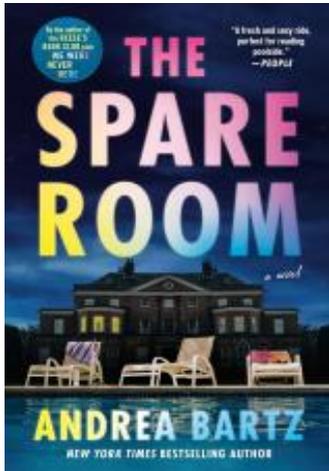


The Spare Room

by Andrea Bartz



About the Book

Staying with a friend and her husband is sexier --- and deadlier --- than anyone could imagine in this provocative domestic suspense from the *New York Times* bestselling author of the Reese's Book Club pick **WE WERE NEVER HERE**.

Kelly's new life in Philadelphia has turned into a nightmare: She's friendless and jobless, and the lockdown has her trapped in a tiny apartment with the man she gave up everything for, who's just called off their wedding. The only bright spot is her newly rekindled friendship with her childhood friend, Sabrina --- now a glamorous bestselling author with a handsome, high-powered husband.

When Sabrina and Nathan offer Kelly an escape hatch, volunteering the spare room of their remote Virginia mansion, she jumps at the chance to run away from her old life. There, she secretly finds herself falling for both her enchanting hosts --- until one night, a wild and unexpected threesome leads the couple to open their marriage for her.

At first, Kelly loves being part of this risqué new world. But when she discovers the last woman they invited into their marriage is missing, she starts to wonder if they could be dangerous...and if she might be next.

Packed with Andrea Bartz's signature tension, twists and toxic relationships, **THE SPARE ROOM** marks an edgy, boundary-pushing new direction from the "master of the feminist thriller" (*Los Angeles Times*).

Discussion Guide

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?

Author Bio

Andrea Bartz is a journalist and the *New York Times* bestselling author of Reese's Book Club pick WE WERE NEVER HERE, THE LAST FERRY OUT, THE SPARE ROOM, THE LOST NIGHT and THE HERD. Her work has appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Marie Claire*, *Vogue* and many other outlets, and she's held editorial positions at *Glamour*, *Psychology Today* and *Self*, among other publications. She lives in Brooklyn and the Hudson Valley.

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