

ALIX RICKLOFF

AUTHOR OF *THE GIRLS IN NAVY BLUE*

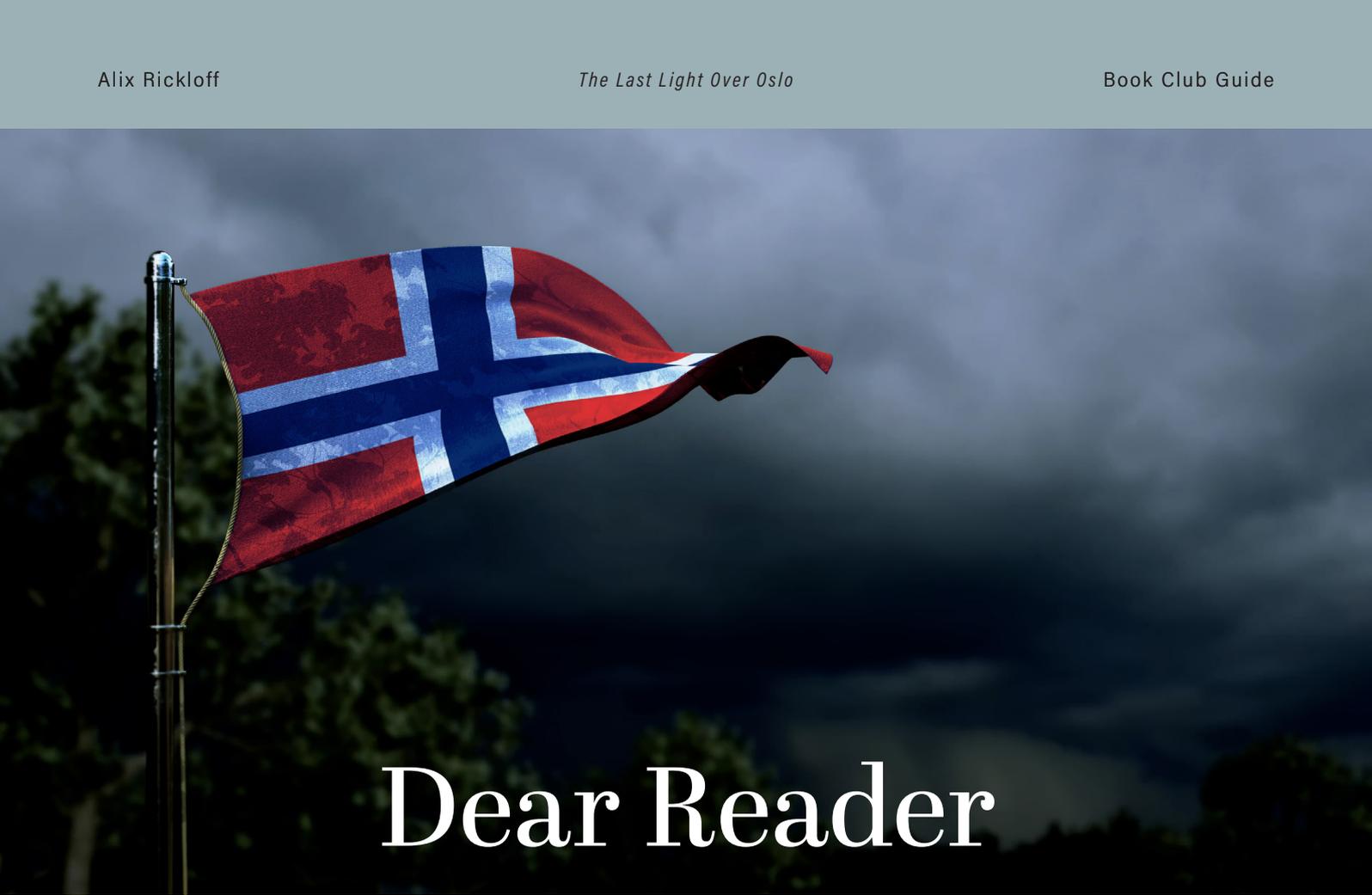
THE  
LAST  
LIGHT  
OVER  
OSLO

*A Novel*

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# Book Club Guide

*The Last Light Over Oslo*



# Dear Reader

Thank you for choosing *THE LAST LIGHT OVER OSLO* for your book club. To help with your evening, I've put together some extras to make it as fun and informative as possible. Included in this guide is an author's note, to give you a peek into what inspired me to write the book as well as a deeper dive into the history behind this fictional account of Daisy Harriman. I've also made sure to include discussion questions to get the conversation flowing. And last, but never least, there are some tasty recipes for treats and drinks to liven up the book party.

Enjoy and happy reading!

Alix



# Author's Note

Who knew that sitting down on a Sunday evening to watch the latest PBS offering would lead to a book, but this was the case in the summer of 2021 when I first spotted the unidentified gray-haired woman warning Norway's Crown Princess Martha of the coming confrontation with Germany. Who was this smart, savvy diplomat? It turned out to be Florence Harriman, known to her family and friends as Daisy.

She was born into the Gilded Age New York splendor of Astors and Morgans, Vanderbilts and Whitneys. Later, as the wife of J. Borden Harriman, she attached herself to one of the wealthiest and most prominent families in the nation. Like many women during this new progressive era, she cut her teeth on the pressing social issues of the day such as prison reform, the labor movement, and women's suffrage. In 1912, she moved from New York to Washington D.C. as part of Wilson's Federal Industrial Labor Commission where she found her footing amid the political whirl. From her home at Uplands, she hosted reporters, diplomats, politicians, judges, cabinet members, and foreign and domestic glitterati at dinners that became famous among Washington's elite.

During WWI, Daisy's activism increased; first as part of the Red Cross Motor Corps ambulance operating in France then, following the Armistice in 1918, as an observer to the peace talks in Paris and a staunch campaigner for Wilson's League of Nations as a member of the Inter-Allied Women's Conference. This life of public service made her eventual tagging by President FDR in 1937 as the U.S. minister to Norway, an easy choice.

There is a danger to telling the story of someone who took the

time to tell their own story. Florence (Daisy) Harriman was a prolific writer, completing two memoirs: *From Pinafores to Politics* and *Mission To The North*. These books were crucial reading material, both in establishing the history behind this amazing woman's growing significance in American politics, but also in offering me a window into her incredible adventure in Norway that culminated in her acting as escort to Crown Princess Martha and her children. Where I could, I have incorporated Daisy's own words into my story, but for anyone wanting to learn more about the facts behind my fiction, I recommend both books as highly entertaining and informative glimpses into the adventures of an influential and witty woman who wrung every last drop out of a long and active life.

As much as Daisy offered up an almost daily record of her experiences, my book is historical fiction which, by its nature, is a reshaping of the facts into an entertaining narrative. In doing so, an author may have to stray off the path on occasion. While Daisy's adventures from Oslo to Stockholm then Finland on her way home is all based on the historical record; there were parts of the story that I altered, condensed, or emphasized for the sake of clarity, pacing, characterization, or plot.







As far as I know, Daisy did not keep up the steady correspondence with her sister-in-law Anne Vanderbilt that I indicate in the book. But the two were close throughout their lives, and both women used their wealth and positions to promote progressive social causes. Anne's death in April 1940 from pneumonia while Daisy was on the run in Norway was a punishing blow.

Last but certainly not least, Daisy's trusted dog Kim, while a chaser of wheels including a milk truck, did not inadvertently cause the death of a German soldier and was put to sleep before the events of 1940 due to age and illness.

Over the course of writing this novel, I've had to repeatedly explain who Daisy was which saddens me when I realize how quickly she's been forgotten. Florence "Daisy" Harriman was a soldier in my army of heroines with a lifetime of experiences and accomplishments that truly put her in "a box seat at the America of her times. I'm honored to offer readers a glimpse at this amazing woman and hope that by doing so, we bring her back to the world's attention for one more bow.



# Discussion Questions

1. Daisy Harriman wore many hats over her long life. Suffragette. Social reformer. Government minister. Had you heard of her before reading the book? If not, what were your first impressions of her? And if so, did you learn anything new after reading the book?
2. What are your first impressions of Daisy and Cleo?
3. Daisy talks about an “army of heroines” — women who answered the call when times demanded it. Can you think of any current women who might be added to that list? This could be someone famous or someone in your own neighborhood working to make things better.
4. Cleo starts the story seeing the war in Europe as someone else’s problem. Did you understand her reasons? At what point do you feel that begins to change?
5. Daisy confronts misogyny throughout the book from small slights to outright hostility. But when questioned, she admits that for all her barrier-breaking, she was still a woman of her time. Do you agree with her assessment? What do you feel has changed for women since Daisy’s time? What remains the same?
6. Petra begins the book, resenting Cleo and believing her to be spoiled and selfish. Cleo thinks Petra is cold and dull. Do you feel their opinions of each other were justified? What moments brought them together?



# Scandinavian-inspired Drinks and Treats



## Smoked Salmon, Apple Fennel Salad, and Horseradish Cream Rye Toasts

Makes 12 small toasts

(taken from [www.norwegianamerican.com](http://www.norwegianamerican.com) from Norway House. Publisher: Ragnar Meyer-Knutsen)

- One package (4 oz.) cold-smoked salmon
- Apple Fennel Salad
- Horseradish Cream
- 12 Rye Toasts or rye crispbread
- Dill sprigs for serving

### For the Apple Fennel Salad:

- One granny smith apple, cored and cut into thin matchsticks
- 2 tbsps. of finely chopped fresh fennel
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- Coarse salt to taste
- Dill sprigs for serving

### For the Horseradish Cream:

- ¼ cup creme fraiche
- 1 tbsp. prepared horseradish
- Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

1. Make the Apple Fennel Salad: Combine all ingredients in a medium bowl and stir gently. Season to taste with salt. (Apple Fennel Salad can be made up to 24 hours in advance and stored tightly covered in the refrigerator.)
2. Make the Horseradish Cream: Combine creme fraiche and horseradish together in a small bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper. (Horseradish Cream can be prepared 24 hours in advance and stored tightly covered in the refrigerator.)
3. Assemble the toasts: Top each Rye Toast with smoked salmon, a little Apple Fennel Salad and a dollop of Horseradish Cream. Garnish each toast with a dill sprig and serve.

# Scandinavian-inspired Drinks and Treats

## Almond-Cardamom Thumbprints with Lingonberry Preserves

Adapted from Food & Wine, December 2013 and  
Modern Scandinavian Baking by Daytona Strong

- 1 cup fine almond flour
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 stick (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- Approximately 1 cup lingonberry preserves

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F and line two baking sheets with parchment paper.

Whisk almond flour, all-purpose flour, cardamom, and salt together in a bowl to combine. In large bowl, beat the butter and sugar using an electric mixer for three minutes, until it becomes light and fluffy. Beat in the egg and vanilla extract, then turn down the speed to low and mix in the dry ingredients, just until incorporated. Turn out the dough onto your work surface and knead it a few times, forming it into a ball.

Shape dough into little balls using a tablespoon measure and arrange them on the baking sheets about an inch apart. Make an indentation in the center of each, and bake until slightly firm, about 10 minutes. Reinforce the indentation in each cookie one more time and return the cookies to the oven until they start to turn lightly golden and feel dry to the touch. This should take about seven more minutes.

Immediately transfer the cookies to a rack. When completely cool, stir the lingonberry preserves in a small bowl to create a smoother jam (it's okay to leave the berries intact), then carefully spoon a little into the center of each cookie.



## Stuffed Eggs

(recipe from The Norwegian Kitchen  
by Kokkenes Mesterlaug  
& Kjell E. Innli)

- 4 Hard-cooked eggs
  - 1½ Tbsp chopped ham, tongue, anchovy fillets, or smoked salmon
  - 1 Tsp butter
  - 3 Tbsp grated cheese
1. Peel the eggs and halve lengthwise.
  2. Remove the yolks and combine with the remaining ingredients.
  3. Stuff the egg whites with the mixture.

# Scandinavian-inspired Drinks and Treats

## Nordic Summer Cocktail

(courtesy of The Moody Mixologist)

- 1-1/2 oz aquavit
  - 1oz lime juice
  - 1oz Aperol
  - ice
1. Chill a coupe glass. Strain into a glass.
  2. In a cocktail shaker, combine ice, aquavit, lime juice, and aperol.
  3. Shake to chill
  4. Strain into glass

## Aquavit Punch

(courtesy of [www.cocktailclub.com](http://www.cocktailclub.com))

- 14oz Botanical Aquavit
  - 30oz Apple Juice
  - 4oz Sugar syrup
  - 4oz Lemon juice
  - Lemon
  - Apple
  - Cinnamon stick
  - Ice
1. Fill your punch bowl half full of ice
  2. Pour the liquids in the punch bowl
  3. Stir
  4. Garnish with lemon slices, apple slices and cinnamon sticks

## GLØGG (non-alcoholic)

(courtesy of Cheap Recipe Blog)

- 32-ounce container of juice (red grape juice, currant juice, or combo of dark red juices)
  - Peel from one orange
  - 5 whole cloves
  - 7 whole allspice berries
  - 2 cinnamon sticks
  - 4 whole cardamom pods
  - 1 knob of ginger, peeled
  - 2 thick orange slices (save the rest of the orange for garnish)
  - 1/2 cup slivered almonds
  - 1/2 cup raisins
1. Place cloves, allspice berries, and cardamom on a cutting board and smash with the back blade of a knife.
  2. Place all ingredients in a heavy-bottom kettle. Heat to a low simmer. Allow to cook for 15 to 20 minutes, allowing the flavors to combine.
  3. Turn off heat, strain out spices, and add almonds and raisins. Serve warm with sliced oranges for garnish. Garnish with lemon slices, apple slices and cinnamon sticks

## Viking Mule

(Courtesy of [www.cocktailsofcopenhagen.dk](http://www.cocktailsofcopenhagen.dk))

- 1.5oz Aquavit
- .5oz elderflower liqueur
- .5oz lime juice
- Ginger beer

Mix ingredients together over ice. Top with slice of cucumber and sprig of dill



# Author Bio

Critically acclaimed author of historical fiction, Alix Rickloff's family tree includes a knight who fought during the Wars of the Roses (his brass rubbing hangs in her dining room) and a soldier who sided with Charles I during the English Civil War (hence the family's hasty emigration to America). With inspiration like that, what else could she do but start writing her own stories? She lives in Maryland in a house that's seen its own share of history so when she's not writing, she can usually be found trying to keep it from falling down. *THE LAST LIGHT OVER OSLO* is her latest release.