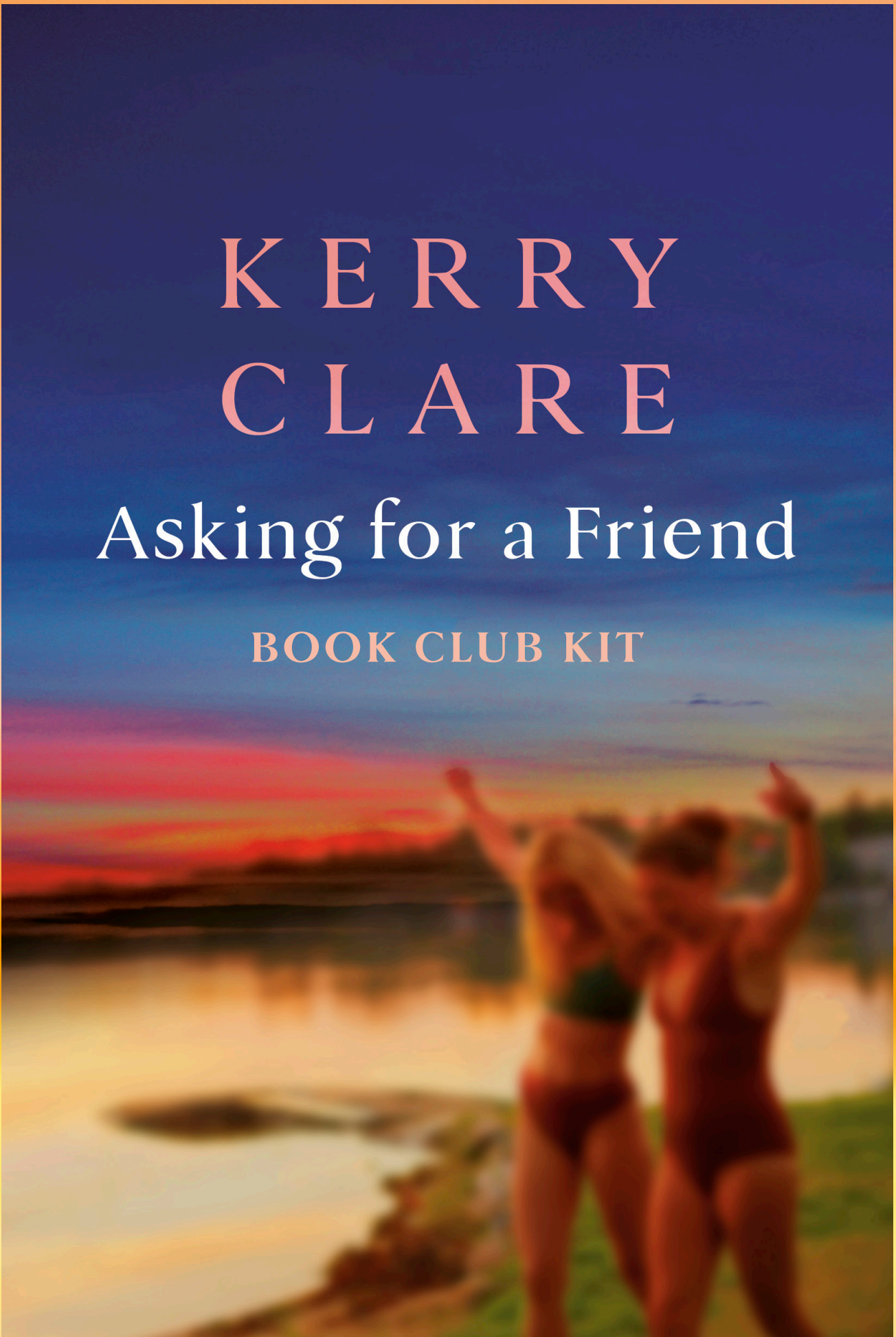


KERRY
CLARE

Asking for a Friend

BOOK CLUB KIT



Dear Readers,

I met my two best friends when I was thirteen, an idea that amazes me because I was distinctly not smart about most things at that age, and yet I was discerning enough to know they were THE ONES—and have they ever been. There have been times where we've drifted in and out of one another's lives, years when it was harder for us to relate to the other's experiences, but we've found our ways back to one another again and again, and these days I can't imagine my life without them. And it's the same with the best friends I met later, in the early days of university, a time and place I've borrowed for the beginning of Jess and Clara's story because the memory of it all is so precious and I want to preserve it: the bright intensity of those years when we were on the cusp of our entire lives and we didn't even know who we were yet, or who might become—only that we loved one another and were extraordinarily lucky in that.

I wanted to write a story about two women, neither of whom were ever just one thing. Sometimes Clara is the experienced and worldly one, and other times Jess is. They take turns wanting, and longing, and learning, and growing, and winning, and losing, and they're ever becoming, and so is their friendship. And that kind of flux is tough, but it's what being alive is, and this is what a friendship being alive is, for better and for worse.

I hope that Jess and Clara's story will remind you of your own friendships, and how they've grown, and changed, and been challenged over time. I hope that it will also remind you of how endlessly fascinating women's lives and stories are, and how it's more vital than ever that these stories continue to be told.

—Kerry



Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. Jess and Clara have very different approaches to life, love, motherhood, but they manage to be friends anyway. What do you think makes them so compatible? What makes their friendship endure? Do you think they will remain friends for life?
2. Which of the characters did you connect most strongly to in this novel and why? Who did you relate to the least?
3. Did Jess and Clara's friendship call to mind a certain friend in your life, past or present? In what ways is that relationship similar to theirs? How is it different?
4. How would you describe Jess and Clara's individual experiences of motherhood? Did you find one more relatable over the other?
5. One of Kerry Clare's favourite lines in the book is, "That night she would fall asleep in her clothes, waking in the morning with that delicious kind of ache and regret that affirms that, while your life might be ridiculous, at least you're actually alive." (p. 35) Describe a time you had a similar feeling, choosing to do something you might regret later. What line or moment in the novel has stuck most with you?
6. Describe the arcs of Jess and Clara's characters from the beginning of the novel to its end. Did your opinion of either of them change as the story unfolded?
7. Who would you cast in the movie adaptation of *Asking for a Friend*?

Questions and Topics for Discussion (cont.)

8. Kerry Clare incorporates the theme of fairytales throughout. Did any of the earlier versions of tales surprise you? What's your favourite fairy tale?

9. How do the ways Clara and Jess cope with loss and grief differ from each other? How are they similar?

10. Like the author, Clara and Jess often turn to tea and swimming throughout the novel when seeking comfort and calm. What are some of the things or practices that you turn to in times of unrest?

11. Clara realizes that "she'd come to depend on Jess during their years together, a fact that drove her to put distance between them just to prove that she could." (p. 87) Discuss the themes of independence and co-dependence as they are explored throughout the different stages of Jess and Clara's friendship. Describe a point in your life where you felt moved to test your independence.

12. The author has woven several cultural references to the late nineties and early aughts into the story. If you, like Jess and Clara, grew up during these years, what were some of your favourite nods to these times?

13. At one point, Jess thinks, "Surely it was time she became the pilot of her life?" (p. 79) What are your thoughts on leaving matters up to fate versus taking destiny into your own hands? Do you think, up until that point, that Jess was just a passenger in her life? Why or why not?

The *ASKING FOR A FRIEND* Playlist

“**Power of Two**” by Indigo Girls

“**Save Tonight**” by Eagle-Eye Cherry

“**Torn**” by Natalie Imbruglia

“**Both Hands**” by Ani DiFranco

“**Iowa (Traveling, Pt. 3)**” by Dar Williams

“**MMMBop**” by Hanson

“**Fast Car**” by Tracy Chapman

“**Love’s Recover**” by Indigo Girls

“**Landslide**” by Fleetwood Mac

“**Get Gone**” by Fiona Apple

“**The Blessings**” by Dar Williams

“**Car Wheels On A Gravel Road**” by Lucinda Williams

“**Dandelion**” by Antje Duvekot

“**(What A) Wonderful World**” by Sam Cooke

“**Jackson**” by Johnny Cash, June Carter Cash

“**Umbrella**” by Rihanna, JAY-Z

“**Lodestar**” by Sarah Harmer

“**Fruits of My Labor**” by Lucinda Williams

“**This Was Pompeii**” by Dar Williams

“**Mystery**” by Indigo Girls

“**Army**” by Ellie Goulding

“**You Gotta Be**” by Des’ree



Vist Spotify for the full playlist!

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6ZPROUVsHoCf74RuNT1Qp2?si=oV7lkoEDSgilu5EXz9Ltgw&nd=1>

The *ASKING FOR A FRIEND* Reading List

Summer Sisters by Judy Blume

The Radiant Way by Margaret Drabble

Friends from Home by Lauryn Chamberlain

Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistlestop Cafe by Fannie Flagg

The Last Goldfish by Anita Lahey

Beaches by Iris Rainer Dart

Dear Exile by Hilary Liftin and Kate Montgomery

Attachments by Rainbow Rowell

A Memoir of Friendship by Carol Shields and Blanche Howard

Big Friendship by Aminatou Sow and Ann Friedman

Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood by Rebecca Wells

Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow by Gabrielle Zevin



CLARA'S HOMEMAKERS' BROWNIES

2/3 cup unsalted butter (or 150 grams)

1 cup granulated sugar

1/4 cup brown sugar

3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

2 eggs

1/2 cup all-purpose flour



Preheat the oven to 350 degrees C.

Prepare an 8-inch square baking pan by laying a sheet of parchment paper inside.

Melt the butter in the microwave in a heatproof bowl, and then stir in sugars, cocoa, and salt.

Stir in eggs and vanilla, and then add flour and mix until you can't see the flour anymore.

Pour batter into prepared pan and bake for about 30 minutes or until brownies are set.