

# BOOK CLUB KIT



# A LETTER FROM ANDREA BARTZ

Dear reader,

Thank you so much for reading *The Spare Room*! It's been a joy to connect with readers over my earlier thrillers (*The Lost Night*, *The Herd*, and *We Were Never Here*), and I'm so excited for you to step into the dreamy, sultry, and ultimately terrifying world of my fourth book. It's my most personal novel yet, and I can't wait for you to join Kelly on her visit to the Lamonts' gorgeous, gated mansion—a pandemic fortress that's just as good at locking secrets deep inside as it is keeping the rest of the world out.

Many book lovers have noted that, after the collective quiet and isolation of the pandemic, we're seeing a boom in Gothic chillers and locked-room mysteries. While I've always loved writing about close-knit, closed-door worlds (from the so-hip-it-hurts scenesters in *The Lost Night* to the perfect-seeming members of a bougie, all-female coworking space in *The Herd*), in 2020 the pandemic forced us all to draw the curtains and cinch the drawstrings of our lives.

The tense silence and eerie moodiness of that period made my suspense-author spider sense tingle: I detected the suffocating tension and quiet dread of a Hitchcock film, and as news sources warned us again and again that stranger danger was real, that anyone could kill us, that we should truly *trust no one*, I couldn't help seeing parallels to some of my favorite slasher films. Though the pandemic is simply the backdrop for *The Spare Room*, not the focus, I loved turning the isolation and terror up to eleven for dramatic effect. I mean, think about your neighbors, your coworkers, friends you haven't spoken to since high school. Who knows what really went on behind all those deadbolted doors?

Another piece of my own lockdown experience made its way into the book; after a couple lonely months in my studio apartment with only my cat, Mona, for company, I accepted an old friend's generous invitation to move in with her, her husband, and their toddler. We fell into a comfortable groove of working and cooking and eating and hanging out together. They weren't just my pod—for a few months, they were my family, and I marveled at the fact that, across the country, so many people I knew were crashing with friends and forming super-close bonds in this unprecedented way.

While my stint in that spare room was decidedly throuple- and missing-person-free, I used that time to wake from the trance of busyness and listen to the wise voice deep inside. It felt like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make major changes free from the prying eyes of the public . . . or even my own network. We all know folks who divorced or permanently relocated or changed careers around that time. Me? I finally admitted I was attracted to women in addition to men—and my very first date was with Julia, now my partner of almost three years. Perhaps it's no surprise that, after physically fleeing her old life, *The Spare Room*'s narrator discovers new facets of her own sexuality and capacity to love.

Several author friends have called *The Spare Room* my twistiest book yet, and I hope you and your book club enjoy discovering all the darkness and surprises lurking beneath the beautiful exterior of the charismatic Lamonts and their picture-perfect mansion. We've put together discussion questions for your meeting (spoilers therein!) as well as a themed playlists and some exclusive peeks at Kelly's world. Thanks so much for reading—and I hope you enjoy every moment of your stay. . . .

Warmly,  
Andi

P.S. If you'd like to know more about [We Were Never Here](#), [The Herd](#), and [The Lost Night](#), please visit [andreabartz.com](http://andreabartz.com) and find me on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), and [Facebook](#).

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *The Spare Room* is set in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. How does this setting help establish the tone and atmosphere of the novel?
2. In a sense, *The Spare Room* is a “locked-room” mystery that takes place primarily in Sabrina and Nathan’s home. Locked-room mysteries are known for their red-herrings—false clues or characters that lead the reader to suspect the wrong characters. Were there any red herrings in this novel that threw you off track?
3. Throughout the novel, Kelly has flashbacks about her relationship, specifically an eerie memory in which Mike says, “I don’t know who you are. . . . This is a side of you I’ve never seen.” How did this make you feel about Kelly? Did you suspect she was not who she seemed to be? Why or why not?
4. Over the course of the novel, we see Kelly make a number of big life changes, often as a result of the way the world was rapidly changing in 2020 and how those changes made her reevaluate her life. She ended her relationship, moved to a different place, and explored her own sexuality. Has a life event (or world event) ever caused you or someone you know to reevaluate their life and make a big change?
5. Kelly finds that the pandemic has robbed her of her identity, and asks, “Who am I without my friends, my hobbies, the fiancé I looked forward to someday calling ‘my better half?’” Did you feel similarly during lockdown? What about your identity do you feel has changed as the world recovers from the pandemic?
6. Kelly finds herself thinking Mike may not be the one for her when she asks herself, “What if what I thought I wanted and what I actually want aren’t the same thing?” Have you ever had a realization similar to this? Think back, what led you to that realization? What do you think led Kelly to this realization?
7. Consider this quote from the novel: “Total honesty is toxic to a relationship. . . . What matters is trust.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Discuss.
8. What did you think of Kelly, Sabrina, and Nate’s relationship? What did you think Sabrina and Nate’s motivations were for not telling the whole truth about their ex? What effect do you think those initial breaches of trust had on Kelly’s suspicions of them later?
9. In one scene, Sabrina asks Nathan and Kelly, “What’s the compliment you like receiving the most?” For Kelly it’s the compliment of being kind, loving, and generous. For Nathan, it’s that he makes the people he loves feel safe. And, for Sabrina, it’s that she’s “bold. Ballsy. Willing to go there.” What do their answers say about each character? What’s the compliment you like receiving the most?
10. What did you think of the twists and turns at the end? What did you think about the murderer? Were you surprised?
11. And speaking of twists, what did you think of the epilogue? Did it affect the way you viewed the characters in any way? Why or why not?
12. If *The Spare Room* were adapted into a movie, who would you cast to play each character?

# SABRINA LAMONT AND KELLY DOYLE'S INSTAGRAM DMS

## How it all began . . .



Sabrina Lamont

sabrinalamontauthor

MAY 27 5:46 PM

Sabrina, hi! Not even sure if you remember me, we were at LNHS together back in the day. I just wanted to tell you I loooooooved the Heart of Desire books. Wow! The pacing, the prose, the big twists...just incredible. I basically tore through each one in one sitting. Sorry if this is creepy but I thought I'd let you know! I can't wait to swallow the next book whole and I'm crossing my fingers you have more in the works. Hope all is well with you down in Virginia! Sending hugs.



Kelly Doyle! Omg, hi!! It is so so so nice to hear from you! Of COURSE I remember you! I cannot thank you enough for the kind words and I'm grateful you reached out—you made my entire month! Truly, you are too sweet. I'm working on the next one now and it's my personal favorite, lots of butt stuff, lol. Can't wait to hear what you think. How are you doing? I see you're in Philly now? Hope all is well! xoxo



Okay, now I'm even MORE excited to read the next book, which I didn't know was possible! I don't normally read romance but I was obsessed with the wild storyline, the beautiful writing, the super-hot sexual tension between Arianna and Perry—totally in awe.

What a treat to hear back from you! I'm fine...as fine as anyone can be these days, lol. I quit my job right before moving here without realizing the job search would become, well \*gestures around\*, so I have lots of free time...which would be great if I could actually use it to explore Philadelphia! But I'm healthy and my loved ones are too, so I really can't complain.

How about you? Looks like you have a pretty ideal lockdown situation down there!



Boooo, I'm so sorry to hear you're job-hunting when the economy is a pile of hot garbage! That sucks. I know so many people who've been laid off and they're having the hardest time without anything to DO all day. Ugh! F this plague, seriously.

"Ideal!" IDK about that...we've been going through some rough shit here too, but we're pretty lucky when it comes down to it. I like your attitude—we're all healthy, so no complaints.



Are you with your adorable fiancé in Philly, at least?

Message . . .

# TEXTS BETWEEN SABRINA LAMONT AND KELLY DOYLE

Sabrina invites Kelly to stay with her and her husband . . .



# SABRINA'S DRAWER OF EPHEMERA

A drawer of Sabrina's desk is always closed and locked. Here's a peek at some of the souvenirs—and secrets—inside.



# **THE OFFICIAL *SPARE ROOM* PLAYLIST**

[Listen on Spotify!](#)

**EXILE – TAYLOR SWIFT (FEAT. BON IVER)**

**GREEN EYES – JOSEPH**

**1950 – KING PRINCESS**

**I KISSED A GIRL – KATY PERRY**

**GOD IS A WOMAN – ARIANA GRANDE**

**3 – BRITNEY SPEARS**

**PRETTY PLEASE – DUA LIPA**

**LIKE A VIRGIN – MADONNA**

**SAY SO – DOJA CAT**

**SINCE U BEEN GONE – KELLY CLARKSON**

**SHE – HARRY STYLES**

**BIRTHDAY SEX – JEREMIH**

**FEELIN MYSELF – BEYONCÉ AND NICKI MINAJ**

**LOVE / PARANOIA – TAME IMPALA**

**EVERY BREATH YOU TAKE – THE POLICE**

**SEND MY LOVE (TO YOUR NEW LOVER) – ADELE**