

The Reading Guide

Reading Group Questions

1. How do you think the novel would have been different if it had had different settings rather than London and New York? How much do these influence what takes place?
2. Would you like to take part in a reality TV show like Hotel Manager? What do you think about the nature of 'celebrity' in the book? Are there any positives to this?
3. Discuss the central theme of revenge and how the desire for vengeance affects the characters in the novel.
4. There are several instances of addiction in the novel (for example, alcohol, drugs, gambling, money, lust). Discuss the characters' different 'addictions' and the consequences of these vices.
5. Marital abuse is a harrowing part of the story. How much do you think that Elise is a victim of herself, as well as being the victim of her brutal husband, Bill? Do you think she punishes Bill enough?

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About the Book

Make it

Sexy, smart New Yorker Logan Barnes knows how to take what he wants to get where he wants to be. But you can't win the girl, make the money and live the high life without picking up enemies along the way...

Break it

There's only one enemy who matters, and that's the friend Logan betrayed years ago – Nicolo Flores. He got mad but, better still, he got even, waiting in the wings to pull the plug on Logan and see his fortunes coming crashing down.

But save the best card for last...

Now Logan's back in London with a perfect wife, perfect family, and the perfect jewel to crown his rebuilt hotel empire: a stunning island getaway for the truly über-rich. Nicolo's crazy to find a way to crush him again – but with gambling, addiction, sex and scandal all knocking on the Barnes' family door, maybe they'll destroy themselves before he even has a chance to...

Reviews

'LUXURY oozes glamour, wealth and scandal – a fantastic debut *****'

Company Magazine

'Twists and turns and everything you need to keep you glued... Just the thing to pack on a long flight or train journey' **Adele Geras**

Manhattan penthouses and exotic islands are the glitzy settings in this blockbuster debut. Deliciously indulgent.' **Marie Claire**

'Pure escapism for a rainy October weekend – a real page-turner!' **Woman**

'Impressively written and littered with exciting twists, this sleek story about addiction, scandal and revenge is utterly thrilling. *****' **Closer**

'Jessica Ruston is bringing back sexy moguls, reckless glamour-pusses and moneyed decadence in a way we didn't think was possible... It's what long-haul flights were made for' **Elle**

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An Interview with the Author

Was your childhood ambition always to be a writer? If not, what inspired you to start writing?

I've always written in some form or another, but no, I never wanted to be a writer when I was growing up. I suppose growing up with a mother who was a working novelist took some of the glamour away from the prospect (and I have always had a stubbornly rebellious streak so whenever anyone asked if I was going to follow in her footsteps I said no!), but secretly I always felt that it was what I would end up doing in some way. I steered clear of writing fiction for a long time though – my first foray into writing professionally was screenplays, and then non-fiction – and then I eventually worked my way around to being brave enough to start writing a novel...

Are the characters in LUXURY inspired by anyone that you know or any celebrities?

No, not at all. There are, of course, little fragments of people I know in some of the characters, and people who know me well might recognise anecdotes or lines that appear in the book as being from my own life or stolen from friends or family, but essentially, they're entirely figments of my imagination.

What do you enjoy most about writing?

The moments where you are writing and things that you hadn't planned or envisaged or imagined just appear on the page and plot problems that you had been fretting over all suddenly slot into place. Magical; there's nothing like it.

How does the writing process work for you and how has it changed over the years?

It basically involves a long period of reading and research and making notes and what are essentially procrastination and diversion tactics followed by intense periods of working really hard in a slightly panicked way. When I'm writing it works best if I write lots at once, quickly – it's something to do with keeping the momentum going, keeping it all in my head. I've been the same since I was young – I was always the one cramming outside the exam room. I think I need the adrenaline.

What / who are some of your favourite books and authors?

Patrick McGrath – *Asylum* is my all time favourite book. F. Scott Fitzgerald – *Tender is the Night* is another favourite. Jay McInerney, Brett Easton Ellis... I am a bit obsessed with novels set in the Deep South, and so things like *Midnight in the Garden of Good*

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and Evil. Also foodie memoirs – I have an enormous crush on Anthony Bourdain, and his book *Kitchen Confidential* is the most brilliant insight into professional kitchens. John Irving. Pat Conroy, Penny Vincenzi, Susan Howatch's massive chunky sagas, Shirley Conran's *Lace* and *Savages*... My bookshelves are a very mixed bag!

What the last really good book that you read?

I absolutely adored *One Day* by David Nicholls. It's just such a good read – a great concept, so well executed. It opens on July 15th 1988, when the two main characters meet on their final day of university, and it follows them through the next twenty years. It's funny, heartbreaking, brilliantly observed, touching and big-hearted. Definitely my book of the year so far.

Have any films influenced your writing?

Actually, TV series have probably influenced it more, at least recently. My first foray into writing professionally was writing screenplays, and I do still think very visually when I'm writing. But one of the things I like to do in my novels is have multiple strands and characters all intertwining, holding lots of things up in the air at once (or trying to), and TV series – especially some of the American ones from the last few years – just do that so, so well. Things like *24*, *Lost*, *Entourage*, *ER*, *The Wire*, older ones like *Dallas* and *Dynasty*... I'm addicted! I buy the DVDs and then have marathon TV binges where I watch 8 hours all at once.

If LUXURY was turned into a film who would you choose to play the lead characters?

Oh, this is a fun game... Lucia is Lindsay Lohan in my head, absolutely. Johnny Depp for Nicolo, definitely. He's got that wicked twinkle... George Clooney for Logan, please – he has the right combination of charming and rugged. Maryanne is the one I find the hardest to cast – she is so clear in my mind as herself, that I find it difficult to see her played by anyone; maybe Michelle Pfeiffer? Or Rene Russo. Both would be excellent opposite George (as I will be calling him after he stars in the movie, naturally...). Possibly Naomi Watts as Elise.

I think Hugh Grant is a natural Mark Mallory. Charlie needs to be someone floppy haired and a bit surfy - Chase Crawford, maybe? I am desperately trying to think of a role for Keifer Sutherland. Maybe he could be Johnny...

Can you tell us a little about what you're working on next?

My second novel, which is going to be out next year. It's another big story, with lots of characters. This time it moves from a small seaside town in 1960s England to Swinging

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London, St Petersburg, Italy and East Africa. It's a bit of a modern-day rags to riches tale, and features an obsessive and destructive love affair, a family beset by bad luck – or is the family cursed? And lots of beautiful hats...

What advice would you give a writer just starting out in their career?

Don't sit around waiting for 'the muse' to strike. Writing generates writing, so make yourself do it. And while internet stuff is fab – Twitter is a great way to find other writers to connect with in what can be a lonely job, and websites and blogging are all useful tools – make sure you're not using them as a distraction or procrastination method (which writers are all brilliant at...). Make them work for you, but don't use up all your words on Twitter! Oh, and leave the house at least once a day.

About the author

Jessica Ruston was born in Warwickshire in 1977. She lives in London with her husband. LUXURY is her first novel. To find out more about Jessica visit her website: www.jessicaruston.com