



## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH ELIZABETH CAMDEN

### 1. Can you describe the plot of *To the Farthest Shores* in one sentence?

When a reluctant spy falls in love with an army nurse, they can't imagine the web of intrigue and adventure heading their way.

### 2. Where did the inspiration for this novel come from?

I adore stories about reunited lost loves. *To the Farthest Shores* opens with two people who fall desperately in love during the rush of blazing infatuation that often happens in a first love. I think there is a purity to that sort of love that can be hard to recapture once people have their heart broken and they become more guarded in subsequent relationships. I wanted to explore a love story in which the characters strive to recapture that dazzling feeling they once shared but are forced to work through the chaos that tore them apart in the first place.

### 3. What are the spiritual themes in this novel?

The main theme is that of forgiveness, which comes into play in many contexts. Some of this relates to romantic partners who have hurt each other and must work through serious failings in their relationship. I also touch on the heroine's struggle to forgive herself for the sins of her youth. There are no easy answers here, as the sins are real and alive. How can a person go beyond merely expressing regret and genuinely receive forgiveness? Can forgiveness be earned? Is it a requirement for a Christian to forgive an offense? True reconciliation rarely happens quickly, and this novel explores the issue while delivering a richly detailed love story.

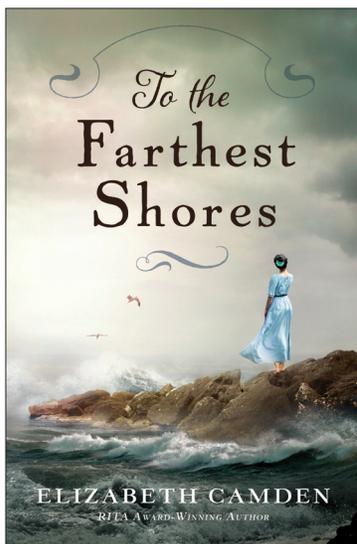
### 4. Your novels are known for shedding insight into little-known historic developments. What do you focus on in this novel?

Pearls! Before the 20th century, natural pearls were astronomically expensive and dangerous to harvest. The quest to coax oysters to produce pearls dates back more than a thousand years, but it wasn't until the early 20th century that scientists began closing in on a workable technique. Much of the novel is set along the wild coastline of California, where two dreamers undertake the creation of an oyster farm to cultivate pearls. While researching the novel, I delved into pearl farming and the myriad challenges that come with trying to make an oyster produce a pearl without killing it. I was never a big fan of pearls before I started work on this novel, but now I am fascinated by them.

The metaphor of the pearl runs throughout the novel. Pearls are formed when an irritant causes the oyster pain, and it produces layers of lustrous nacre to protect itself. The pearl is a symbol of that pain. Just as the pearl is beautiful, I believe we become more compassionate people as we endure the pain and challenges that sometimes come our way in life.

### 5. What is the take-away message you want readers to receive after reading the novel?

While I always aim for a thrilling story with equal parts history, romance, and adventure, I try to infuse the story with ethical challenges that are relevant to today's reader. None of us are perfect, and our lives will be pockmarked by disappointments, but those challenges have the potential to inspire us to become more compassionate people. They can make us stronger as we learn to weather storms. Even during difficult times, our lives can be shot through with glimpses of joy and inspiration if we look for them.



#### ***To the Farthest Shores***

by Elizabeth Camden

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