

# A WORD ON HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH FROM KARLA VALENTI



The theme for this year's Hispanic Heritage month is "Esperanza: A Celebration of Hispanic Heritage and Hope." Surely there is no more fitting theme to embrace in 2021. But what exactly are we celebrating?

The root of "heritage" stems from inheritance, a legacy passed on from generation to generation. In this case, the inheritance is a cultural one, passed on through food and music, fables and myths. It is a gift of history, a wealth of traditions, a bounty of stories. To celebrate Hispanic heritage is to acknowledge the many contributions of the Hispanic and Latinx American experience in shaping the identity of our nation.

As for "hope," that unwavering quality of trust is central to the Hispanic ethos—a lifeline as potent as the blood that courses through our veins. To celebrate hope is to champion those who are willing to believe in something better, without losing the best of who they are; it is an invitation to grow beyond our barriers, allowing new ideas to enter our domain. A celebration of hope is an act of faith in you, in me, in all of us. Esperanza is no small thing.

And so, this month, as we shine a light on one of the many cultural legacies that make up our collective truth, let us delight in all the ways we make each other whole. Let us share food and music, fables and myths. Let us share histories and stories about what it means to be Hispanic. For my part, I invite you to explore Mexico's rich culture and heritage, the legacy that runs through my veins, in a story about death and destiny, choices and consequences, free will and family . . . and of course, hope.

"Don't be swayed by the songs of the siren," cries the game master in the game of Lotería. And that may be true for seafaring folks (or children being lured into a magical land). But you are a reader, and it is an author's job to make you swoon. So, to you I say, be swayed, and follow your heart deep into the pages of these wonderfully rich and complex stories by some of today's best Latinx and Hispanic storytellers.



## Lotería

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GLB: 978-0-593-17697-9

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The turn of a card could change your destiny . . . *The Phantom Tollbooth* meets *Coco* in this captivating magical realist adventure based on the Lotería card game.

