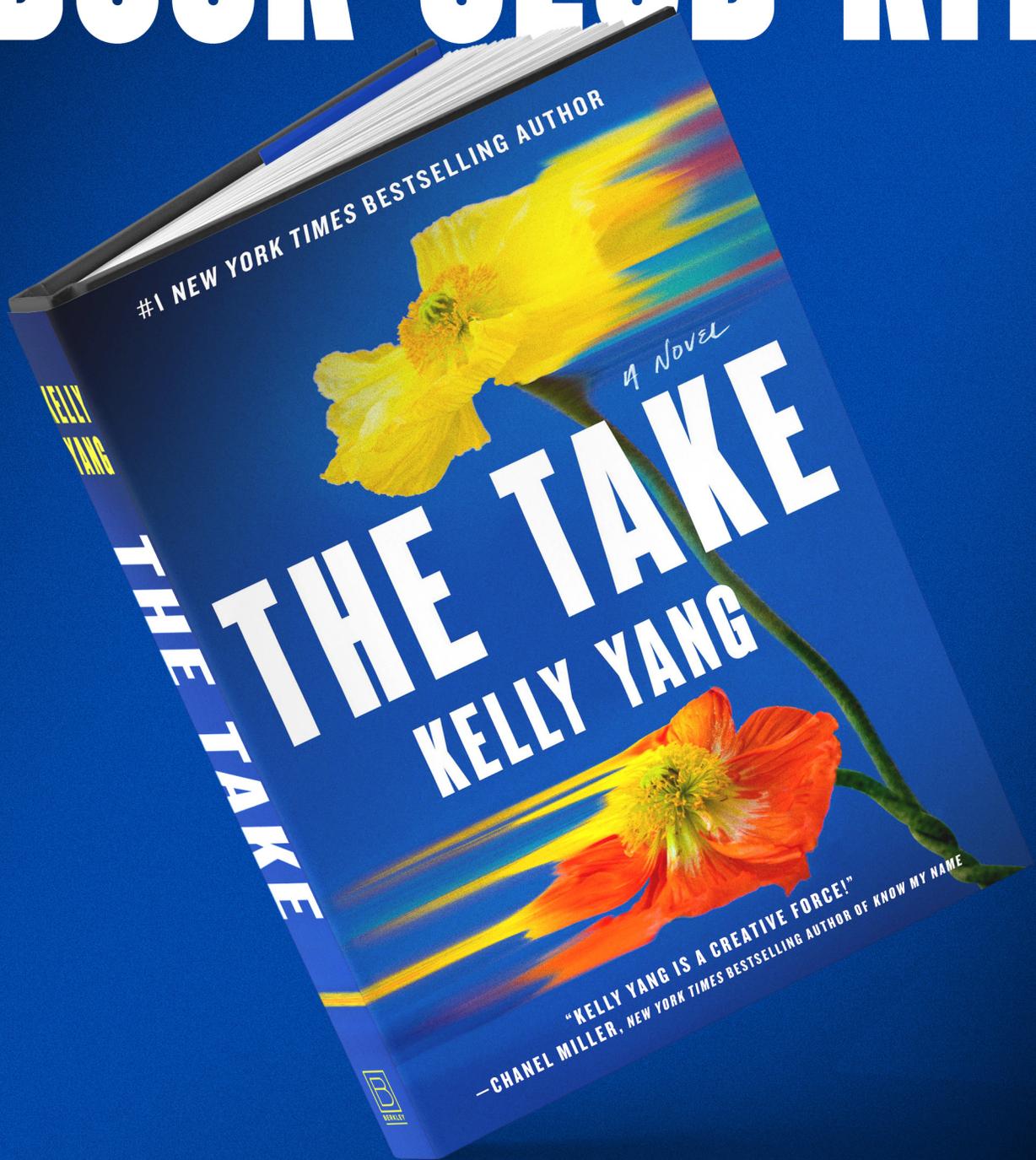


BERKLEY

# BOOK CLUB KIT





# Dear Reader,

The book you are about to read is the culmination of every ridiculous, hilarious, and unrepeatable thought I've ever had hurled at me about my age. My whole life, I've felt like I've never been the right age at the right time. This is in large part due to how much our society loves to judge women as we age. I've been told I was "too old" to ever learn perfect English (I was six when we moved to the US). I was then "too young" to try to manage the front desk of a motel. "Too young," again, to be a lawyer. "Too old" when I wanted to switch tracks and become a writer. Now here I am, once again, reinventing myself, coming to you with my first adult novel . . . and wondering if I am "too old" to wander down a new path.

It's insane how small of a window we get, as women, to be seen as the right age to do what we want to do. Not amazing "for someone who's so young," or intuitive "despite her lack of experience," or flexible "even though she's been here forever." Just allowed to be.

That's why I wrote The Take. I wanted to take these vulnerable, embarrassing thoughts I had about my own age and make art out of them. I wanted to shine a light on how deep the discrimination cuts . . . both ways! As much as our society idolizes youth, it also punishes those who are eager and green. But then, just you wait, as soon as you get a little experience

under your belt, you'll hear voices popping up. "Does she still have it?" "Is she losing her relevancy?" "Is her time almost up?"

I wanted to explore the imbalance of power that takes advantage of our insecurity, and the cannibalistic nature of the mentor-mentee relationship. I wanted to write about some of my own experiences trying to navigate Hollywood as a young writer, and what happens when you've been duped by a dream. How do you find the courage to keep going?

Most of all, I wanted to write about the deeply inspiring and terrifying friendship of two women who take it upon themselves to try and do something . . . they just want to lengthen the time they have to be taken seriously for who they are. As diabolical as their journey is, I hope they succeed in helping all of us crack that window of time wider. Even if it's just in our own minds.

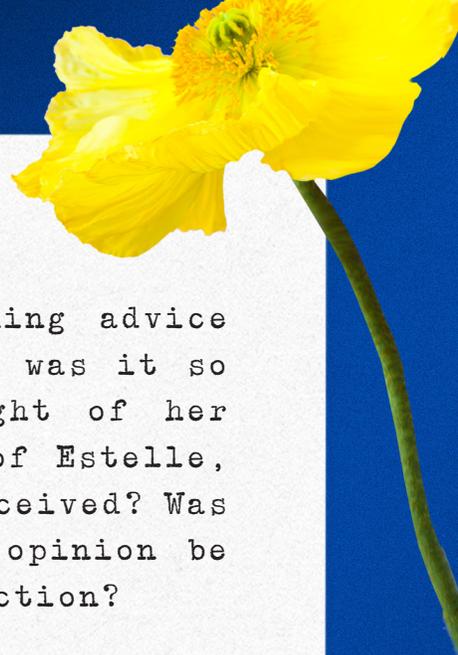
And on that note, I'm not too old to do this. Enjoy The Take.

*Kelly Yang*



### Discussion Questions

1. When Maggie is introduced, she is seeking advice from a writer she admires, Estelle. Why was it so important to Maggie what Estelle thought of her writing? Ignoring what you later learn of Estelle, what do you think of the advice Maggie received? Was her reaction justified, and would your opinion be different if the two didn't have a connection?
2. Why do you think this story pairs up Maggie Wang and Ingrid Parker? What similarities and differences do you see between the women and their relentlessness? Of the two, who was ultimately more feared, and who was more fearless?
3. The story seems to show that no matter their age, women are at a disadvantage in their professional lives. Do you agree with that? Do you feel that Ingrid's decision to do something about her fading position was courageous? Admirable? Conniving? All three?
4. How would you feel if it were Maggie who first found out about the experiment and sought out Ingrid? Do you think the story would still work? Why or why not?
5. Antiaging experiments are a real thing happening today. If these experiments prove to be effective and safe, and someone wanted to sell their youth for a sum of money, should they be allowed to?
6. Do you think that Ingrid would have been a good mentor for Maggie without the experiments? What informs your thinking? What does being a good mentor entail?
7. Similarly, what does it mean to be a good assistant?



How much should you do to prove yourself to be a value add? And where do you draw the line between "paying your dues" and exploitation?

8. Ingrid encourages Maggie to dig deeper and write her own story. Do you think that Maggie was ever in control of that story?
9. At some point, the dynamic between Maggie and Ingrid begins to shift, and Ingrid points out that everyone exploits. Do you believe that's true? Are Maggie's actions exploitive? Do you think that if the tables were turned, Maggie would have done the same thing to Ingrid? Why or why not?
10. "Writing is not simply a contest of who is the most talented. It is also a contest of who is the least starved." Reflecting on this line, do you agree with Maggie? How much is one's ability to make art influenced by one's socioeconomic position?
11. The title, The Take, has a few meanings. What was your interpretation of the title before reading the story? What was it after? What do you think is the biggest thing that the two women take from each other? Give to each other?
12. If Ingrid's health weren't in question and Maggie accepted a deal that was just about aging, do you think these experiments would have been a good deal for her? What would have made it one?
13. Reflecting on your own life, have there been times when you felt you were taken advantage of by someone you admired professionally? What would you tell your younger self about how to handle the situation?

