

ALL DRESSED UP

BOOK CLUB KIT



JILLY GAGNON

## DEAR READER,

*All Dressed Up* may have a classic “locked room mystery” setup, but for me, writing it was motivated almost entirely by a need to escape.

I started the book in the summer of 2020. I was living in Los Angeles, the city had been completely locked down for months . . . and then the wildfires started up for the season. With the air outside too smoky to breathe and a very limited amount of space to share with my spouse and two cats, I was stuck with nowhere to go . . . so I started writing about a place I’d like to be instead, a majestic mansion nestled deep in the woods of the Northeast, the perfect setting for a murder mystery game that allowed the players to glam up and let loose in equal measure, two things I—and most of the world around then—was desperate to do. Don’t get me wrong, as a writer I have a professional obligation to love working in my night pants, but we all have limits.

It wasn’t just my cramped apartment I wanted out of, though: I wanted a different mental landscape. One of my favorite things as an author is imagining my way into people unlike me, trying to puzzle out what makes a different sort of person tick, what hopes and fears they cling to, what decisions they’d make. As one of countless adults suddenly spending all my time with just one other (speaking) individual, I wondered . . . what would lead someone to stay through the worst? Like Becca’s sister, I’ve always had a black and white view of cheating, but I found myself more and more intrigued by what might make someone choose the other path, and what walking that path might do to you, your ability to trust others . . . and to trust yourself.

Also, a mystery writer loves nothing more than a great setup to make her protagonist doubt herself.

In a way, this book was my personal pandemic life raft, allowing me to explore new frontiers from the relative comfort of my pandemic-enforced house arrest. Needing fun more desperately than I ever had, I opted to get playful with murder (because why even be an author if you can’t have a little fun with murder?)—the result is the book in your hands, one I’m both deeply proud of and grateful for.

I hope it gives you the same escape it gave me.

Sincerely,

**JILLY GAGNON**

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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. Becca goes through a whirlwind of emotions throughout the weekend as she grapples with Blake's infidelity. Did you empathize or sympathize with her? If you were in her shoes, would you have forgiven Blake? Why or why not?
2. As she works to forgive Blake (and tries to convince herself that she has), Becca still struggles to trust him and keep her emotions in check. She ends up lashing out in ways she regrets almost immediately. How do you think she changed over the course of the book? What influenced that change the most?
3. Blake and Becca's marriage is far from perfect—yet there are moments in the book where they seem like the perfect match, even though they are two very different people. What did you like about them together? How do you think they complement each other? What were some ways they worked as a couple?
4. Blake's cheating has left Becca on edge and unsure what to believe. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt you couldn't trust your own perceptions?
5. Everyone is a suspect in a murder mystery game. Who was your first suspect? Did you change your mind at any point? Why or why not?
6. Becca chooses her in-game killer based on motive. Do you agree with her that love is the best motivation for something as extreme as murder? What other motivations might drive someone over the edge?
7. Becca starts to believe there are multiple mysteries at play in this novel. When did you become certain that Becca was right? What made you question the situation?
8. From Buggy Slugs to Miss Ann Thrope, there are so many fun characters in the murder mystery party here. Who was your favorite character?
9. The murder mystery game character profiles are fairly detailed—we get to learn a lot about who our characters are acting as. Did you notice any overlap between the in-game descriptions and the characters themselves?
10. Now that you know what all the characters are like, if you could choose, whose roles would you swap in the game? How do you think things would play out differently?



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# BOOK CLUB COCKTAIL

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Jazz Age-up your  
*All Dressed Up* book club  
with this delicious drink  
recipe from *Food & Wine*



© Luca Allen

## BLOOD & SAND

This classic's name is a tribute to the 1922 silent movie *Blood and Sand*, which stars Rudolph Valentino as a poor young Spaniard who eventually becomes a great matador. Fruity and only faintly smoky, it's an approachable drink for people who aren't sure they like Scotch.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 oz. blended Scotch, such as Compass Box Asyla
- 1 oz. sweet vermouth
- 1 oz. cherry liqueur, preferably Heering
- 1 oz. fresh orange juice
- Ice
- 1 orange wheel, for garnish

### DIRECTIONS

In a cocktail shaker, combine the Scotch, vermouth, cherry liqueur, and orange juice. Fill the shaker with ice and shake well. Strain into a chilled martini glass and garnish with the orange wheel.

[foodandwine.com/recipes/blood-and-sand-cocktail-2012](http://foodandwine.com/recipes/blood-and-sand-cocktail-2012)



