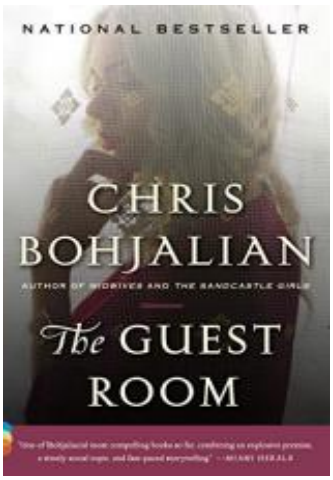
The Guest Room

by Chris Bohjalian



About the Book

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of MIDWIVES and THE SANDCASTLE GIRLS comes the spellbinding tale of a party gone horribly wrong: two men lie dead in a suburban living room, two women are on the run from police, and a marriage is ripping apart at the seams.

When Kristin Chapman agrees to let her husband, Richard, host his brother?s bachelor party, she expects a certain amount of debauchery. She brings their young daughter to Manhattan for the evening, leaving her Westchester home to the men and their hired entertainment. What she does not expect is this: bacchanalian drunkenness, her husband sharing a dangerously intimate moment in the guest room, and two women stabbing and killing their Russian bodyguards before driving off into the night.

In the aftermath, Kristin and Richard?s life rapidly spirals into nightmare. The police throw them out of their home, now a crime scene, Richard?s investment banking firm puts him on indefinite leave, and Kristin is unsure if she can forgive her husband for the moment he shared with a dark-haired girl in the guest room. But the dark-haired girl, Alexandra, faces a much graver danger. In one breathless, violent night, she is free, running to escape the police who will arrest her and the gangsters who will kill her in a heartbeat.

A captivating, chilling story about shame and scandal, THE GUEST ROOM is a riveting novel from one of our greatest storytellers.

Discussion Guide

1. When Anahit is forced to become Alexandra, what happens to her sense of self? How is she able to secretly retain many aspects of her true identity --- particularly her sense of humor and her intellect? How does she navigate the multitude of cultures beyond her Armenian homeland? How would you fare in her situation?

2. If you were Kristin, how would you have reacted to Richard?s story? If you were Nicole, would you have broken off the engagement to Philip?

3. If the bachelor party had featured strippers or prostitutes who had freely chosen their line of work, would you call the debauchery harmless? Is a career in the sex trade ever freely chosen?

4. Discuss the psychological tactics Alexandra?s captors use against her. Is there anything she and her beloved grandmother could have done to see through Vasily?s promises?

5. How will Melissa be affected by the aftermath of her uncle?s party? How will these memories shape her understanding of a woman?s role in the world, and the nature of suffering?

6. Is Spencer simply motivated by money, or does he also crave power? How much does he have in common with Kirill and Pavel?

7. At the end of Chapter 5, Alexandra says she never had faith in hatred, like Sonja did. What accounts for the differences between Sonja and Alexandra? What is the source of Alexandra?s resilience and her inability to become ?good at hatred??

8. Are most of the men you know similar to Richard, or are they more like his brother, Philip? Are Alexandra?s images from ?The Bachelor?totally unrealistic?

9. How were you affected by the story Alexandra tells Richard about the crates of Barbie dolls? How do her memories of the dolls compare to Melissa and Kristin?s visit to FAO Schwarz?

10. As Alexandra and Richard struggled to be free of their separate turmoil, what outcomes were you envisioning for them? How did the ending compare to your predictions?

11. How did THE GUEST ROOM enhance your experience of other novels by Chris Bohjalian? What?s special about the worlds he brings to life in his storylines?

12. Although it?s a work of fiction, THE GUEST ROOM opens our eyes to the tragic reality of human trafficking. How can a novel spur change? How is a novelist?s approach different from that of journalists?

13. What should we teach our daughters and sons about sexuality and exploitation? Does sex appeal make a woman powerful, or does it make her vulnerable?

Facts About Human Trafficking and Sexual Slavery

According to the U.S. State Department, perhaps three-quarters of a million people are trafficked across international

borders every year --- and then there are the millions trafficked within their own countries.

The International Labor Organization estimates that 14.2 million people are victims of forced labor exploitation in economic activities, such as agriculture, construction, domestic work, and manufacturing. The ILO also estimates 4.5 million people were forced into sexual exploitation globally in 2014.

About two million children every year are exploited in the global commercial sex trade.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children estimates that one out of every six runaways is a likely sex trafficking victim.

If you are in an emergency situation or have a credible tip, call the CAST 24-hour hotline to speak to an emergency responder: **1 (888) KEY-2-FREEDOM.**

Author Bio

Chris Bohjalian is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of 26 books, including THE AMATEUR, THE JACKAL'S MISTRESS, THE PRINCESS OF LAS VEGAS, THE LIONESS, HOUR OF THE WITCH, MIDWIVES and THE FLIGHT ATTENDANT, which has been made into a MAX limited series starring Kaley Cuoco. His other books include THE RED LOTUS; THE GUEST ROOM; CLOSE YOUR EYES, HOLD HANDS; THE SANDCASTLE GIRLS; SKELETONS AT THE FEAST; and THE DOUBLE BIND. His novels SECRETS OF EDEN, MIDWIVES and PAST THE BLEACHERS were made into movies, and his work has been translated into more than 35 languages. He is also a playwright (*Wingspan* and *Midwives*). He lives in Vermont.

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