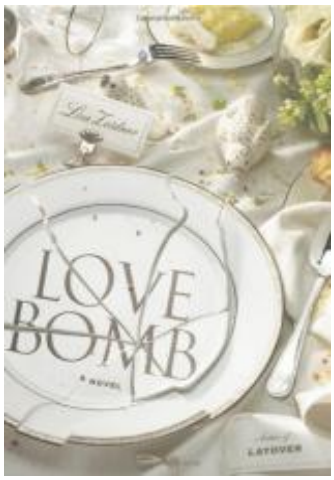
Love Bomb

by Lisa Zeidner



About the Book

Praised for its ?edginess and power? as well as its ?humor, wisdom, and poignancy,? Lisa Zeidner?s writing always delivers a fresh perspective on life?s challenges. In **Love Bomb**, she detonates a provocative, wickedly funny tale about romance versus reality and the conundrums of marriage and parenthood.

In quaint Haddonfield, New Jersey, Tess Nathanson is about to marry Gabe Billips in her childhood home. The guest list includes crying babies, disgruntled exes, moody psychiatrists, celebrity actors, and Africans befriended through Tess and Gabe?s work for Doctors Without Borders. But the most troubling guest was never on the list at all: a woman in a wedding dress and a gas mask, armed with a rifle, a bomb trigger strapped to her arm. Who has offended this nuptial nutcase, and how? Does she seek revenge against the twice-divorced philanderer? Or is her agenda political?against the army general? Or the polygamous Muslim from Mali? Tess?s mother tenderly tries to bond with the ?terrorist of love,? but the crisis only escalates until the hostage taker?s real motives are unveiled.

The questions and discussion topics that follow are designed to enhance your reading of Lisa Zeidner?s **Love Bomb**. We hope they will enrich your experience of this gutsy, inventive novel.

Discussion Guide

1. What does the book?s title mean to you? (See page 43 for a discussion of the term?s multiple meanings.)

2. What were your theories about why the hostage taker was really there? Which hostage seemed to be the culprit most likely to have enraged her?and how did you react when her real identity was revealed?

3. The novel includes many references to hostage dramas on TV and in movies. Why? How is the hostage situation in *Love Bomb* different from the typical ones?

4. Why is Helen more effective than the psychiatrists on the guest list at bonding with the HT? How did you feel about the psychiatrists? competitive attempts at diagnosis?

5. While the hostages are stuck in the room, the author frequently takes you out of the situation at hand to hear about the hostages? pasts and key events in their lives. How did you feel about the novel?s unusual structure? Why do you think the author employed it?

6. As you read about the novel?s lovers, which stories captured your attention the most? Did you find any patterns in the courtships? What would Helen assume about your circle of friends if she applied her skill in assessing the strength of a relationship by reading a couple?s body language?

7. What does Amy?s stalker, Kevin, teach us about the nature of obsession? Does Mara count as a stalker as well? At what point should persistence become defined as insanity?

8. The HT claims to be a feminist. Do you agree? Discuss the differences between the male and female responses to the hostage situation. Did you find the male characters less brave or faithful than the female ones? Or is Zeidner?s appraisal of her characters gender-neutral?

9. What does **Love Bomb** have to say about parenthood, how it changes marriages, and the lasting effects of childhood experiences in shaping our characters?

10. Many of the characters? stories include details about their first meetings. What is the author?s point about ?love at first sight??

11. Throughout the novel, which aspects of American culture are on display for the African cohort? Discuss the novel?s culture clashes?between black and white, Jewish and Muslim, American and African, urban and suburban.

12. Love Bomb has a large cast of characters. Does it have a hero?or heroine?in the traditional sense? Who is it?

13. How would the guest list (appearing at the back of the book) compare to your own clusters of family and friends if you were to host a similar event?

14. Discuss the aftermath of the wedding and the novel?s coda. How does the day bring out the best and the worst in the hosts, guests, caterers, and law enforcement?

15. How would you characterize the tone of the book? How does the author balance comedy with drama? Mockery of her characters with empathy for them?

16. Discuss the previous Lisa Zeidner novels you have read. How does she use wit and tragicomedy to open meaningful dialogues about the experience of love and loss?

Author Bio

Lisa Zeidner has published several previous novels, including the critically acclaimed **Layover**, and two books of poems. Her stories, reviews, and essays have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Slate*, *GQ*, *Tin House*, and elsewhere. She is the director of the Rutgers-Camden master of fine arts in creative writing program. She and her husband, along with their greyhounds Trish and Zelda, live in Cherry Hill, New Jersey.

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