



BOOK CLUB KIT



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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Dear Reader,

When I was doing my last round of edits on *200 Monas*, I remember not blushing once until I got to the final chapters. I texted my editor and agent immediately: "It's so horny! How did I forget how horny it is?!?!" I typed it in a bit of a panic, worrying what my mother would think, my colleagues, my husband's colleagues, good lord—the high school students I'd taught for years! My editor and agent's responses were priceless and ever supportive. "This depressing ass world needs soooooo much horny." "Horniness is the key to a functioning society!!!" I agree. Romance novels continue to be the highest grossing genre in the publishing industry, a telling indicator of what so many of us crave in our escapism: the belief that love and sex are alive and well.

I have always been a lover of transgressive fiction—stories and narrative voices that dare to be bold, to reject the boundaries of social norms and mainstream likability. And yet, in my own life, I am a romantic; I thoroughly enjoy a feel-good story about being young, a little messed up, and falling in love. I decided to get greedy: I wanted to write a novel that made me laugh, gasp, swoon, cringe, draw tears, flip pages—a story that reminded me that life is hard, and we're all just trying to do our best with what we've been given.

At its core, *200 Monas* is a story about grief, and how we all ache to be seen behind the walls and masks that we construct for ourselves; we believe those walls will protect us in some way. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is only when those walls come down that we begin to feel a little closer to ourselves, and with that, others.

When Francis Pete gives Arvy her mission to sell *200 Monas*, he says he's giving her a gift: The gift of self-preservation. If there's anything worth preserving in this lifetime, it is the power of human connection. I have always found that exercising humor and empathy are great steps toward that preservation. My hope is that this novel touches on that belief in some way.

I hope you enjoy reading this rollercoaster ride as much as I enjoyed building it, for it is truly a case study in being alive and working with what we have been given.

Sincerely,

Jan Saenz

FUN FACT:

Jan first got the idea for *200 Monas* while soaking in the bathtub at 2am. She whipped out her phone and started outlining the book in her Notes app. She was high.



LISTEN TO THE
PLAYLIST



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

AKA. Pillow Talk

1. *200 Monas* has elements of a thriller, rom-com, campus novel, coming of age story, and more. What genre would you consider this book? Why?
2. In the book, "the funk" is an unidentified condition that Arvy's mother has. Why did the author use a nickname rather than a psychological diagnosis? How does that term impact the world of the novel?
3. Just like Arvy has no way of knowing if her mother's death was a suicide or accident, we never find out if Doris left Mona behind intentionally as a project for Arvy or if she simply hadn't gotten around to selling them. What does it mean to Arvy that she doesn't know? What does not knowing say about losing a loved one unexpectedly?
4. Does Arvy begin to cope with her grief and her mother's loss throughout the novel? How does Sayter, or any of the other places Arvy visits during the novel, help her move on or see things in a different life?

FUN FACT:

Jan's creative writing students once described her personality as a "hot pink gel pen", coincidentally the same color as Doris' caddy and the cover of *200 Monas*.

FUN FACT:

One day, Jan spotted *Women Who Run With the Wolves* on her bookshelf, a well-known feminist text about female empowerment. Jan likes to imagine that this is why Rose named her son Wolf.

5. How is Wolf similar to the average "book boyfriend" we often see in popular romance? How is he different?
6. What did you think of Imogen? How did your perception progress or change between first meeting her to the end of the novel? In the end, did you empathize with her?
7. If sexual liberation is a common theme in post-modern feminism, why would someone like Rose feel so strongly about putting a cap on it in Sayter? What does this suggest about Rose?
8. How does the novel use dark humor? What does comedy make easier, or harder, to confront?
9. Which scenes resonated with you? Which ones did you find yourself still thinking about upon finishing the novel?
10. Who in your life would you recommend this novel to? Who wouldn't you? Why?

**RELEASE ALL THAT'S
INSIDE YOU.**

BLUE COSMOPOLITAN

3.5 oz vodka
1 oz blue curaçao
2 oz white cranberry juice
¼ oz fresh lemon juice

Shake ingredients well with ice,
strain into a chilled glass, and
garnish with a lemon twist.

FUN FACT:

Westheimer is a fictional town. The name pays homage to a well-known street in Houston, Texas—Jan's home turf—and the town was inspired by Jan's small-town alma mater: Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas.

FUN FACT:

In creating Sayer, Jan was inspired after reading *Dirty Rush* by Taylor Bell, wanting to construct her own version of an ideal sorority and sacred sisterhood.



PINK CADILLAC MARGARITA

1.5 oz tequila blanco
1 oz triple sec or Grand Marnier
2 oz lime juice
1 oz agave
1.5 oz cranberry juice

Rim the glass with blue or pink salt,
if desired. Shake ingredients with ice
and strain into glass. Garnish with a
blue jolly rancher for
200 Monas flair.