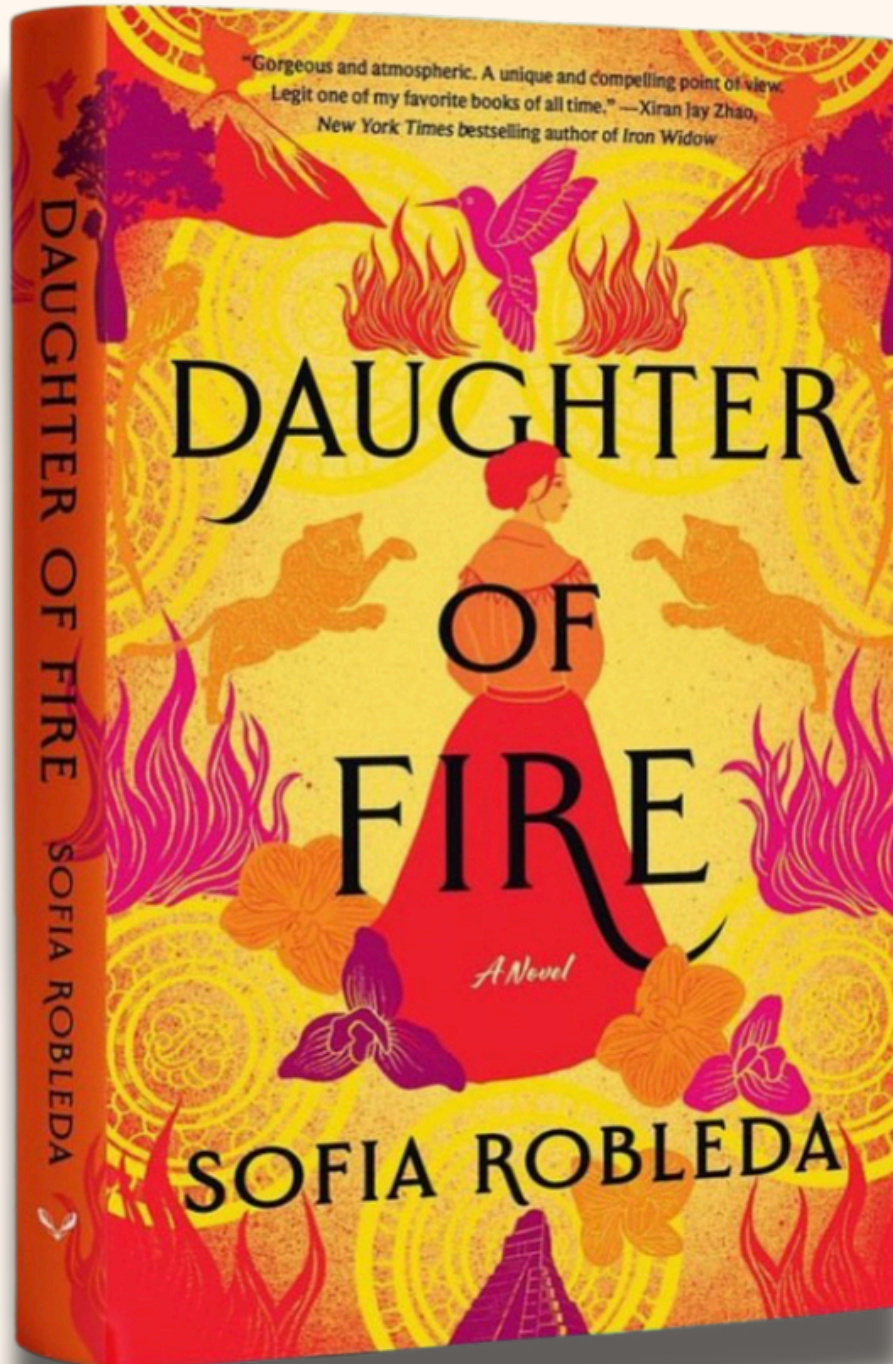


# DAUGHTER OF FIRE

## BOOK CLUB KIT



AMAZON CROSSING

# DEAR READER,

This book is the unexpected result of a personal ancestral search I began in 2018, which led me to discover that I had Indigenous roots, native to Mexico and Central America. This knowledge changed something in me.

Growing up in Mexico City and Cancun, I'd been exposed to the awesome parts of some of our ancient civilisations. I clearly remember going every year to Chichen Itza to witness the summer solstice. At home we had picture books with Aztec and Maya myths, which I grew to love from an early age. In school, we learned that the majority of Mexicans and Latin Americans, like my protagonist Catalina, came from this *mestizaje*, this blending of races, which is something that's supposed to fill us with nationalistic pride and a sense of identity. It's supposed to free us from racism, to equalize us as one people. But in actuality, it's a mirage that has led to the erasure and forced assimilation of much of the Indigenous and African descendants in our population. Nearly five hundred years after the Spanish conquest, a stealthy colorism continues to plague our societies, contributing to more significant barriers and indignities for those with darker skin tones.

Thus, I was confronted with these harsh yet necessary truths as I reflected on how it was possible to have lost the knowledge of my Indigenousness (which I now have learned comes from *both* my parents), and delved more deeply into our native history, especially about the Mexica and the Maya. I was left bereft and devastated when I came across the fact that in the 16th century, a Catholic bishop in Yucatan burned thousands of Maya codices, and that only four survived to the present day. After crying inconsolably at the loss of all that incredible wisdom, my interest into the surviving texts intensified, and I finally learned of the Popol Vuh.

This underestimated work of literature was written in secret, a mere three decades after the Spanish conquest. It was meant to guide the K'iche' Maya people, to connect them to their history and beliefs. The authors refused to name themselves, in fear of the severe repercussions, and to this day, no one knows who wrote it.

But it was the courage they displayed in preserving their heritage in the face of such danger that inspired me to write, to travel to Guatemala on a solo research trip and experience this incredible country, to truly acknowledge the probable horrors that some of my own forefathers perpetuated against other members of my lineage in their deluded righteousness and greed. To try to connect and reclaim, in the limited yet most respectful way I could, to the indomitable Indigenous power in my bloodline that, to my shame and loss, had been spurned and forgotten.

DAUGHTER OF FIRE is my debut novel. I am incredibly proud of it, and forever humbled. Because I do believe that I was led by my ancestors. That through Catalina, I was blessed to bring this reimagining of real historical truths, events and figures to light, and to share them with you. I hope you will be immersed in this world of beautiful, yet brutal contradictions, and be transformed in some significant way, as Catalina and I have been. And I hope you will be inspired, if not by this novel, then by the wonderful, transcendental, and ever mighty Popol Vuh.

# DAUGHTER OF FIRE

## PLAYLIST

**SAVAGE DAUGHTER - EKATERINA SHELEHOVA**

**SHARPENING MY KNIVES - KRIS BOWERS**

**THE CURSE - AGNES OBEL**

**CUATRO VIENTOS - DANIT**

**FUEGO - XIUHTEZCATL, ISA CARESS**

**DAUGHTER - BEYONCE**

**OJALA - SILVIO RODRIGUEZ**

**GYPSY FLAME - ARMIK**

**EDGE OF SEVENTEEN - STEVIE NICKS**

**LUNA DE XELAJU- MARIMBA CONCIERTOS DE BELLAS ARTES**

**THUNDER - LANA DEL REY**

**OJITOS LINDOS - BAD BUNNY, BOMBA ESTEREO**

**GUATEMAYA - BARRIOCANDELA**

**ZOMBIE - THE CRANBERRIES**

**SET FIRE TO THE RAIN - ADELE**

**LOSE CONTROL - TEDDY SWIMS**

**CASOCERRADO - IMMASOUL**

**THANK YOU AIMEE - TAYLOR SWIFT**

**DISFRUTO - CARLA MORRISON**

**TOUGH - QUAVO, LANA DEL REY**

**NO - SHAKIRA, GUSTAVO CERATI**

**MAYAN FIRE FLUTE - XAVIER QUIJAS YXAYOTL**

**GIRL ON FIRE - ALICIA KEYS**



Listen to this playlist inspired by DAUGHTER OF FIRE,  
curated by Sofia Robleda and available on Spotify

# DAUGHTER OF FIRE

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- One of the central themes in *Daughter of Fire* is belonging. We see Catalina struggling to reconcile her contrasting halves. Have you ever felt 'split' or had difficulty feeling like you belonged? Describe how those experiences affected you.
- In the first chapter, we are told that both of Catalina's parents tell her stories as a child. Her mother's stories of the Popol Vuh in particular have a deep and lasting impact on her. Did anyone tell you stories as a child? Are there any that stand out to this day? How do you feel when you recall these childhood storytellers? How did you feel reading the retellings of the Popol Vuh?
- Another significant theme in *Daughter of Fire* is honoring and connecting with your roots and ancestry. What aspects of Catalina's journey inspired you to reflect on your own roots?
- As a woman, Catalina faces many challenges in her quest to preserve the Popol Vuh. When she agrees to help Don Bernal write down his memoir, we see the contrast between their writing journeys. How did the two differ and why do you think this was? Have you ever faced challenges because of an intrinsic characteristic you had no control over? How did that shape you?
- *Daughter of Fire* is set in 16th century Guatemala. What did you learn about the world from this book? What surprised you or changed your views about what that time period was really like?
- After a rocky start, Catalina and Juan fall in love with each other. Why do you think they clashed at the start of the novel? What drew them together and then apart again? What did you think of their relationship by the end?
- Who was your favorite character in *Daughter of Fire*? Who would you have liked to see more of?
- Some might characterize Don Alonso as the 'villain' of the story. Why do you think he makes the decisions he does towards his daughter? In what ways do you find him sympathetic?
- Catalina has a complex relationship with her half-sister Beatriz and her friend Isabel. What similarities did you find between these two characters, if any? What was your response to them? How did you feel about Catalina ultimately 'choosing' the Popol Vuh over her friend's life?
- What did you think of the Author's Note at the end? Did it change your feelings of the book to realize that many of the characters and events were real? Did it inspire you to do your own research into the topic?