



Women
Are The
Fiercest
Creatures

A Novel

Andrea Dunlop

BOOK CLUB KIT

GET READY TO HOST YOUR BOOK CLUB!

We're so glad you've decided to host a *Women Are The Fiercest Creatures* book event! Inside this kit you'll find an author Q&A with Andrea, a reading guide to help prompt your discussion, a custom cocktail recipe, a yoga flow, and more. Stories are best when shared, and we hope your time together is fun and engaging!

If you're new to hosting a book event, don't worry! We've got you covered. Here's what you'll need to do to get ready for your gathering:

- Determine if you'll meet virtually or in-person.**
- Save the date!**
- Reach out to your local bookstore. You can direct your guests to purchase the book through the store ahead of time or coordinate with the store and have them sell the books at your event.**
- Invite friends! Make sure your guests know they're welcome to attend even if they haven't read or finished the book! If you're planning to do the Fierce yoga flow together, be sure to let your friends know so they can dress appropriately and bring yoga mats.**
- Plan to have some food and drinks, but don't stress about this! Keep it easy by stopping at Trader Joe's for some wine (or sparkling water), cheese, and crackers. Or go all out with homemade snacks and treats. Grab the ingredients for *The Storm Reaper* and make cocktails together as a group. You could also divide and conquer by asking a few close friends to bring an appetizer or dessert!**
- Relax and have fun! Book clubs are enjoyable because of the connections, not the cocktails or the charcuterie board. Allow everyone a chance to share or ask questions. Be mindful of those who haven't had a chance to read the book by discussing the themes rather than the specifics.**



READING GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE:

1. *Women Are The Fiercest Creatures*, but the three main female characters in this novel are extremely different.

How do Anna, Sam, and Jessica exhibit fierceness? How does their representation of fierceness differ from each other?

2. On page 23, Sam “recognized the idealistic version of Jake, which still shone through in places. But most of it seemed like a performance now.” And on page 36, Dunlop writes about Anna, “Her first lesson in love was not lost on her: no matter how glittering the golden boy seems, he can always up and leave you stranded.”

How are Sam and Anna’s perspectives on love (and Jake) similar? How are they different?

3. On page 63, the reader learns about Artemis, the women-only business accelerator that Anna hopes to start with her friend. At one point, Dunlop writes, “For years, Jake had gotten her best ideas first. With Artemis, she didn't want to make the same mistake.” What do you think this scene says about Anna and Jake's relationship and how Anna has changed since the divorce? Does she make the same mistakes throughout the book, or does she learn to take control of her ideas?

4. As Sam thinks about Strangers, she realizes a piece of her had always lived inside the program. “Reporters always mentioned the unknowable magic of the site's original algorithm. There was Sam, buried inside of the very thing that made Strangers special, a major part of the reason it had succeeded when 95 percent of its competitors had failed” (pg. 71).

What makes this moment so frustrating, for Sam and for the reader? Have you ever experienced someone taking credit for something you created? How do you think Sam's former relationship with Jake amplified these feelings?



READING GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE:

5. At one point, we learn from Anna that "whereas Jake experienced only fleeting moments of self-doubt, she experienced only fleeting moments of self-confidence. Her faith in her idea and capabilities was like a silvery fish that shimmered just out of her reach. Each time she tried to grasp it, to hold on, it slipped from her hand" (pg. 92)

How did Anna's childhood set her up for "fleeting moments of self-confidence"? How does Jake contribute to her self-esteem? Do you see Anna change throughout the book?

6. In the prenatal class where Sam first meets Jessica Sarnoff in person, Sam says, "There's even a theory of civilization that the reason men oppressed women to begin with, the reason they used their advantage of physical strength to subjugate us, was because they feared us" (pg. 109), and later she tells the room, "Women are the fiercest creatures" (pg. 109).

How do you think these statements impacted Jessica? What is it about Sam that makes her stand out from Anna, Jessica, and the other Portside moms?

7. Anna discovers Dylan's finsta (fake Instagram) account shortly after Jake takes the boys to Whistler and Dylan refuses to return to Jake and Jessica's place. Several months later, at the end of the school year, Dylan is involved in the leaking of footage of Jessica in the nude that he pulled from Jake and Jessica's security cameras.

Why do you think Dylan was involved in these two incidents? Was there anything Jake (or Anna) could have done to prevent them? How do you think they impacted Jessica?

8. Eventually, Anna reveals that she deleted Samanta's emails to Jake regarding Lola.

If you were in Anna's place, would you have done the same thing? Why or why not? How does this action complicate a story of women's empowerment?



READING GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE:

9. Throughout the book, Samanta works with Sienna Markowitz to announce not only her role in the development of *Strangers*, but Lola's parentage. When Jake finally approaches her near the end of the book, Sam briefly considers asking Sienna to call off the article, but ultimately remembers that she is telling the truth for Lola.

What are the benefits and disadvantages to making this information public? Did your perspective change once Sam and Jake started talking again? Do you think Sam's choice to move forward with the exposé was the right thing to do?

10. Both Sam and Anna mention being free from Jake—Sam on page 131 ("She had done everything she could not to form her life around Jake, and in doing so, she had somehow let his absence define it. Would she ever be free?"), and Anna on page 171 ("But whether he'd been serious about any of his recent overtures or not, Anna did not want him back. She wanted whatever was coming next for her to come. She wanted to be free.").

What was it about Jake that made both women feel trapped? What do you think freedom meant to each of them, and what choices did they make throughout the book to feel free?

11. *Women Are The Fiercest Creatures* begins with a glimpse at Charlotte's disappearance, but it isn't until the end of the book that the reader returns to this moment and discovers who kidnapped Charlotte.

Was Ben's choice a surprise to you? Looking back at the rest of the book, are there any indications that this is how Ben would react, or, like Anna when she emailed Samanta as Jake, did Ben just finally hit his limit with Jake's behavior? Why do you think Ben felt this was the best way to reach Jake?



READING GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE:

12. At the end of Sienna Markowitz's original article, Jake Sarnoff says, "Who I am to my family will be my most important legacy" (pg. 7).

What do you think he meant when he said this? What will his legacy look like to Anna, and how will that differ from the legacy he leaves with Jessica or Sam? How could he improve his legacy to his children?

13. Anna reflects a lot on the birth of her first child throughout the book, but as readers, we do not meet Kayla Abrams until the Epilogue. Kayla seems optimistic about meeting her mother and brothers (and almost sisters).

Do you think the Sarnoff and Flores-Walsh families will welcome Kayla the way she hopes they will? How do you think Kayla reaching out to Anna will impact Anna and her boys? Did this ending give you closure?

14. In Sienna Markowitz's third (and final) article, it is revealed that the expose about Sam and Lola "led to onetime tech darling Jake Sarnoff being ousted from his company Strangers following an epic social media rant that dissolved into him insulting and berating the legions of commenters that questioned his behavior" (pg. 259).

Did you anticipate this ending for Jake? Did it feel just to you? What kind of feelings would this conclusion bring up for Anna, Sam, and Jessica?

15. Which scenes did you connect with in particular? Were there any scenes, or choices by characters, you disagreed with?



FIERCE

[feers] *adjective*

1. menacingly wild, savage, or hostile
2. violent in force, intensity, etc.
3. furiously eager or intense

- Do you agree with the above definition?
- How do you feel when you hear the word fierce?
- How has your reaction to the word fierce changed after reading *Women Are The Fiercest Creatures*?
- What comes to mind when you imagine someone who's characterized as fierce?
- Who are some fierce women in pop culture?
- Who is a fierce woman from history that you admire?
- Who are some fierce women in your own life?
- You're hosting a Fierce Women dinner party. Who's on your guest list and why?
- Share one of your own fierce moments.

CONTINUE THE FIERCE CONVERSATION



Q&A WITH ANDREA

1. What was your writing process like for *Women Are The Fiercest Creatures*? Did you start with an outline, or any particular character?

I started with the idea of Sam, this woman who comes into a small town with a big secret and turns everyone's lives upside down. I started it while I was pregnant, so I also knew that motherhood was going to be a big theme because that experience was omnipresent for me.

2. What would you say is the message of *Women Are The Fiercest Creatures*?

I don't think of it as having a message per se, but thematically, I hope it makes people think about the impossible demands we put on mothers and the way that women's accomplishments are often obscured or obliterated from history.

3. Your novels often feature strong female leads, like Katie Cleary in *We Came Here To Forget*. How is *Women Are The Fiercest Creatures* different from your other books, or what similarities does it share?

I think it's different in that it is definitely a mid-life book, a coming of middle age story, if you will, whereas my previous books really feature women trying to find themselves in the first part of their adult lives. Middle age is such an interesting time because you still have a lot of life ahead of you and there is time to make big, sweeping changes but on the other hand, you feel time begin to speed up. Many of the things in our lives in middle age are more serious and permanent than when we're younger: we may be married, own houses, have children—circumstances become more fixed, which can definitely send people down a “how did I get here?” rabbit hole.

4. What books, music, or other art inspired you while you were writing this book?

I love Jennifer Egan's work and especially how she addresses motherhood and her thoughts on how technology shapes our modern life. There is also a lot of good television about midlife and motherhood now, such as *The Let Down*, *Working Moms*, and *I'm Sorry*. Those shows made me feel very seen.

5. Seattle/Portside is its own character in the book. Why did you choose to set the book in the Pacific Northwest?

I grew up here, and it's the place I chose to put down roots, so I've been keenly aware of how much it's changed over the past two decades. It felt like the perfect place to set a story about a tech mogul who insists he's not like other tech moguls.



Q&A WITH ANDREA

6. If you were friends with Anna and Samanta in real life, what advice would you give them at the beginning of this book?

I wouldn't! Then there'd be no book. I think Anna and Sam are both good women who've made mistakes and are doing what they feel they need to do to protect themselves from a world that has put them through the wringer.

7. What is something you wish you had known as a new mom that you'd pass on to Jessica?

Don't try to make breastfeeding work if it's hard. Formula is great.

8. You currently live in the Seattle area. If someone has never been, what is the first thing they should do

Go on a boat. Seattle is best observed from its waterways.

9. It's so great to see authors with new releases supporting each other. Are there any books or authors you are looking forward to reading?

Caroline Kepnes has a fourth book in her addictive Joe Goldberg series coming out next year. I'm excited to read *Aesthetica* by Allie Rowbottom, which is about an instagram influencer who goes off the rails. *The Two Lives of Sara* by Catherine Adel West is also on my list.

10. What writing and/or other projects are you currently working on that people can look forward to reading?

We just wrapped up the first season of my true crime podcast *Nobody Should Believe Me* –which you can find wherever you listen to podcasts. We're working on a second season to come out next spring. I'm also writing a true crime book that's coming out in 2024 and, of course, working on a new novel.



MAKE A FIERCE COCKTAIL

WITH YVONNE @TASTEANDTIPPLE

I was inspired by the conversation between Sam and Jacinta toward the end of the novel. Jacinta says, “quien siembra vientos, recoge tormentas,” or “sow the wind, reap the storm.” This sentiment is ever-present throughout the novel as these three overlooked women confront their secrets and settle their scores with Jake.

The cocktail I've created is deceiving. When it first hits your palate, the flavour is unassuming: pleasant grassy notes from tequila blanco are complemented by a subtle acidity and sweetness from grapefruit liqueur and fresh citrus. As it moves to the back of your tongue, a smoky heat builds and awakens the palate thanks to the chile de árbol syrup. The meringue of the egg white and splash of club soda quell the fiery flavour and prepare you for the next sip.

Much like the strong female characters in the book, this cocktail is more fierce and complex than meets the eye.



STORM REAPER

Ingredients

- 1½ oz tequila blanco
- ½ oz grapefruit liqueur
- 1/3 oz chile de árbol syrup (recipe follows)
- ¾ oz grapefruit juice
- ¼ oz lemon juice
- 1 egg white or ¾ oz aquafaba
- Club soda, to top
- Garnish: chili pepper

Recipe

- Add all ingredients, excluding club soda, to a cocktail shaker. Shake without ice for 15-20 seconds.
- Add ice, shake again until well-chilled. Strain into an ice-filled highball glass.
- Top with club soda and garnish with a chili pepper

CHILE DE ÁRBOL SYRUP

Ingredients

- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup water
- 1-2* small chiles de árbol, diced

Recipe

- Add all ingredients to a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat.
- Simmer for five minutes, stirring often, until sugar is fully dissolved.
- Cool to room temperature and strain through a cheesecloth-lined fine-mesh sieve or coffee filter into a sealable glass bottle/jar.
- Store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks.

If you like it hot, use 2 chiles

DO A FIERCE YOGA FLOW



Tara Stiles, co-founder of Strala Yoga, created a custom Fierce yoga flow in celebration of *Women Are The Fiercest Creatures*. Grab a yoga mat and use the link below to get started!

Find the yoga flow here: <https://stralahome.com/fierce>

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