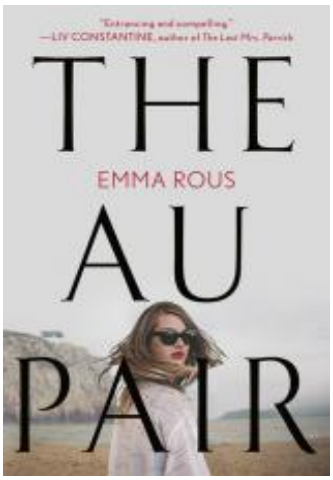
The Au Pair

by Emma Rous



About the Book

If V. C. Andrews and Kate Morton had a literary love child, Emma Rous' THE AU PAIR would be it.

Seraphine Mayes and her twin brother, Danny, were born in the middle of summer at their family's estate on the Norfolk coast. Within hours of their birth, their mother threw herself from the cliffs, the au pair fled, and the village thrilled with whispers of dark cloaks, changelings, and the aloof couple who drew a young nanny into their inner circle.

Now an adult, Seraphine mourns the recent death of her father. While going through his belongings, she uncovers a family photograph that raises dangerous questions. It was taken on the day the twins were born --- and in the photo, their mother, surrounded by her husband and her young son, is smiling serenely and holding just one baby.

Who is the child, and what really happened that day?

Discussion Guide

1. What were your feelings about Summerbourne as the setting for this story? Did you empathize with Seraphine?s attachment to the house, or are you more like Danny as far as bricks and mortar are concerned?

2. Seraphine tells us early on she?s ?never felt much need for friendships.? Do you think this might have been influenced by her early childhood experiences? Do you think her attitude might have changed at all by the end of the book?

3. Laura says to Alex, ?We all did bad things, Alex. You, me, Ruth, Dominic. Just because we haven?t been arrested like Vera doesn?t mean we got away with it.? Do you think all four of them carry an equal amount of blame for their actions?

4. Pregnancy denial is a real phenomenon. Did you pick up on clues in the book that Laura was pregnant --- clues that

she herself simultaneously mentioned and ignored? Have you come across other forms of psychological denial, such as people refusing to acknowledge problems in their relationships, jobs, health or behavior?

5. The Latin inscription at the folly translates as ?A precipice in front, wolves behind.? Do you think this is an apt description of the situation Laura finds herself in after the babies are born? Could she have achieved a better outcome?

6. When Vera admits she had initial doubts about the babies? identities, Seraphine tells us: ?I try to embrace [Vera?s] meaning: that it doesn?t matter to her, that she loves us anyway. But it?s not enough. Her love for us doesn?t give her the right to hide the truth from us.? Do you agree? Do you have any sympathy with Vera?s desire to bring up the babies as Summerbourne twins irrespective of where they came from?

7. How did Michael?s stories and the village gossip about the Mayes family make you feel? Do you think rumors and gossip are inevitable in any community?

8. Do you believe Vera was guilty of all three of the crimes she was charged with --- Ruth?s murder, Dominic?s murder and Laura?s attempted murder?

9. If you could spend an afternoon on the Summerbourne patio with any one of the characters from THE AU PAIR, which one would you choose and why?

10. What do you hope the future might hold for Laura and Seraphine?

Author Bio

Emma Rous is the *USA Today* bestselling author of THE AU PAIR and THE PERFECT GUESTS. She grew up in England, Indonesia, Kuwait, Portugal and Fiji, and from a young age she had two ambitions: to write stories and to look after animals. She studied veterinary medicine and zoology at the University of Cambridge, and worked as a small animal veterinarian for 18 years before starting to write fiction. Emma lives near Cambridge in England with her husband and three sons, and she now writes full time.

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Publication Date: January 8, 2019
Genres: Fiction, Mystery, Women's Fiction
Paperback: 384 pages
Publisher: Berkley
ISBN-10: 0440000459
ISBN-13: 9780440000457