

**AUDITIONS –**  
**BOOK CLUB by KATE BROMAGE**  
**DIRECTED by PAT DRIVER**

Book Club is a gentle British comedy that started life as a short play performed at the Wandsworth Fringe in 2019. Following a very positive audience reaction, the script was developed into a full-length play, which will be performed for the Rye Arts Festival on 23 September 2023 at the Mermaid Inn, Rye.

Auditions will take place on Tuesday 13 June at the Mermaid Inn, Rye at 7pm. Read more below about the roles available and how to get involved.

**Play synopsis**

Grab your wine, nibbles and notebooks and get ready to join Linda and her fellow “book clubbers” as they attempt to dissect the literary classics, over the course of 12 months. This gentle comedy explores the idiosyncrasies of a group of random acquaintances brought together (through Linda’s heavy persuasion) by their love for (or mild interest in) books.

As we move through different meetings, each covering an array of classic novels, free flowing wine, endless crisps and small pockets of insight into each character’s life, we’re left with the question: can this motley group of strangers actually become friends? And what exactly is a cheese puff?

**Characters**

**Linda, F 40s – 50s**

Founder and self-appointed chair of the book club. A snobbish control freak with an inflated sense of self, especially regarding her own intellect. Despite outward appearances she is actually extremely insecure and relies heavily on her husband, Bob.

**Bob, M 40s – 50s**

Linda’s long-suffering husband. A quiet man with the patience of a saint, he also happens to be a bit of a whizz in the kitchen.

**Susan, F 30s – 50s**

Linda’s shy neighbour. A gentle introvert who is enthusiastic about books. She lives with her beloved dog Winnie.

**Gemma, F 30s – 40s**

Friendly, sociable and loud. A little rough around the edges, although much smarter than she appears. Her son, Dylan, attends the same school as Linda’s daughter, Jennifer.

**James, M 30s**

An overworked teacher. He is amiable, enthusiastic and extremely earnest. New to the area, he is keen to embed himself in the local community.

*We are also seeking people to help run tech and to stage manage. If anyone would like to take up either of these roles, or other production roles, please contact [patdriver252@gmail.com](mailto:patdriver252@gmail.com)*

Rehearsals will begin in early July. They will usually take place on Tuesdays and Saturdays OR Sundays depending on cast commitments. This is an ensemble piece and so it is essential that the whole cast can attend and prioritise the rehearsals so we can do justice to a fantastic new comedy in Rye.

## AUDITION PIECES

Gemma, Susan & James Audition piece: An extract from Scene Two

**Characters:** Gemma, Linda, James and Susan

**Context:** It is 3 months later and the group are now gathered at Gemma's house who is hosting their second meeting.

Linda is sitting next to James on a sofa, nodding her head at what he is saying, a serious expression on her face, whilst Susan sits on a chair next to James. They all drink from an assortment of cups and glasses. Gemma is slouching on a bean bag on the floor yawning, taking sips of wine out of a mug.

**Linda** (leaning in): How fascinating James. I really didn't pick up on the fact that Nick Carraway may have been gay!

**Gemma:** That's unlike you Linda.

**James:** Well yes, many scholars believe there are several indications within the text. His relationship with Mr Mckee for example.

**Linda:** Really? How interesting!

**Susan** (*shyly*) I did find it a bit odd how he complimented Daisy's voice but didn't really reference her appearance..

**Linda:** That doesn't mean he's gay Susan.

**James:** Susan actually makes a very good point. There's a notable difference in how Carraway describes male and female characters, which is often commented on. But the most speculated scene is the elevator scene in chapter two...

*(Gemma and Susan immediately flick to chapter two in their books.)*

**Gemma:** What page is that on James?

**James** (consulting his notebook): 32

**Linda:** Gosh I feel like I was reading a different book. I was too distracted by the dazzle of Jay Gatsby. Susan, as you've got the book open, can you read out the section for us? Now we have this new spin, it would be interesting to revisit this and discuss further.

**Susan:** I'm not quite sure I'm looking in the right place. I'm just at the bit where the bellboy is telling Mr Mckee not to touch his lever... (drifting off as realisation dawns).

*(Gemma sniggers.)*

**Linda:** (*oblivious and consulting her own copy of the book*): Maybe you could point us to the section in the text James. Page 32 did you say?

**James** (*slightly awkwardly*): Well it's more the way the err, elevator lever is used as a... errr phallic symbol.

(*Susan looks like she might faint.*)

**Linda** (*flustered*): Right, yes, of course, well that's very enlightening.... Maybe it's time for a break... Gemma?

**Gemma** (*innocently*): I'm not sure we should interrupt this flow of rich discussion, Linda.

**Susan:** I think I could do with a short break too.

**Linda:** Well that's settled then, seems like the perfect time for refreshments (*pauses waiting for Gemma to get up*) ... Gemma? Refreshments?

(*Gemma reaches under Susan's seat and pulls out a plastic carrier bag containing a variety of crisp packets, standing up to offer them to her guests.*)

**Gemma:** Right I've got Monster munch, skips, Hula hoops... Susan, you look like a Spicy Space Raiders kind of girl.

(*Gemma throws a packet of crisps to Susan. Then continues to distribute packets to the others.*)

**James** (*enthusiastically*): Pickled Onion Monster Munch. These take me back!

**Gemma:** They're Henry's favourite. Had to hide them in the laundry basket as it's the only place he doesn't look.

(*James looks slightly less enthusiastic about his crisps.*)

**Linda:** How very fun and retro of you Gemma.

**Gemma:** Yes Linda, I paired the crisps to the book.

**Susan** (*studying her crisps and book*): Really?

**Linda:** I believe Gemma is making a little joke Susan.

**James:** (*holding up a crisp*): One could say that the monster munch is reflective of the inner demons of Jay Gatsby.

**Gemma:** And the Skip, representative of my reading style....(*looks over at Linda who is studying a packet of crisps*) If you don't want crisps Linda, I've got a packet of Babybels in the fridge.

**Linda:** I'll pass on the nibbles thanks Gemma. We need to make sure Dylan has something left for his packed lunch tomorrow.

**Gemma:** Suit yourself. Anyone need their drink topped up?

**James:** (*holding up a champagne flute*) Yes please Gemma. This rosé is going down a treat.

**Gemma** (*topping up James*): Get yourself down to Aldi James. The rosé was only £6... And no, Linda, it doesn't taste like vinegar and yes, it's a perfectly acceptable bottle. The wine chap on Saturday Kitchen was whanging on about it last week.

**Susan:** I do love Saturday kitchen. Winnie and I always tune in. Olly Smith certainly knows a lot about wine.

**Gemma:** And you don't need to worry Linda; Dylan only likes to drink red at school. So you won't be depriving him at lunch.

**Linda:** You're not the only one with your finger on the pulse, Gemma. Bob has been buying their wine for a while now; he's quite the sommelier.

*(Linda hands her glass to Gemma who tops it up and hands it back to her.)*

**Gemma:** Susan, can I interest you in a drop more?

**Susan:** No thank you, but might I swap my space invaders for some hula hoops, it's no trouble.

**Gemma** *(looking in the bag)*: I can do you a bag of ready salted?

**Susan:** That's perfect, thank you, I actually prefer the plainer flavours.

**Linda** *(exaggerated whisper)*: It's her IBS.

*(Susan looking embarrassed swaps her crisp packet with Gemma.)*

**Gemma:** *(returning to the wine)*: Top up Gemma?... Be rude not to Gemma.

*(Gemma fills her mug, settles herself on the bean bag and opens the space invaders. Munching loudly away. Meanwhile,)*

**Linda:** While we're having this short interlude, we should start thinking about our next book. We obviously have my laminated shortlist that we can refer to, but the floor is open for other suggestions.

**Susan:** *(retrieving her phone)*: I took a screenshot of the Richard and Judy top 10 book club recommendations, just in case we wanted some more ideas...

**Linda:** We are not following the advice of Richard and Judy, Susan.

**Gemma** *(mouth full)*: Got to agree with Linda on this one.

*(Shocked pause. While Gemma crunches more crisps)*

**Gemma:** He's a bellend and she married him, doesn't bode well for a good read.

**Linda:** Yes, well, quite. Regardless, we agreed to focus our attention on rediscovering the classics. Shall I dig out my list? It's really quite comprehensive.

### **Bob Audition Piece: An extract from Scene One**

**Characters:** All

Bob has no lines as such. His character traits are expressed through his movements and facial expressions. Bob, as the put-upon, often overlooked, spouse claims his space via subtle physical comedy throughout the play.

**Context:** James has just joined the group late and is sitting next to Susan on a Gemma is lounging in a chair eating crisps from a bowl and Linda is presiding the meeting. Bob is awkwardly positioned on a pouffe to try and join in.

**Linda:** Right, let's crack on then shall we. Ladies and James, I would like to welcome you to the inaugural gathering of...

*( Susan raises her hand)*

**Linda:** Yes, what is it Susan?

**Susan:** You forgot Bob.

**Linda:** Ignore Bob, he isn't here.

**Gemma:** I am pretty sure that Bob just topped up my Chardonnay.

**Linda:** Chablis. It's a 2012 Chablis, Gemma. Chosen for its crisp, acidic profile match that of our male protagonist, Mr Darcy.

**James:** You paired the wine to the book?

**Linda:** Just a bit of fun, I thought it would give our little club its very own USP.

**James:** Great idea, really clever. I'm going to have to find a book that goes with nice Merlot when it's my turn to choose.

**Linda:** Oh, I'm sure it's been done before.

**Gemma:** Yeah, Bev probably does it at hers.

**Linda:** Well yes, I'm sure Beverley does something in her own unique quirky s... *(Susan raises her hand)* Yes Susan?

**Susan** *(pointing at Bob)*: I can see Bob too Linda.

**Linda:** Please ignore Bob, He isn't here

*(Bob very carefully and slowly gets up off the pouffe and creeps out of the room)*

**Linda:** Right, where were we...

**Gemma:** *(consulting the agenda)*: According to the agenda we should be at the time refreshments...

**Linda:** Let's ignore the agenda shall we *(clears her throat)* Welcome to the inaugural meeting of our little book club. As an ice breaker, I think we should begin by going around the room and telling each other our favourite book. The rest of us can then ask a question about said book. *(Susan raises her hand)* Susan, you really don't need to keep raising your hand. It's a very informal relaxed forum.

**Susan:** What if we have more than one favourite?

**Linda:** Just pick one please Susan.

**Gemma:** What if we don't like books?

**Linda:** Then I would question why you had joined a book club.

*(Gemma holds up her glass of wine and smiles.)*

**Linda:** James why don't you start...

**James:** Oh goodness, this is a lot of pressure... like picking a favourite child.

**Linda:** Very true James, I myself have many favourite books. Ok, let's take 5 minutes to think. In silence, please Gemma.

*(Everyone sits in silence, all that can be heard is Gemma loudly munching on the kettle chips. A few seconds pass. Susan gets up and shuffles over to Linda.)*

**Susan** (*loud whisper*): While we're having this quick break...

**Linda** (*stage whispers back*): It's not a break Susan.

**Susan:** While we're thinking of our favourite book, do you mind if I pop next door check on Winnie.

**Linda:** Is it really necessary Susan? We've barely started. I'm sure Winnie can hold out till you're home.

**Susan:** I'm just concerned she may have had an accident.

**Gemma:** Now you mention it, I'm a bit worried about my Henry.

**Susan:** Oh, do you have a dog too?

**Linda:** Henry is her husband. (*Impatiently*) Susan, get me your keys. (*Linda call for Bob*) Bob... Bob...BOB.

*(Susan goes to get her keys from her handbag. Bob rushes back in the room an apron and carrying a tray of small pastry snacks. He crosses the room to the coffee table, where he is about to place them when...)*

Linda (*exasperated*): Why have you brought the cheese puffs with you? It's too soon.

*(Confused Bob begins to retrieve the crumpled agenda from his pocket, while balancing the tray of puffs.)*

**Linda** (*waving him away*): We're no longer referring to the agenda Bob, keys (*clicks her fingers*) Keys please Susan. Bob, be a dear and pop round to Susan's and check on Winnie.

**Susan:** Oh, there's no need for Bob to..

**Linda:** Bob is perfectly happy to. Bob loves dogs.

*( Bob remains rooted to the spot holding his tray.)*

**Susan:**I thought you said Bob was allergic to dogs, which is why it was best Winnie at home.

**Linda:** No, that's Jennifer dear. It's the fur, goes straight to her lungs.

**James:** I hope you've informed the school about that Linda. They're thinking of introducing a therapy dog.

**Susan:** (*reluctantly*): There's really no need for you to go, Bob.

**Linda:** Nonsense, Bob can be there and back in a few minutes.. unless Winnie can wait of course.

**Susan:** I suppose Winnie can hold on a little longer. I did take her on that extra walk this afternoon.

**Linda:** Great, problem solved. (*pats Susan's arm*) I'm sure Winnie is having a marvellous time.

*(Bob begins to leave the room with the tray of cheese puffs.)*

**Gemma:** I'll take one of those cheese puffs please Bob.

*(Bob turns and takes the tray over to James, Susan and Gemma who all take one. Gemma helps herself to several.)*

**James:** These are excellent Bob, so light and airy.

**Gemma :** *(with her mouth full)*: Ever considered the Great British Bakeoff Bob?

**Susan:** Oh, I do love that show.

**Gemma:** I can just picture you in the tent shaking hands with that handsome tanned chap with the blue eyes... What's his name?

**James:** Paul Hollywood.

**Susan:** Is it your own recipe Bob?

**Linda:** No, they're Nigella's, very straightforward. I'll email round the recipe. Right. Are we ready to continue? Susan, you can start.