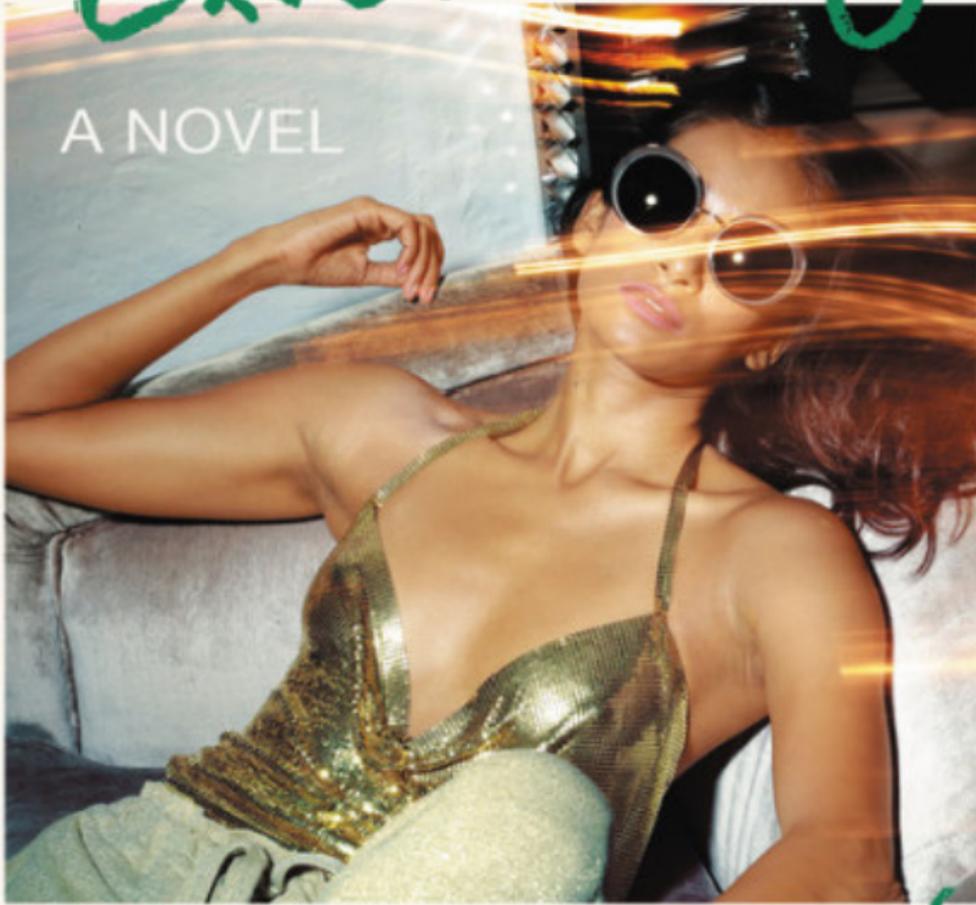


The View Was Exhausting

A NOVEL



Mikaela Clements
& Onjali Datta

BOOK CLUB KIT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Win is in a constant battle to control her image at the hands of the press, especially as it directly affects her career and the types of roles she receives. How much of this need for control do you attribute to the systems within in which Win must operate?

2. Leo often is frustrated by the fact that Win will not call out racism—subtle or overt—when she sees it, and Win struggles to make Leo understand why she doesn't. How do the characters' backgrounds and respective privilege contribute to their positions?

3. Describe what elements makes *The View Was Exhausting* feel like quintessential escapist fiction. Does it remind you of other novels with similar qualities?

4. Win and her mother Pritha have an often-difficult relationship, to which intergenerational, cultural and emotional factors contribute. What are some of the barriers that exist between them and why? What does it take to eventually break them down

5. *The View Was Exhausting* gives a fly-on-the-wall perspective at behind-the-scenes celebrity. Did it make you rethink your own consumption of celebrity news and gossip, or cast it through a more critical lens?

6. In some respects, Win and Lila are opposites. What do you think has given them their different attitudes towards their public image and the way they interact with the media?

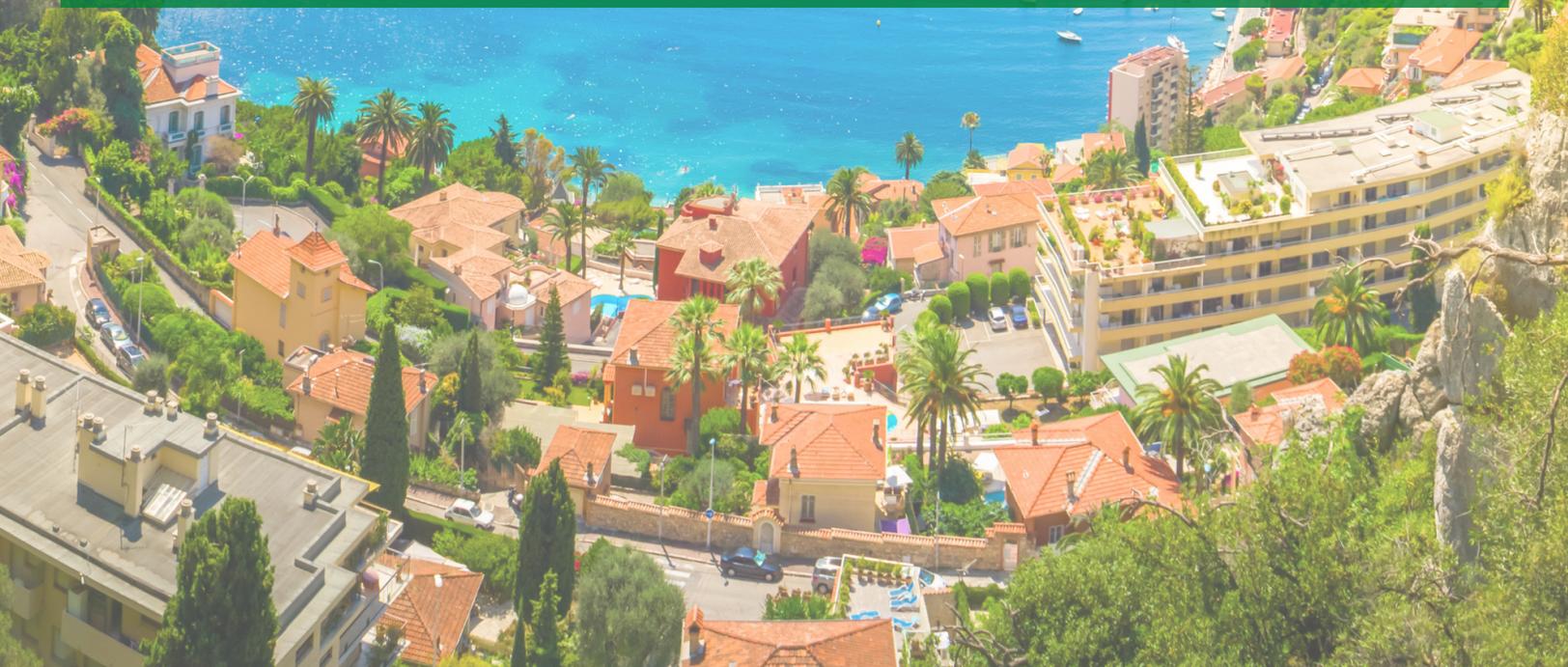
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7. Throughout Win and Leo's years of friendship and as they confront the truth of their relationship, both Win and Leo must grapple with their own identity. How do these two characters grow by being together? How do they gain a more nuanced understanding of themselves and each other?

8. There is a clear distinction between the Whitman Tagore who exists in front of the cameras, and Win's more authentic self. Discuss the situations in which we are all forced to present ourselves differently, and why.

9. By being a successful actor, Win has been a willing participant in the Hollywood machine and courted the media for her gain. How do you feel this affects Win's right to privacy?

10. What's the most swoon-worthy moment in this book, and what do you think is the biggest turning point for Leo and Win's relationship?



A CONVERSATION WITH MIKAELLA CLEMENTS & ONJULI DATTA

What inspired you both to write *The View Was Exhausting*?

We started writing *The View Was Exhausting* in summer 2016. There were a number of high profile celebrity relationships splashed across social media, and just as much speculation about whether or not those relationships were real or just to drum up publicity. We've always been fond of the "fake dating" trope but we found ourselves particularly intrigued by it that summer, wondering, okay, sure, say the relationship is fake -- what would that be like? How would that feel? What would the "real" relationship actually be? We started writing just to answer some of those questions.

It was also a time when criticism of social media was beginning to feel very one-note and dull; it was before people got properly critical about the way social media can be damaging and the narrative instead seemed to revolve around how narcissistic and soul-sucking it was. We were interested in the idea of someone using their image very practically without that element of narcissism, making use of leisure with absolute ruthlessness.

What do you find to be the elements that make for a powerful love story?

There's no real formula for a great love story, although there's plenty of fun, tried and true ways to get there. We're big fans of tropes, and the early days of writing *The View Was Exhausting* involved a lot of us shouting them aloud at each other: they should have to FAKE KISS! They should share a BED! They should HATE each other for a while! They should DESPERATELY WANT to touch each other but not be ALLOWED!

But a lot of the grand romance surprised us by coming just from us falling in love with the characters: Leo's quiet devotion, Win toying with his fingers, their bedrock friendship. Imagining them eyeing each other and waiting, and then waiting a little longer.

Writing is such a personal endeavor and writing with your partner must be a very unique experience. What did you learn about yourselves and each other during this process?

We didn't have so much to learn in writing *The View Was Exhausting*, because we've been writing together for nearly ten years, before we were even a couple. Even when we write individually, the other person is always still heavily involved.

In *The View Was Exhausting* specifically - we learned that we have very different opinions about the use of commas! Thank god a copyeditor could step in and referee our brawls there. Mostly writing together was just a lot of fun, a source of support and joy. One very clear memory is right at the end of the drafting process, when our editors asked if we could give, on the first page, a quick visual description of Leo. This was a grievous task: at this point, he was so clear in our heads that it felt impossible to write it down. He looks like Leo!

We wanted a tennis ball to throw back and forth while we brainstormed but we are sadly unsporty people, and so we settled for an onion. We looked like mad women, rolling an onion back and forth on the floor and saying, agonized, "He.... has.... a nice face?????"



Win is such a nuanced character—charming, fiercely protective, ambitious, yet also impatient and quick tempered—all of which makes her feel so relatable and human. How important was it to you to make sure that Win wasn't just a straightforwardly loveable character, but complex and flawed as we all are?

It was very important! We think probably every author wants their character to be nuanced and three-dimensional, because that's where a lot of the drama and tension comes from. We also didn't want to set Win up as a kind of Victorian heroine who just gets tossed around by these invisible forces in her life: she should have agency, she should make mistakes. Most importantly, girls with bad tempers are hot.

The View Was Exhausting makes many nods to our current fame and tabloid obsessed culture, and there are some subtle Easter eggs and homages to real celebrities in the book. Where there any real celebrity moments that inspired any scenes, characters, or imagery in your novel?

We were careful not to name any real celebrities in *The View Was Exhausting*, because it felt important that it was its own self-contained universe. But there are of course lots of referents, if you're looking for them! The Taylor Swift/Tom Hiddleston romance was a big jumping off point for us: obviously the debate at the time around whether it was real, but also just some of those incredible images, like Taylor in her yellow dress with him at the Colosseum, or the Fourth of July party with the "I Heart Taylor" shirt. We also listened to the *Reputation* album a lot during later drafts: "Getaway Car" is our secret soundtrack to the opening chapter.

The Cara Delevingne/Michelle Rodriguez romance was another big inspiration for the Saint-Tropez section - they had some incredible public moments, making out at basketball games, the beach shots. And Ariana Grande and Pete Davidson with their coolly obsessed short-lived romance was a great inspiration for the ways Win and Leo might talk about each other in interviews.

We're also both fascinated by Kim Kardashian West. There's not really an Easter egg moment about her in the novel, but she's present in every conversation about female celebrity, especially about women taking agency and control over their own narrative - for better or worse.

And, not going to lie, the book was a good opportunity to poke some fun at the male establishment. We won't name any names but there are a few recognizable figures in there if you're hunting for them.

What was your approach in portraying a mixed-race relationship so that it didn't feel tokenistic but rather grappled with the reality of that experience?

We came up with Win and Leo and their history together and characteristics and fighting styles and the dynamic of their relationship before we began thinking about the fact that it was a mixed race relationship, which in hindsight was very useful. The foundations were there and they were real people; it wasn't like we sat down and thought "we want to write about a mixed race relationship", so we were able to tease out aspects of their characters that already existed.

It also felt very important to think about Leo's whiteness just as much as Win's British Asian heritage. We didn't want Win to be on a journey and Leo not - it had to be something they were navigating together. A lot of media about mixed race relationships feels like it's asking "what's it like to be Black/Asian/Indigenous/a Person of Color", taking whiteness as the assumed default.

The Getaway Car



Take your book club to the next level with a themed cocktail or mocktail! The Getaway Car is just the kind of light and refreshing treat Win and Leo would be sipping along the French Riviera.

Tip: Don't have all ingredients on hand? Swap out limes for lemons, strawberries for another fruit, or mint for basil or rosemary to make a drink your entire book club will love.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 oz French Vodka
- 1 oz Fresh squeezed lime juice
- 3oz sparkling water
- Fresh Mint
- Strawberries

DIRECTIONS

1. Add lime juice, 2 strawberries and 2 mint leaves into a glass or a cocktail shaker. Muddle ingredients.
2. Add vodka and shake
3. Pour over ice
4. Top with sparkling water and stir
5. Garnish with an additional mint leaf and a strawberry and enjoy!



LISTEN TO THE SOUNDTRACK

curated by Mikaela Clements & Onjuli Datta

1. Otis by Jay-Z, Kanye West, Otis Redding
2. Getaway Car by Taylor Swift
3. TIRED by Jasmine Sokko
4. DWAY! by Jackson Wang
5. Hayat by Kiran Ahluwalia
6. Hills by Kim Petras feat. Baby E
7. Holy Ground by Taylor Swift
8. Upgrade U (feat. Jay-Z) by Beyoncé
9. It Girl by Jason Derulo
10. Any Time At All by The Beatles
11. Whatever You Like by T.I.
12. I Don't Even Smoke Weed by Empress Of
13. Cherry Bomb by The Runaways
14. Lax by JJAMZ
15. Rockstar by Mallrat
16. Best Kept Secret by Neko Case, k.d. lang, Laura Veirs
17. I Don't Always Miss You by Dan Reeder
18. Miss You by Louis Tomlinson
19. Never Really Over by Katy Perry
20. Quick! by The Magnetic Fields
21. It's Your World by Tim McGraw
22. Oh Well by Fiona Apple
23. Summer Shandy by The Front Bottoms
24. What A Man Gotta Do by Jonas Brothers
25. Golden by Harry Styles
26. You Will. You? Will. You? Will. You? Will. by Bright Eyes
27. Don't Take The Money by Bleachers
28. Save Me by Nicki Minaj
29. fake smile by Ariana Grande
30. White Ferrari by Frank Ocean
31. Million Dollar Bed by Babygirl
32. Love Ridden by Fiona Apple
33. Mistakes by Tove Styrke
34. Honey Hi by Fleetwood Mac
35. The Bride's Dad by Hamilton Leithauser, Rostam
36. Whenever You're Ready by The Zombies
37. Talk With Your Hands by Bad Bad Hats
38. Cruel Summer by Taylor Swift
39. I Think We're Alone Now by Tommy James & The Shondells

Click or scan below to listen

