



ANDREA BARTZ

WE WERE NEVER HERE

BOOK CLUB KIT

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear readers,

Thank you so much for reading *We Were Never Here* and for sharing your thoughts with other passionate bookworms! It's been a joy to connect with people over my debut, *The Lost Night*, my sophomore thriller, *The Herd*, and now my third novel—my favorite one yet.

I had the idea for *We Were Never Here* when I was in a remote mountain town in Chile myself, where my friend and I befriended the one other backpacker in Pisco Elqui. He was so cool and kind and non-creepy that we all jumped on a running gag about how he was actually a psycho angling to kill us and steal our money.

On the last night, we were drinking wine in our hotel suite, and out of nowhere, I said, “Stephen, you’ve known us exactly as long as we’ve known you . . . and you didn’t watch us pour your wine in the kitchen. What makes you so sure *we’re* not a danger to *you*?” (What can I say—I’m a thriller author!) A long silence ensued, and the idea for this book was born.

In non-pandemic times, I’m a travel writer, which means I’m often visiting far-flung places. People are always telling me I’m brave or reminding me to be careful, and newspapers occasionally print articles aimed at female travelers listing *aaall* the ways we should protect ourselves. It seemed to me that, on some deeper level, all the hand-wringing and subtle victim-blaming are ultimately about

convincing us we shouldn’t explore and experience the world. With *We Were Never Here*, I wanted to turn that idea on its head by making female travelers the ones with blood on their hands. Obviously I don’t want men running terrified from women, either (ha!), but I hope the book makes you think!

And just as importantly, I hope this book makes you daydream about travel! My goal was to airdrop you into the settings, so you’re *right there* with Kristen and Emily as they explore Chile—sipping pisco sours on a deck and admiring the mountain views and dancing to Latin pop on a jungly patio. (And then, you know, ditching a body in a remote patch of farmland . . . but I’m getting ahead of myself.) When we can’t travel in person, books are a beautiful way to escape, and I’m honored you’re starting that journey with me.

I hope you enjoy *We Were Never Here* and, if it resonates with you, I hope you’ll recommend it to your fellow thriller lovers. Thank you, truly—your support means the world.

Warmly,
Andi

*P.S. If you’d like to know more about *The Lost Night*, *The Herd*, and *We Were Never Here*—or my past as a magazine editor and travel writer!—please visit andreabartz.com and find me on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), and [Facebook](#). I’d love to connect with you!*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Emily and Kristen have been best friends since college, ever since Emily's breakup with her high school boyfriend. What did you think of the way this breakup cemented their friendship? Do you think it was the beginning of a pattern that is followed throughout the novel? Do you have a pivotal moment in your life that you saw one way in the moment, but in an entirely new one light years later?
- Emily notes: "In the US, 40 percent of murders go unsolved. Some arithmetic, then: That meant that detectives threw up their hands at almost 7,000 murders a year—7,000 cadavers with no origin story, no clarity around the moment they went from human to body. And that meant there were thousands, maybe millions in the aggregate, of people walking the earth this very moment who'd gotten away with murder." These stats are accurate. Did that surprise you? Did you find yourself sympathizing with Emily, despite her at least partial responsibility for two deaths?
- Ever since Emily's traumatic experience in Cambodia, she has struggled to move forward in her life, particularly regarding romantic relationships—and, especially after the events in Chile, she discovers that Kristen's help alone is not enough and begins to see a therapist. What does it show about Emily's character when she reaches the decision to finally seek professional help for her recovery? What does Kristen's reaction to this demonstrate about their relationship?
- At one point, Emily reflects, "All the handwringing about women tempting fate by going on adventures, how it was our responsibility to protect ourselves . . . wasn't it just a way to keep women's lives small? To keep us cowering at home, controlled, contained?" Do you believe women are responsible for protecting themselves from violence? Have you ever been told you were "tempting fate" for something you said, did, or wore?
- Kristen often uses uniquely subversive "gestures of friendship" to disguise her threats to Emily; did this kind of manipulation ring true to you? How did you feel about the way Emily handled these moments? Would you have reacted in the same way?
- As the secrets from Kristen's past bubble to the surface, Emily realizes just how much of Kristen's life she'd held back from Emily over their decade-long friendship. What did you think of this? Did you believe Kristen's reasons for withholding her past? Can a friend keep their most private traumas secret and still be trustworthy?
- Though the book's central traumas revolve around those nights in Cambodia and Chile (and the fallout), Emily is no stranger to "casual violence," citing examples from her ex-boyfriend and father, and even street harassment. Kristen, too, is both a victim and perpetrator of abuse. Why do you think the author included these elements from the characters' pasts?

PLAYLIST

This playlist comprises songs Emily and Kristen would've listened to together in college and beyond, songs they could've danced to on that patio in Chile, songs about Emily's floaty feeling of falling for Aaron, and, finally, songs that capture that ultimate yearning for true freedom!

I'M GOOD

Wafia

WOMAN

Ke\$ha

LOS AGELESS

St. Vincent

AGUA DE JAMAICA

Maluma

FEELING MYSELF

Nicki Minaj, Beyoncé

YO NO SÉ - REMIX

Mati Gómez, Nicky Jam, Reik

GET BACK

Ludacris

PURPLE HAT

Sofi Tukker

PROBARLO TODO

Moral Distraída

WISH YOU WERE HERE

Incubus

SUN IN OUR EYES

MØ & Diplo

HYSTERIC

Yeah Yeah Yeahs

NIGHT GO SLOW

Catey Shaw

ICU

Phoebe Bridgers

WREATH

Perfume Genius

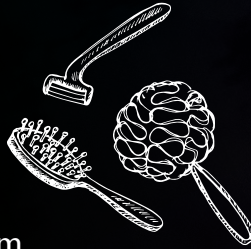
MONUMENT -
THE INEVITABLE
END VERSION

Robyn and Röyksopp

[Listen to the playlist on Spotify!](#)

KRISTEN AND EMILY'S PACKING LIST

- Toiletries
- Yoga gear
- Hiking boots
- Bathing suits for pools and hot tubs
- Warm layers—the mountains should be warm during the day and chilly at night



- Car rental confirmation (*Kristen, you have this, right?*)
- Granola bars (*so Kristen doesn't get hangry*)
- Condoms??
- Emily's asthma inhaler **[DON'T FORGET!!]**
- ~~Phone chargers~~ (*We'll be off the grid!*)

EMILY & KRISTEN'S COLLEGE ROOMMATE BIOS

EMILY:

- Curious
- Empathetic
- Methodical
- Sensitive
- Kind



LIKES:

- Animals
- Beer
- Yoga
- Volunteering

DISLIKES:

- Loud noises
- Driving in the dark (or anytime really)
- Being the center of attention



KRISTEN:

- Adventurous
- Brilliant
- Bold
- Extroverted
- Impulsive



LIKES:

- CrossFit
- Cocktails
- Brain teasers
- Hiking

DISLIKES:

- Toxic masculinity
- Therapists
- Questions about her family



SNACK AND DRINK SUGGESTIONS

UP NORTH S'MORES DIP

YIELDS 6 SERVINGS



INGREDIENTS

- ½ tablespoon butter
- 1 ½ cups chocolate chips, semi-sweet milk chocolate, or a combo
- 15 jumbo marshmallows, halved
- Graham cracker squares

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Adjust rack to center position of oven and place 8-inch cast iron skillet on rack. Preheat oven to 450°F with skillet inside.
2. Once oven is preheated, remove the hot skillet from the oven. Place pat of butter in the skillet and swirl the skillet so that the melted butter coats the bottom and sides.
3. Pour chocolate chips in an even layer into the bottom of the skillet.
4. Arrange marshmallow halves over the surface of the chocolate chips, covering the chocolate completely.
5. Bake for 5 to 7 minutes or until marshmallows are toasted to your preference.
6. Remove the skillet from the oven and allow to rest for 5 minutes. Serve immediately with graham cracker squares.

CHILEAN PISCO SOUR

YIELDS 1 SERVING



INGREDIENTS

- 3 oz. Chilean Pisco
- 1 oz. lime or lemon juice
- 1–2 tbs. of powdered sugar
- ¼ – ½ cup of crushed ice

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place all ingredients into a cocktail shaker
2. Shake vigorously until sugar dissolves
3. Taste and adjust sugar to your liking
4. Serve in chilled glass

WISCONSIN-STYLE BEER-CHEESE DIP

YIELDS 16 SERVINGS



INGREDIENTS

- 2 x 8-ounce packages cream cheese, softened
- ⅓ – ½ cup beer
- 1x1-ounce packet ranch dressing mix
- 1 ½ cups shredded cheddar cheese
- Pretzels, for serving

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a small bowl, mix the cream cheese, beer and ranch seasoning until smooth.
2. Spread mixture evenly over a plate or serving platter.
3. Top with shredded cheese. Serve with pretzels.

EMPANADAS DE PINO (CHILEAN BEEF EMPANADAS) YIELDS 10 SERVINGS



FOR THE PINO:

INGREDIENTS

- 2 lb. of ground beef 90%
- 1 cup beef broth
- 3 large or 4 medium onions diced
- 2 tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 2 tbsp. red pepper or paprika or Merken (Chilean smoked chili)
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- Salt and pepper
- 4 tbsp. vegetable oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Always prepare it the day before. In a large saucepan heat the oil and fry the meat until lightly browned (about 8 minutes). Add the paprika, salt, pepper, and cumin, then sauté for a few minutes. Add the broth and simmer 30 minutes over low heat. Add the onion, mix well, and cook over medium heat until onion is tender (about 30 minutes). Add the flour and stir well and adjust seasoning if necessary, cook two more minutes. Cool and refrigerate.

FOR THE DOUGH:

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 cup warm water
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 2 lb. of all-purpose flour
- 4 egg yolks
- 6.5 oz of melted shortening, warm

OPTIONAL INGREDIENTS:

- 20 black olives
- 40 raisins
- 5 hard-boiled eggs

INSTRUCTIONS

2. Make a brine with the milk, water, and salt. Stir altogether to dissolve the salt. In a large bowl, mix the flour and egg yolks for a minute to incorporate. Add the melted shortening and mix a little more. To form the dough, add and stir the brine with the mixer little by little until the dough is soft and flexible. If needed, add water. Separate the dough into 20 portions and cover with a moist cloth. Work each piece individually, rolling until thin and forming into a circle about 7". Fill each of these with two tablespoons of Pino, a quarter of hard-boiled egg, olives, and raisins if desired. Close by smearing the edge, pressing firmly and making folds. Brush with an egg wash before baking. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Bake for 30–35 minutes until golden.