



# Book Club Kit



# Get ready to host your book club!

We're so glad you've decided to host a MY WHAT IF YEAR book event! Inside this kit you'll find an author Q&A with Alisha, a reading guide to help prompt your discussion, recipes, a worksheet, and more. Stories are best when shared, and we hope your time together is fun and engaging!

If you're new to hosting a book event, don't worry! We've got you covered. Here's what you'll need to do to get ready for your gathering:

- Determine if you'll meet virtually or in-person.**
- Save the date!**
- Reach out to your local bookstore. You can direct your guests to purchase the book through the store ahead of time or coordinate with the store and have them sell the books at your event.**
- Plan to have some food and drinks, but don't stress about this! Keep it easy by stopping at Trader Joe's for some wine (or sparkling water), cheese, and crackers. Or go all out with homemade snacks and treats. For special treats that relate to the MY WHAT IF YEAR, check out our recipes for the Kinloch Brownies or the rose lychee martini that Alisha and her friends enjoy in London. You could also divide and conquer by asking a few close friends to bring an appetizer or dessert!**
- Relax and have fun! Book clubs are enjoyable because of the connections, not the cocktails or the charcuterie board. Allow everyone a chance to share or ask questions. Be mindful of those who haven't had a chance to read the book by discussing the themes rather than the specifics.**

# Reading Group Discussion Guide:

1. If you were at the Coral Room with Rebecca, Laura, and Alisha, how would you answer Alisha's question: "What would you do? If you could do anything you ever dreamed for a few months?"

2. On page 16, Alisha writes, "Every morning at three, I woke to my brain playing Ping-Pong with itself. I found myself drafting imaginary emails to contacts in the art world or thinking about how I might tailor my resume for a job at a hotel. But then, in the clear light of the morning, reality would set in. Fear and reality. I had too many obligations, too many responsibilities, too many things other people needed from me; I couldn't see any fathomable way to bridge the gulf that seemed to exist between idea and internship."

Has an impending decision ever kept you up at night? Have you ever been scared to take the next step?

3. When Alisha talks about leaving Broadway, she says, "As I turned to go, I couldn't resist a peek at the bare stage. The production team had removed all vestiges of Dracula, and the Assassins setup wouldn't start until the following day. I stood center stage and closed my eyes, imagining an audience filled with anticipation of the opening chords about to be played. It was a future that seemed like it would never happen now. I took a deep bow to the empty room, savoring my last moments as a theater intern, or maybe as an intern altogether, and then stood up and silently walked out the stage door for the last time."

Did you have moments like this in 2020? Think about turning points in your own journey.

4. After meeting with Harry, Alisha and Carlos go to an outdoor performance of Jesus Christ Superstar. "The cast filed onto the stage, one by one, wearing masks. At the crescendo of the overture that I've heard a hundred times before, they all pulled down their masks, slowly. Mine stayed on, as the rules required, but underneath, tears were streaming down my face. My first performance since leaving New York felt like coming out of hibernation: a fragile new seed, a promise that something hopeful was ahead."

# Reading Group Discussion Guide:

Why is this moment so moving for Alisha? What do you think made her feel so hopeful?

5. Near the end of her internship with Harry, Alisha visits one of Edward Ruscha's exhibits. "In a small corner of the exhibition, there was a lone business card. Apparently, no one could pronounce his name ever, so he had some printed that said: EDWARD RUSCHA (ED-WERD REW-SHAY) YOUNG ARTIST. I guess I wasn't the only one who needed some guidance. Maybe everyone in the art world had a little bit of imposter syndrome. Just like me, they were figuring it out as they went along."

Alisha was a CEO before taking on her internships. Where do you think her imposter syndrome came from? Have you ever experienced imposter syndrome?

6. As Alisha is getting ready for her internship at Kinloch, she writes, "even contemplating the idea of going "back to normal" incited a cold sweat. I didn't want my old normal. I didn't want to go back to sitting behind a desk and staring at a computer screen with an inbox of hundreds of emails, fixing the margins on slide deck after slide deck or reconciling expenses or creating proposals for new work. I wanted to be creative, challenged, pushed. I wanted to do something different than normal."

Why do you think Alisha was so set on not going "back to normal"? How can we add creativity and spontaneity to our "normal" lives?

7. To prepare for her interview at Kinloch, Alisha went to her twins, Theo and Lola, for support. "The twins offered to help me prepare by doing a mock interview. They sat on the sofa and peppered me with questions like 'Why do you want to work at Kinloch?' and 'Do you know how to make spaghetti, and can you make some right now?'"

What questions would help you prepare for doing an internship like this? Also, can you make spaghetti?

8. On page 238, Alisha writes, "'Joy' - such a simple, small word that holds so much complexity. It's more than happiness. It's ebullience. It's a celebration. A party all day, every day, where everyone is invited. People think joy is elusive, and they're right;

# Reading Group Discussion Guide:

its impermanence is what makes it all the more important to cultivate, nurture, and appreciate it whenever it comes your way.”

How do you cultivate, nurture, and appreciate joy in your life? How could you be better at it?

9. Near the end of the book, Alisha says, “Changing your life is hard. I can see why more people don’t bother.”

What is a big change you have made in your life? Was it difficult, and would you make the same choice now? Why do you think more people don’t change their lives?

10. What is something you loved about MY WHAT IF YEAR? How did it challenge you?

11. Throughout the book, Alisha’s husband and kids are her support team. Who would you call if you needed support in a big What If moment?

12. Alisha asks, “What would you do? If you could do anything you ever dreamed of for a few months?” Did your answer change after reading MY WHAT IF YEAR?

# Author Q & A

with Alisha Fernandez Miranda,  
moderated by Alisha's publisher,  
Zibby Owens of Zibby Books!



Pictured left to right; Zibby Owens, Alisha Fernandez Miranda



# Author Q+A with Alisha Fernandez Miranda



At the beginning of the book, your friend Rebecca encourages you to write a book about your journey, before you'd even begun your internships. Were you planning to write this book from day 1 of your first internship, or was Rebecca's encouragement just the spark?

In spite of Rebecca's prescient comment, I did not set out to write a book about this experience. While I loved creative writing as a kid, I didn't ever consider myself a writer. Writers were important people who thought deeply profound thoughts, like Shakespeare, Zadie Smith and Tina Fey.

But gradually, it became something I sometimes told people I was doing. It seemed much more palatable to people that I was leaving my job and my family to make great literature, rather than to explain I was kind of having a midlife crisis. In the right situations, it was a quick response to the much more complicated question of "why are you doing this?"



What was your writing process like? Did you journal during your internships or record your experiences in other ways?

I did keep a diary pretty religiously throughout this entire journey. This was by force of habit, mainly; I've journaled most important life events since childhood. Here's a real entry from September 7, 1995:

Dear Diary,

Hey! I just made a really big decision. I'm going to attend journalism day at FIU for my yearbook class on Sept. 23. Mommy just told me that they were planning a trip to Sea World for that day. I said I was going to stay home and go to journalism day. This is more important to me than a "thing" at an amusement park. Plus, if I'm copy editor, I have to be there. This is my first "major" mature decision. At this time last year, I would have said "Sea World all the way."

Love ya

- Lish



Even though I didn't know if anything would ever come of my writing, I knew I would want to record my internship journey for posterity. And then when the pandemic hit, it seemed important to ensure I made an honest recollection of my life during this extraordinary period of human history. When my future grandchildren did one day ask me about it, I wanted something authentic to share with them, not just my memories which would of course be colored by time.

As I wrote about my days and weeks, the people I met and the mistakes I made, I came to realize that I actually really loved sitting down to write. I saw connections to events of my past, patterns in my behavior. It made me question the stories I had told myself about who I was and why I made the choices I had made.

So at some point the fake "I'm writing a book about this" excuse became "maybe I will write a book about this." Still, it seemed almost comical, frankly, that anyone would read it except for my mom and my husband. It was like saying "Maybe I'll audition for the New York City Ballet" or "Maybe this zero-calorie ice cream really will taste like the real thing." But the more I said it and the more I wrote, the less far fetched it seemed.



Near the end of the book, you talk about the importance of seeking joy. Did you intend to create a more joyful life, or was that an unexpected benefit from your internship journey? Did you learn any other unexpected lessons?

I think it was like Georg Baselitz's "happy accidents." I've always been a joy seeker but what I hadn't realized was how far off the path of seeking my own joy I had gotten in the previous years. I had been attempting to Band Aid over my unhappiness by taking on small, joyful hobbies – knitting or tap dancing or French – but they didn't help the bigger issue: that I was questioning the direction of my life.

It would probably take me a whole other book to write about the unexpected lessons I learned from my internships – how if you wear black, no one will notice if spill a whole entire bottle of Coke on your outfit (except dogs, you will become irresistible to dogs); or how to price a Hockney or how do to a one-legged side plank. But the biggest lesson was that I had so much time ahead of me to explore what I wanted to be when I grew up – the idea that I was already on a path I couldn't diverge from was a barrier put in place by me, and me alone.



What books or authors inspired you to write your own book?

I have always been an avid reader since my PAT THE BUNNY days and there are so many authors across genres, countries and languages that I love and admire. But for this project in particular I was inspired by a lot of funny memoirs: Tina Fey's BOSSYPANTS, Mindy Kaling's IS EVERYONE HANGING OUT WITHOUT ME?, Dolly Alderton's EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT LOVE, Caitlin Moran's HOW TO BE A WOMAN.

I also found inspiration in a lot of "behind the scenes" books that looked under the hood of different types of jobs: CORK DORK by Bianca Bosker was a huge inspiration. I also loved SEVEN DAYS IN THE ART WORLD by Sarah Thornton, HEADS IN BEDS by Jacob Tomsky and RAZZLE DAZZLE by Michael Riedel.







At the end of the book, you were working for Harry, had stepped down from your CEO role, and had moved your family to Scotland. Have any other big changes happened since then?

I once heard the saying that the only thing constant in life is change, and I think that is true for me as well. Since I finished the book, we moved again, this time to Edinburgh. We still spend as much time in Skye as we can manage but I can't tell you the joys of being able to walk to a coffee shop again.

In addition to working with Harry, I ended up coming back into the Kinloch family and penning a cookbook for them (50 Years, which came out this fall) and writing up a storm. And I started my podcast, Quit Your Day Job.

Before I take on any work, I try to gut check if it's interesting, intellectually stimulating, and will give me that good, juicy, spirit of the intern type of vibe. Mostly the answer has been yes!



If you could go back and have this experience again, is there anything you would do differently?

I think probably not, because I'm not a person who deals in regret. I'm so pleased with the result of my What If year, even if it wasn't all perfect. I will say though that I still have some internships in my future. Marine biology, working in Disney and heading back to a different side of the theater world, like casting or producing, are still on my bucket list. If you'd like to hire me (for free) in any of those spaces, I'm all ears.



How are you continuing to cultivate, nurture, and appreciate joy in your life?

One of the (only) things I appreciated about lockdown was that it gave ample time for reflection. Too much time, probably, but once we came out of restrictions and life got busy again, it's been a really conscious effort to try to continue the practice of cultivating joy.

I have however really tried to live the lessons I learned throughout my internship. A great example: I have been dying to get back into singing for years and not done anything about it. Last spring, I joined a choir in Edinburgh that sings Broadway songs. We performed at the Fringe Festival and I even had a solo. It was pure joy from start to finish. I made the time for it and saw it through.

I suppose the key is to be intentional about it and to not let fear stop me. I have not always succeeded, but I'd say on the whole I give myself a B+.





What goals do you have for the coming year? Did this experience change how you think about goals?

I can't wait to bring MY WHAT IF YEAR to the world and getting it out there will be a huge part of 2023, as will be, hopefully, completing and selling my next book. But my big goals are the same every year: take the most out of each day, appreciate each experience, even the bad ones, and do the best I can for the people I love. And, every year, I say I'm going to learn French. Maybe this year is it? Peut-être! (I had to Google translate that.)



What are some of the books you've been reading recently? Any books you're looking forward to?

For the first time, I started tracking my reading in 2022 using the Copper Books app, so now I finally have a good answer to this question. I developed a deep obsession with the Sarah J. Maas COURT OF THORN AND ROSES series this year, for better and for worse. I also loved Emily Henry's BOOK LOVERS (can't wait for HAPPY PLACE), Andrew Sean Greer's LESS IS LOST, OLGA DIES DREAMING by Xochitl Gonzalez and Gabrielle Zevin's TOMORROW AND TOMORROW AND TOMORROW which has rapidly ascended to a place on my own personal best ever list.

I'm really excited for upcoming books by Annabel Mognahan and Kirithana Ramiseti but I have to shout out ALL the 2023 Zibby Books authors. Their books are top of my TBR.



Did you continue a writing practice after your What If year? What other projects are coming up for you?

I have loved developing my writing and been really delighted to have pieces out in Vogue, Romper and some other publications I adore. I hope to keep up with my personal essay practice. There will be at least one more season of Quit Your Day Job coming soon. I have also just finished the first draft of a novel, tentatively titled Unrestricted Giving. Crumbling under the pressure of new motherhood, people-pleasing do-gooder Lucia Gutierrez-Barrow gets a dream job advising the rich and powerful on their philanthropy; but as she dives deeper into the excess of extraordinary wealth, she must figure out what it really means to do good before things in her life get very, very bad. Watch this space!



If you could give someone who wants to have their own What If year one piece of advice, what would it be?

The best, weirdest advice that I repeat to everyone who will listen all the time (including my poor children) is, paraphrased, that you have to eat an elephant one bite at a time. See? It's gross. But in all seriousness, planning a big change is terrifying, but taking a small step, then another, toward your goal is much, much more manageable. And delicious.

What's one thing you can do to move toward your what-if goal? Maybe it's blocking off a weekend to take a course in a subject you've always wanted to learn about, or reaching out to an acquaintance for coffee to ask them about their job or life. Then take the next small step. You'll be far down the path of your own What If Year before you even realize it.





# MY WHAT IF Worksheet!

Print it out and start your plan!



# Ready for your own MY WHAT IF YEAR? Use this worksheet to start planning for more joy in your life.

1. If you had unlimited time and resources for three months, what would you do? It could be something you already enjoy doing, like a hobby, or something you've always wanted to learn how to do. Maybe it's a totally different career path. Start by listing everything you can think of (we'll narrow it down).

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2. From the list above, pick the three that call to you the most.

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3. Now, narrow the list to just one activity. Write it down here.

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**Turn the page!**

# Putting your What If into action:

1. Select a month where you think you could devote time to your What If. You don't have to leave your job! Start by carving out 5 hours each week to your What If.

**JAN**    **FEBRUARY**    **MARCH**    **APRIL**    **MAY**    **JUNE**   
**JULY**    **AUGUST**    **SEPTEMBER**    **OCTOBER**    **NOVEMBER**    **DECEMBER**

**YEAR:** \_\_\_\_\_

2. What are three action steps you can take to get yourself started? If your What If is a new skill, can you join a local class? If it's a new job, can you set up informational interviews with people who already hold your dream position? Write them down here.

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3. What do you need to achieve this goal? Someone to watch the kids for an hour each evening? A certain tool or piece of equipment? Write down what you need most, and don't be afraid to ask for help.

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**Let your MY WHAT IF YEAR begin!**



# Kinloch S'mores

as mentioned in MY WHAT IF YEAR by Alisha Fernandez Miranda

**Makes approximately 16 brownies!**

## Ingredients:

185g butter

185g dark chocolate

170g plain flour

80g coco

50g white chocolate drops

3 eggs

375g caster sugar

Marshmallows

## Recipe:

1. Heat oven to 180 degrees.

2. Gently melt the butter and dark chocolate together. In a separate bowl, sieve the plain flour and cocoa powder, scatter in the white chocolate drops. Whisk together the eggs and caster sugar.

3. Mix the dark chocolate and butter mixture into the flour and cocoa powder. Then fold in the whisked eggs and caster sugar.

4. Line a 30cm by 20cm size baking tray and bake for 35 mins

5. Remove from oven and allow to cool – cut into squares.

6. To serve, warm brownies for 12 secs in a microwave. Put 3 marshmallows on top of the brownie and carefully melt with a blow-torch.

7. Drizzle with salted caramel sauce.



# Rose Lychee Martini

as mentioned in MY WHAT IF YEAR by Alisha Fernandez Miranda

**Makes one cocktail!**

## **Ingredients:**

0.25 Oz Rose water

0.50 Oz Lemon juice

1 Oz Lychee juice

1 Oz Tanqueray gin

## **Recipe:**

1. In a shaker, pour all the ingredients out.
2. Add the ice and shake well for 8 to 10 seconds.
3. Pour the mix out, through a cocktail strainer, in a Martini glass.



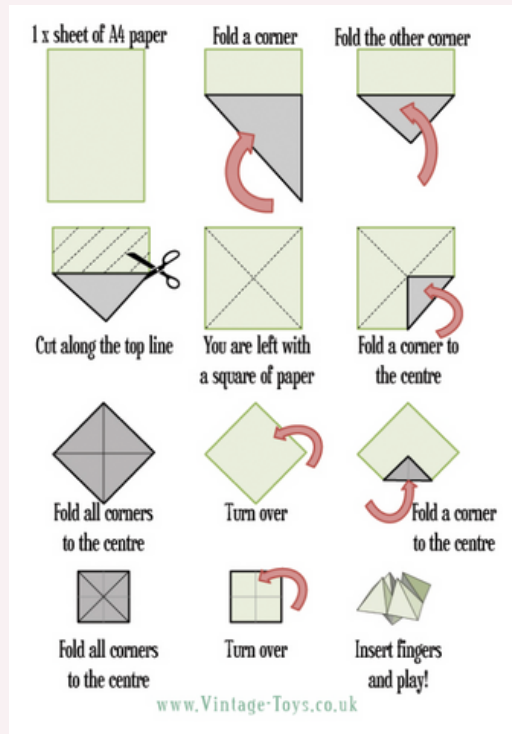
# Origami Fortune Teller:

Discover the next step for  
your #mywhatifyear



# Origami fortune teller instructions: The MY WHAT IF YEAR Challenge

Step 1) Cut your fortune teller along the dotted line and fold as shown below:



Step 2) One person holds out the fortune teller to the other. Choose your favorite shoe from Alisha's cover.

- **If you picked the sneaker - open and close the fortune teller with your fingers 4 times.**
- **If you picked the ballet flat - open and close the fortune teller 3 times.**
- **If you picked the rainboot - open and close the fortune teller 2 times.**
- **If you picked the high heels - open and close the fortune teller once.**

Step 3) Now you pick a number from the visible number choices. If the number 5 is chosen, open and close the fortune teller five times.

Step 4) Pick another number. Again, move the fortune teller based on the number you chose.

Step 5) From the numbers visible, choose the number of the flap you want to lift. Lift the flap and reveal your first MY WHAT IF YEAR challenge!