

# BOOK CLUB KIT



“A MASTER CLASS IN MEMOIR.”

—DANI SHAPIRO

# A LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Hello Book Clubs!

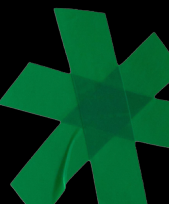
Just the idea of a book club excites me—it's oh so fun and it's oh so necessary and it gives me hope. That (often messy, often brave) curiosity and connection embodied by book clubs is what my debut memoir *Everything/Nothing/Someone* is ultimately about. Writing this book was vital to my survival, and I wrote myself into a place of deep empathy for the people in my life.

This book traces a journey—or, rather, many journeys—from abstraction to actualization, from isolation and sickness to love and healing. I think you'll find there's much to discuss—many sticky subjects, many points of ambivalence and ambiguity, that will make for lively debate. In this book, I wanted to show how many seemingly contradictory things can be true at the same time, and how we can stay coherent and connected in the center of that realization.

Thank you for making *Everything/Nothing/Someone* your book club pick. I am honored and humbled that you have chosen to spend time with my words, and I hope I've been able to convey how essential and transcendent the act of writing is for me.

With love,

*Alice Carrière*



# BEHIND THE SCENES PHOTOS



Alice and Gregory



Young Alice



Baby Alice with her parents



134 Charles Street



Alice and her sister, Elena



Alice with her mom

# EVERYTHING PLAYLIST

***I Try***—Macy Gray

***Basket Case***—Green Day

***99 Luftballons***—Nena

***Buddy Holly***—Weezer

***Waterfalls***—TLC

***Killing Me Softly With His Song***—The Fugees

***I Want It That Way***—The Backstreet Boys

***La Belle Et Le Bad Boy***—MC Solaar

***Handle With Care***—Traveling Wilburys

***Mit freundlichen Grüßen***—Die Fantastischen Vier

***(Everything I Do) I Do It For You***—Bryan Adams

***Hey Ya!***—Outkast

***Radio Ga Ga***—Queen

***Under the Boardwalk***—The Drifters

***Got to Get You Into My Life***—The Beatles

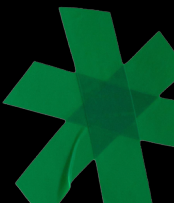
***Do You Believe in Magic?***—The Lovin' Spoonful

***That Thing You Do!***—The Wonders

***Can I Kick It?***—A Tribe Called Quest



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# NOTHING PLAYLIST

***Waltz #2 (XO)***—Elliott Smith

***Ding Dong***—Nellie McKay

***Lua***—Bright Eyes

***Tous les garçons et les filles***—Françoise Hardy

***Hospital***—The Modern Lovers

***Get Me Away From Here***—Belle and Sebastian

***Who's Got the Crack***—The Moldy Peaches

***Girl***—Beck

***Last Nite***—The Strokes

***Teenage Kicks***—The Undertones

***Je t'aime moi non plus***—Serge Gainsbourg

***Hallelujah***—Jeff Buckley

***Everyday***—Buddy Holly

***Radio, Radio***—Elvis Costello & The Attractions

***As We Go Up, We Go Down***—Guided By Voices

***Fidelity***—Regina Spektor

***Whole Wide World***—Wreckless Eric

***Glad Girls***—Guided By Voices

***Love, You Should've Come Over***—Jeff Buckley

***Float On***—Modest Mouse

***Buonanotte Fiorellino***—Francesco De Gregori

***Sucks***—Thin Lizard Dawn

***Dragostea Din Tei***—O-Zone

***Hey Jude***—The Beatles

***Fuck and Run***—Liz Phair

***Quelqu'un m'a dit***—Carla Bruni

***Baby's On Fire***—Brian Eno

***Ca Plane Pour Moi***—Plastic Bertrand

***Ocean Rain***—Echo & the Bunnyman

***Umbrella***—Rihanna, JAY-Z

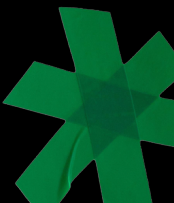
***Crimson & Clover***—Tommy James & The Shondells

***Quand on a que l'amour***—Jacques Brel

***God Only Knows***—The Langley Schools Music Project



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# SOMEONE PLAYLIST

***I'm Sticking With You***—The Velvet Underground

***In Spite of Ourselves***—John Prine, Iris DeMent

***Good as Hell***—Lizzo

***I Want to Hold Your Hand***—Al Green

***This Will Be Our Year***—The Zombies

***Up All Night***—Aaron Lee Tasjan

***Love Like You Don't Care***—Amanda Stone

***The Village Green Preservation Society***—The Kinks

***Girlfriend***—\*repeat repeat

***Washin' My Big Ol' Pussy***—Birdcloud

***Truth Hurts***—Lizzo

***Story of an Artist***—Daniel Johnston

***This Life***—Vampire Weekend

***Avant Gardener***—Courtney Barnett

***Into Your Arms***—The Lemonheads

***All My Favorite Songs***—Weezer

***Story to Tell***—Wilco

***West End Girls***—Pet Shop Boys

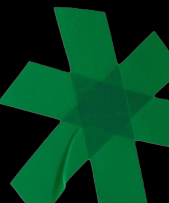
***Can't Get Enough of Myself***—Santigold, BC Unidos

***Poses***—Rufus Wainwright

***True Love Will Find You in the End***—Daniel Johnston

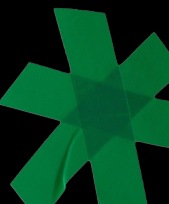


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# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** As the daughter of conceptual artist Jennifer Bartlett and European actor Mathieu Carrière, Alice is raised in a glamorous environment of fame, privilege, and upper-class luxury. But there are other aspects to this environment—loneliness, danger, negligence. How did this background shape Alice as a person? Consider other examples of children of celebrity parents. To what extent are these trappings of fame and wealth a blessing for them? And in what ways might they be a curse?
- 2.** Alice spends her childhood at 134 Charles, the sprawling multi-floor mansion in New York City’s West Village, with bespoke furnishings and a constantly revolving carousel of assistants, celebrities, and parties. Alice describes growing up in “this irresistible nexus of strangeness, luxury, and niche functionality” as if she was living “inside [her] mother’s mind.” In what ways is 134 Charles a metaphor for Alice’s relationship with her mother? How did your own childhood home reflect the personalities or psychologies of your parents?
- 3.** Alice’s mother, Jennifer Bartlett, recalls horrific incidents of Satanic ritual abuse that took place during her childhood—memories that traumatized her and influenced her work. Eventually, Alice learns that these incidents may never have occurred, that these “recovered memories” may have been a product of a vogue in psychotherapy in the 1980s, now known as the “Satanic Panic.” Real or unreal, how do the stories and mythology around Jennifer’s recovered memories affect Alice? Discuss the similarities and differences between both of their experiences in therapy, and the relationship between trauma, truth, and self-mythology.



4. Growing up, Alice spends almost all her time with Nanny—the woman her parents hire to take care of her. “Nanny was family but she was also not family,” Alice writes. “To me, she was a mother, but one who could be fired and disappear at any moment.” Over time, Nanny becomes an integral fixture of her world, a protector and a constant parental presence, more than her own parents were. Are there people in your own life who you consider family, even if they are not related to you by blood? How does that affect your view of the durability and permanence of these relationships?

5. Alice’s father champions an anarchic theory of desire, informed by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, that attempts to dissolve certain boundaries and social norms. His relationship with Alice frequently veers into uncomfortable territory—choreographing a nude, horseback photoshoot for his teenage daughter, leaving her in dangerous situations with older men, asking her, as a child, to administer his injections or lick his tears. How did you respond to him as a character? Does your view of him change when you learn about his own childhood? And by the end of the memoir, when Alice confronts her father, does his response to her accusations force a reconsideration? Do you think Alice is right to forgive him?

6. Alice’s doctors prescribe a slew of medications that warp her sense of reality and ultimately trigger a harrowing psychotic episode. Jennifer doesn’t question the doctors and the growing roster of pills that Alice takes every day, even when it brings about radical and terrifying changes in her daughter’s behavior and appearance. We also learn that Jennifer’s own psychiatrist was notorious for conducting unethical human experiments on her patients (as depicted in the documentary *Three Identical Strangers*). What does this book bring to your view and experiences of what Alice calls “the American psychiatric complex”?

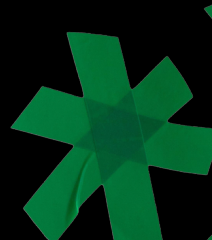




**7.** The book has many vivid, sensory descriptions of Alice’s dissociation, as she drifts away from herself, her body, and her mind. She describes feeling her “I” slipping through her fingers like “a heavy, slick rope”; feeling as if “each moment was the first moment in the history of the universe, when things were just taking shape, though never forming something solid”; holding a cup of water and feeling like “there was nothing separating the water from me”; looking in the mirror and being unable to “unlock or lock into place that it was me, my face.” Which descriptions or moments struck you most powerfully, and why? What do you understand about the visceral experience of dissociation and how they relate to self-harm?

**8.** Moving between centers and therapists in Massachusetts, Florida, New York, and elsewhere, Alice encounters a variety of approaches to treatment and therapy. Which of these were most effective and ineffective? By the end of the book, Alice is highly critical of the antagonistic process of the trauma group, which positions her childhood as “the story of the molested girl who had overcome her monster.” What are the shortcomings Alice sees in this model, and do you agree or disagree with her assessment?

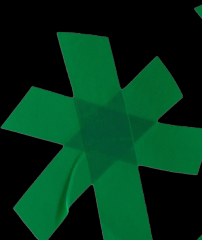
**9.** In an interview, Alice says that one way she thinks of *Everything/Nothing/Someone* is as a love story. How do you understand this book as a love story? Does the trajectory of Alice and Gregory’s relationship fit (or resist) the tropes of other love stories you’ve read? What other kinds of love do you see in the book?



**10.** For Alice, the act of writing becomes a salve against dissociative spirals. She realizes, “Words were the only thing that tethered me to some splinter of myself.” How does the act of writing help Alice? Do you have a regular writing practice, and if so, how does it help you? There is a variety of source material quoted in the memoir—journals, letters, case reports, ephemera. What did you think about the interplay between these original texts and Alice’s own writing style? How do these other writings factor into the stories we tell about ourselves—and that Alice came to understand about herself, both at the time and later, when she gained perspective? What does it mean for Alice’s story, finally, to belong wholly to herself?

**11.** Toward the end of the book, Alice and her parents have come almost full circle: Alice takes care of her mother after she is diagnosed with dementia, and directly confronts her father for his transgressions. What was the turning point in both of these relationships? Do you think they were able to achieve reconciliation, or at least, resolution by the book’s conclusion? Why or why not?

**12.** Discuss the title and how it relates to Alice’s experiences in each section. What is Alice’s journey from “everything” to “nothing”? How does she finally become “someone”?



# LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH



**ALICE CARRIÈRE** is a graduate of Columbia University. This is her first book. She lives in Nashville, Tennessee, and Amagansett, New York.

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