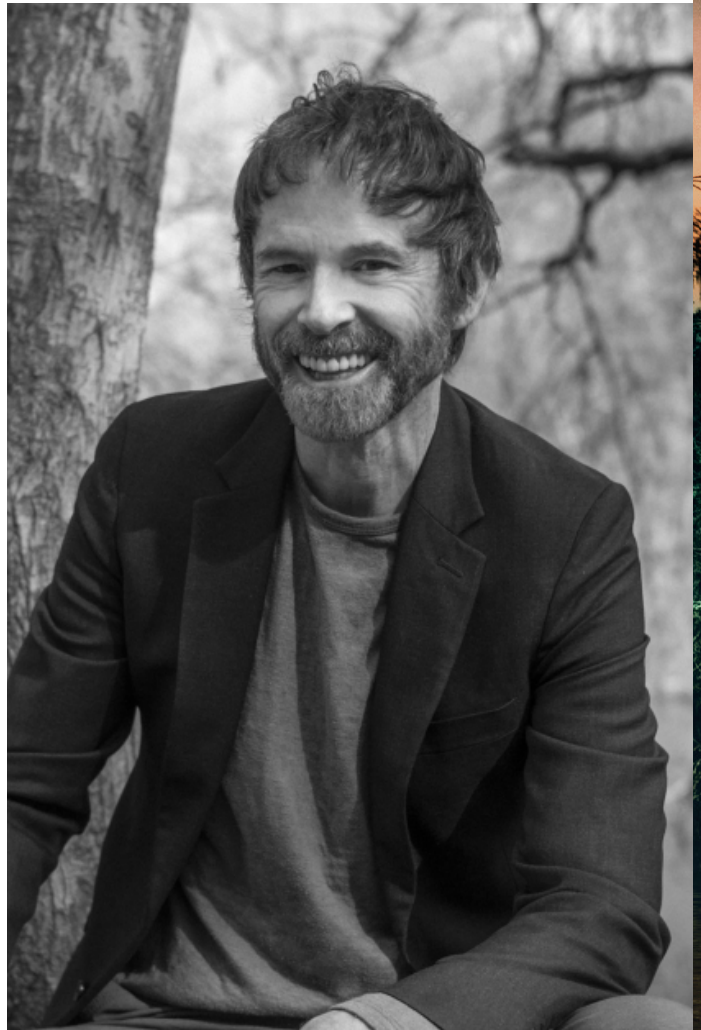
Please talk about the two versions of Savannah that you present to the reader—the one that the tourists see, and the hidden one that unfolds over the course of the novel.

Tourists imagine they get the character of the city in these tours, with all the mansions and fine silverware, and all the floating Victorian specters moaning about their Lost Cause and their fallen nobility; with all those murderous children and rich heiresses throwing themselves tragically from cast-iron balconies. But Savannahians can't stand all that death-cult stuff.

The real city comes to us through its living stories: the immeasurably rich memories of our neighbors.

What is the significance behind "Kingdoms" being plural in the title of the book?

There are many worlds in this small city: the redoubts of the old guard, the Black neighborhoods, the 39 homeless camps that encircle the city, the tourist district. As my protagonist Morgana Musgrove says: "Savannah's not just one realm, it's a great many realms—but they work together to keep us in thrall."



CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE WIDOW

Morgana Musgrove

Matriarch of the family, often a beast. Manipulative, meddling, mean. But she's charming and witty, a doyenne of Savannah society, with an acute ability to discern hidden motives.

HER DECEASED HUSBAND

Frederick Lamar Musgrove

Rich scion of a Southern dynasty. He left his widow a grab bag of businesses he'd collected over the years, including an odd little detective agency, Musgrove Investigations.

THEIR ADULT CHILDREN

Ransom Musgrove

Morgana's younger son, connected to both Savannah's high society and the city's most down-and-out residents. After years of estrangement, he is pulled back into his mother's schemes.

Superior Court Judge Willou Musgrove Lutinger

Morgana's eldest daughter's imperious manner on the bench may be deceiving, as she quietly does her best to help those at the bottom of the justice system.

Bebe Musgrove

Willou's younger sister works as an ER nurse. She sees that her daughter, Jaq, is drawn to Morgana; she wants desperately to shield her from her mother's scheming ways.

David Musgrove

Morgana's elder son. She vaporized his self-esteem in his childhood. Now he's a powerful attorney: cunning, swaggering, abusive, vengeful.

THE GRANDDAUGHTER

Jaq

A bartender at Bo Peep's and an aspiring filmmaker with a strong sense of justice. She'd do anything for her friends and family, and for the city she loves.

OTHER NOTABLE PLAYERS

Matilda Stone

Known to her friends as "Stony," she's an archeologist whose loyalties lie with a secret "kingdom" and its mysterious treasure — some will stop at nothing to find it.

Archibald Guzman

"The Gooze," a shady real estate developer, turns to Morgana for help after he finds himself at the center of a murder investigation.

Detective Nick Galatas

This young, good-looking police officer helps Jaq discover why her friend Luke was murdered.

Rayford Porter

An old Savannah grandee. Like many of his generation, he was in love with Morgana in his youth. He has been a good friend to the Musgrove family for decades.

Billy Sugar

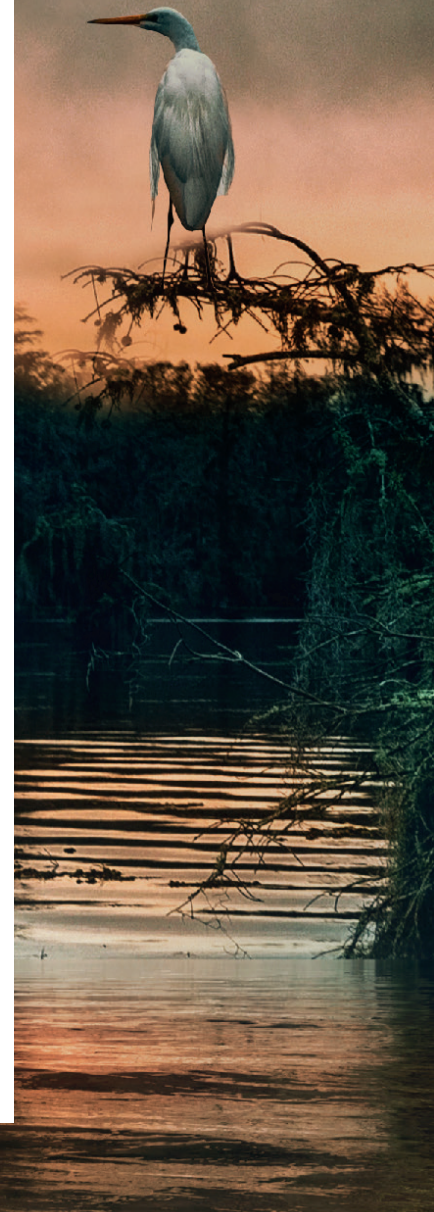
Always accompanied by his dog Gracie. He is a longtime resident of the Truman Marriott homeless encampment. He was a witness to Stony's kidnapping.

The Musician

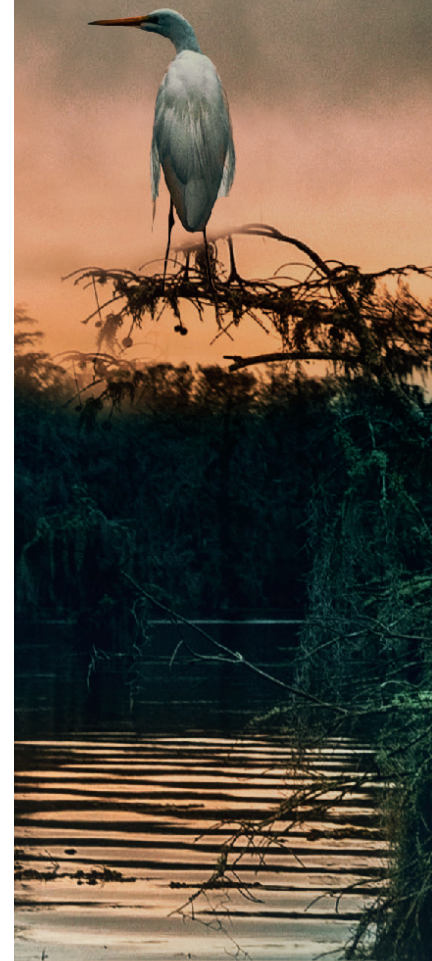
This whistling wanderer is a mysterious part of the city landscape. He sees much but seldom speaks.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Despite Ransom's best efforts to create distance between himself and his family, he finds himself repeatedly entangled in the detective work of his mother, Morgana, and niece, Jaq. What do you think pulls Ransom back into the family and his mother's schemes?
2. Why did the Gooze turn to the Musgrove family? What traits make them uniquely able to help?
3. How does the setting of Savannah guide the novel? Do you think it was important that the author included real places? How has the author's inclusion of these places shaped your perception of Savannah?
4. Many writers have conflicted relationships with the places they grew up in. Is it possible to simultaneously love and hate a place (in particular one's hometown)? Where in the novel do you see the author's complicated relationship with the city?
5. The book challenges the seeming disconnect between the tourists' history of Savannah and the city's dark history of slavery. Were you surprised by some of Savannah's history? Is it possible to present a full picture of the past? Do you think it's important for people to know the history of where they live?
6. The close-knit communities of Savannah's elite and Savannah's homeless population become a wealth of information for the Musgrove family during this investigation. How do these two communities mirror each other? What are the roles of money, race, and status in the story?
7. Bebe and Willou are compared and contrasted their whole lives, but did you notice any similarities between the two Musgrove sisters?
8. How do you feel about Morgana? How did your perspective on her relationship with Ransom and his place in the family evolve throughout the book?



9. Why do you think the author reveals who kidnapped Stony so early in the novel? How did this shape your understanding of the rest of the story?
10. From where does Stony draw her strength? How is her resistance to her kidnapper similar to or different from the strengths of other characters, such as Jaq, Ransom, or the Musician?
11. There are two principal mysteries in the book: Who is behind Luke's murder and what is the Kingdom? How do they interplay? Which of these mysteries do you think is more essential to the themes of the book?
12. Why do you think Galatas made the choices he did? What motivated him to go beyond the desires of the people he worked with?
13. Do you feel that Luke or Billy get justice in the end?
14. Were you satisfied with Morgana's solution at the end of the book? Was she protecting Jaq or betraying her? How do you think her relationship with Jaq has changed?
15. What do you think is next for Jaq or the rest of the characters?
16. The author broke the book into five chapters, each focusing on a different character. How does this affect the way you experience the story?
17. Did the book or the author's writing call to mind other Southern writers? What is it about the South that opens up such a wealth of storytelling?



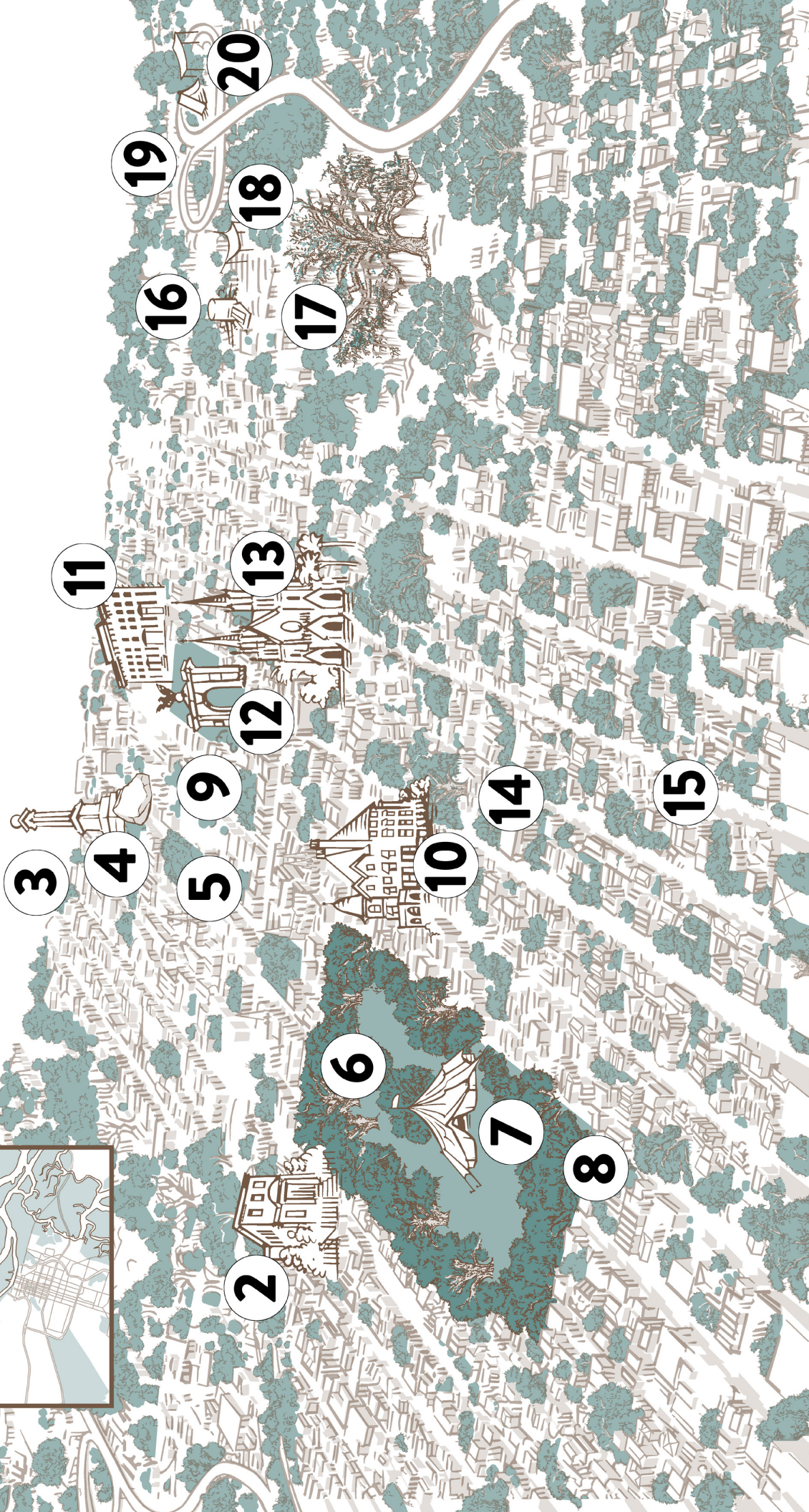
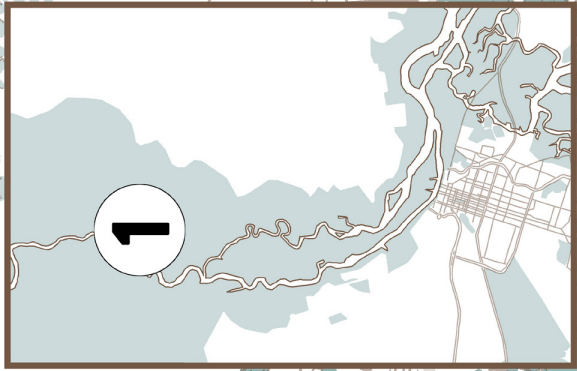
KEY LOCATIONS IN THE BOOK

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PAGE TO
SEE MAP

- 1** Montmillan Island
A wilderness island in the swamps of the Savannah River, Montmillan Island hides the ruins of the Kingdom, where a group of former slaves lived and created a community following the Revolutionary War.
- 2** Georgia Historical Society
The Georgia Historical Society was founded in 1839 and commits itself to researching, documenting, and teaching Georgia's history with the motto "*Non Sibi, sed Aliis*" or "Not for Self, but for Others." Here, Jaq learns more about the history of Savannah from her friend Arthur.
- 3** Stone Stairs of Death
The centuries-old staircase that connects Bay and River streets earned its nickname for its treacherously steep incline and nearly lived up to that name when Ransom pushed his brother David down them in a fight.
- 4** Wright Square
One of the 22 original squares designed by General James Edward Oglethorpe, Wright Square once held the tomb of the Chief of the Yamacraw and friend of Georgia's early settlers Tomochichi, but it now holds a large white statue depicting an old Savannah slaveholder. It is also the place where Ransom goes to hang out with the local vagabonds and drunks, and extract some information about Luke's death.
- 5** Gryphon Tea Room
The elegant mahogany and stained-glass room of the Gryphon serves the people of Savannah high-quality tea and food and is a favorite spot of Morgana's. She holds court in the busy restaurant while the other diners are shocked at the sight of Ransom out in public with his mother for the first time in years.
- 6** Forsyth Park
A 30-acre park in Savannah's Historic District, Forsyth Park is a meeting place for characters throughout the book, whether at the Telfair Ball or when Willou goes to warn Jaq that she is in danger.
- 7** Tent for the Telfair Ball
The Telfair Ball is held each year in Forsyth Park and, in the novel, is circus themed and chaired by David Musgrove. It is a major day for Savannah's elite to gather, dress elegantly, and spend wildly at an auction and for Morgana and Jaq to discuss what they have gleaned from their investigation into Luke's death and the Kingdom.
- 8** Sentient Bean Café
The real-world café known as "The Bean" is a favorite spot for many of the Musgrove family to grab a quick bite and a coffee.

- 9** Bo Peep's
An old dive bar. Stony and Luke frequent Bo Peep's, where they have the chance to talk to the bartender, Jaq, and enjoy a drink before things go horribly wrong.
- 10** The Old Fort
Morgana's house, where her four children grew up and where she continues to live, hosting business meetings, private detectives, family gatherings, and charity soirees, is nicknamed the "Old Fort."
- 11** The A-Hole
Jaq goes to the Savannah Police Department Headquarters, known to some as the A-Hole, to try to learn more about Guzman and the case of Luke's murder.
- 12** Colonial Cemetery
A graveyard that dates back to the War for Independence, with old gravestones covered in moss: Visible from the A-Hole.
- 13** The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist
The old grand Catholic basilica on Lafayette Square, where Jaq goes to meet Galatas.
- 14** Kroger
The Kroger is not just a grocery store but the place where locals tailgate, chatting and playing music together.
- 15** Where Percy Sees the Mud Ghouls
Teenage Percy Mulker is walking to church when he hears three mysterious voices coming from a storm drain.
- 16** Portal to the Storm Drains
The access point for the storm drains where smugglers used to bring in alcohol during Prohibition.
- 17** Stormcloud Oak
Hundreds of years old, the Stormcloud oak is dying, but it still stands as an impressive tree in the woods near the homeless encampment where Ransom and Billy live.
- 18** The Musician's Tarp
The Musician sets up his camp under a blue tarp, but he has to abandon it and all of his possessions when a murder is committed nearby.
- 19** Truman Marriott
Popular name for the homeless encampment under the exit ramp from the Harry S Truman Parkway.
- 20** Ransom's Tent and Billy's Tarp
Ransom and Billy live close to the Truman Marriott.

The Kingdoms of Savannah



SAVANNAH FACTS

- ✦ Savannah is America's first planned city. It was carefully designed in a grid pattern by General James Edward Oglethorpe in 1733. This grid pattern makes Savannah easy to navigate for locals and tourists alike.
- ✦ When Oglethorpe founded Savannah, alcohol, lawyers, and slavery were all prohibited. Tragically, following Oglethorpe's departure from the colony, slavery was legalized in 1751.
- ✦ When Union General William Sherman arrived in Savannah during his famous Civil War "March to the Sea," he spared it from the destruction that other Confederate cities had faced on his orders. Instead, in a telegram to Abraham Lincoln, Sherman offered the city to the President as a Christmas present.
- ✦ Savannah is known for ghost tours, which Ransom and his friends and fellow vagabonds love to disrupt. One of the most famous stops on these tours is the Moon River Brewing Company, supposedly the most haunted spot in all of Savannah thanks to its consistent ghost sightings dating back to the building's time as Savannah's first hotel.
- ✦ Dubbed "The Weeping Time," 432 men, women, and children were sold during America's largest-ever slave auction.
- ✦ The First African Baptist Church was organized in Savannah in 1773 and played a key role during the Civil Rights Movement. The Savannah chapter of the NAACP would often gather at the church. It achieved many victories for the movement, including the integration of the Savannah police department in the 1940s.
- ✦ Savannah has been the home of many important literary and artistic figures, including Flannery O'Connor, James Alan MacPherson, and Conrad Aiken. It is also home to the famed Savannah School of Art and Design.



BOOK CLUB DRINK PAIRINGS

JAQ'S SPRING SOIREE NEGRONI

A classic cocktail traditionally made with one part gin, one part vermouth, and one part Campari with an orange peel garnish. Jaq instead recommends:

- Generous shot of gin
- Smaller doses of vermouth and Campari, just enough to “impart the colors of the sunset outside”
- Slice of Vietnamese orange for the garnish

MORGANA'S PEACH ICED TEA

Morgana has Betty make her iced tea. The perfect Georgia Sweet Tea is a simple way to refresh anyone's day in the heat of a Savannah summer.

Ingredients:

Iced Tea

- 4 cups water
- 6 sachets of black tea
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 cups ice

Peach Syrup

- 6 ripe peaches
- 1 cup water
- 1 ½ tbsp white sugar

Optional: Peach and lemon slices

Instructions

Step One: Boil 2 cups of water and then remove from heat. Steep sachets in water for 5 minutes.

Step Two: Blend peaches and water until the mixture is smooth, while the tea is steeping.

Step Three: Remove sachets and allow tea to cool for 10 minutes. Place tea in refrigerator for 30 minutes.

Step Four: Heat the peach mixture and the sugar on the stove until it reaches boiling point, stirring constantly. Allow it to simmer for 5 minutes. Turn off the heat.

Step Five: Strain the peach syrup and allow it to cool.

Step Six: Pour tea into a pitcher along with the peach syrup. Add lemon juice and mix. If too sweet, add more lemon juice. If too sour, feel free to gradually add more sugar, a teaspoon at a time, stirring until dissolved. Add ice and serve.

Optional: Add peach and lemon slices as a garnish.



If you decide to adopt *The Kingdoms of Savannah* for your book club, we would love to hear about it!

Please let us know by emailing us at reader@celadonbooks.com or post on social media using the hashtags **#CeladonBookClub** and **#KingdomsOfSavannah**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Your friends at Celadon Books



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