

Book Club Kit

Do Tell

A NOVEL

Lindsay Lynch

"Wonderful, provocative . . . I stepped into the stream of the narrative and didn't look up until I came to the last page."
—Ann Patchett, NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author of *THE DUTCH HOUSE*

Dear reader,

Before writing *Do Tell*, I hadn't considered myself much of a gossip. Unlike my intrepid narrator, actress-turned-gossip-columnist Edie O'Dare, I've never been the sort of person to walk into a party and work the room. To be honest, I'm more likely to be found tucked in a corner with a snack or befriending the host's dog—and that's assuming someone successfully wrangled me out of my home to go to the party in the first place.

But as I began researching the stars of Golden Age Hollywood, I realized I didn't just want to know about the films they were in or the accolades they received. I wanted to know who they were sneaking around with between scenes, who they had fights with at after-parties, who they all thought *really* should've won that Academy Award.

I've always been interested in celebrities, where the line is drawn between their public and private selves. Under the studio system of 1930s and '40s Hollywood, those lines were drawn by publicists and the press, often collaboratively but sometimes contentiously. Columnists like Hedda Hopper, Louella Parsons, and Adela Rogers St. Johns had to strike a balance between appeasing the studios that gave them access to these stars and feeding exclusive scandals to the hungry public. As Edie attempts her own rise to fame as a gossip queen, she has to make some very troubling decisions when it comes to the personal lives of the celebrities she once called friends.

It turns out, like Edie, I am a *bit* of a gossip. And I have a hunch you might be as well. *Do Tell* is a novel of secrets—what we're allowed to reveal, what we have to hide, and why. So, grab a drink and your favorite friend to dish with, and let's get into it!

Thanks for reading!

Lindsay Lynch

Discussion Questions

1. What was your impression of the Golden Age of Hollywood before reading *Do Tell*? How did the novel change the way you thought about the studio system and the actors, directors, publicists, and writers who made up its ecosystem? What did you get right?
2. Edie says she built her career by focusing on “the things actors won’t say” (p. 3). What do you think is the most valuable secret she picks up on over the course of the novel? How does covert observation play into your life, relationships, and work?
3. Edie and Charles discuss their working-class backgrounds in contrast to their current circumstances as Hollywood actors. How do you think Edie’s childhood shapes her adult outlook? How does her experience of scarcity differ from Seb’s?
4. Sophie’s assault trial is one of the major plot threads in Part 1 of *Do Tell*. What did you think Edie’s responsibility was to Sophie when asked to help get Sophie’s story into print? If you were Edie, would you have told Augustan about your involvement sooner?
5. Edie chooses to print the story about Charles rather than her findings about Margy’s marriage during Freddy’s trial. Based on what Edie knew at the time, would you have made the same choice in her shoes? Were there questions you wished she’d asked that she didn’t?
6. World War II complicates studio operations in Part 2. How does *Do Tell*’s treatment of the American war effort differ from other stories you’ve read set in this period? What’s your take on the way the studio system played a role in wartime propaganda and how those changes affected the characters in the novel? How do you think you might have participated in the Hollywood war effort?
7. Throughout the novel, we see that Edie’s words, and the words of her fellow actors, have power. When does gossip work in these characters’ favor? Is it always pernicious? Are gossip columns inherently dangerous? Why did studios like FWM opt into relationships with writers like Edie?
8. Characters in *Do Tell* go unpunished. How did that make you feel? Were there elements of the conclusion that surprised you? In a perfect world, how would you see justice served?
9. Edie calls Hollywood “a city that promised reshoots” (p. 271). Where in your life do you wish you could try again? She also calls Los Angeles “a city that no one was supposed to be from” (p. 205). How does self-invention play into LA’s role in the novel?
10. Though *Do Tell* is historical fiction, Sophie’s trial and its outcome feel timely given recent news events and social movements. How do you think Sophie’s allegations might have been received had she gone to trial today? Do you think public opinion and the jury’s outcome could be different? Why or why not?
11. How do you think the film industry has changed since the 1930s and ‘40s? Do you feel movies are made differently now than they were then? Do you think the current trends in cinema are positive? Is there anything from the past that you’d like to see brought back for today’s new releases?
12. What films, TV shows, or novels did *Do Tell* most remind you of? Did Edie’s story make you want to revisit any of those stories to compare and contrast? Who would you cast in a film adaptation?



The Author Recommends

SUGGESTED READING

CITY OF NETS

Otto Friedrich

THE STAR MACHINE

Jeanine Basinger

I LOST MY GIRLISH LAUGHTER

Jane Allen

HOLLYWOOD: THE ORAL HISTORY

Jeanine Basinger and Sam Wasson

THE DAY OF THE LOCUST

Nathanael West

**SEDUCTION: SEX, LIES, AND STARDOM
IN HOWARD HUGHES'S HOLLYWOOD**

Karina Longworth

THE DEVIL FINDS WORK

James Baldwin

SUGGESTED VIEWING

THE THIN MAN, 1934

STAGE DOOR, 1937

A STAR IS BORN, 1937 (but also 1954, 1976, and 2018)

THE WOMEN, 1939

STAGECOACH, 1939

THE PHILADELPHIA STORY, 1940

THE MARK OF ZORRO, 1940

Lindsay Lynch's DO TELL PLAYLIST

If *Do Tell* had a theme song, it would be Angel Olsen's deliciously melodramatic ballad "Chance"—I love songs with a big, swoopy string section and a deep, melancholic bass line. Here's what I listened to while writing *Do Tell*: it's a mixture of contemporary music, hits of the time period, and a few things in between, but I think they all qualify as perfect songs to have a good cry to in a dark, smoky room at the end of a big night.

1. "Chance," Angel Olsen
2. "The End of the World," Skeeter Davis
3. "Movies," Weyes Blood
4. "Fool," Perfume Genius
5. "If I Didn't Care," The Ink Spots
6. "Master of None," Beach House
7. "I'll Be Seeing You," Billie Holiday
8. "Goodbye LA," Blah Blah Blah
9. "Eadie Was a Lady," Cab Calloway
10. "God Knows I Tried," Lana Del Rey
11. "You Always Hurt the One You Love," The Mills Brothers
12. "Moon River," Frank Ocean
13. "I Don't Want to Set the World on Fire," Ozzie Nelson & His Orchestra, Harriet Hilliard
14. "Lilac Wine," Nina Simone
15. "Nothing Fades Like the Light," Orville Peck
16. "Heartstuck (Wild Hunger)," Hamilton Leithauser, Angel Olsen

The Spotify playlist can be found [here](#)
Or scan the code below!



Sips and Nibbles

Whether you're watching a movie or hosting book club, we know drinks and snacks are a must! To set the mood for *Do Tell*, we're recommending a classic cocktail that pairs perfectly with Lindsay Lynch's characters and popcorn, but just like Hollywood gossip, we're spicing things up a little with some Cajun seasoning in honor of Charles Landrieu.

Do Tell Sidecar

2 ounces VSOP Cognac, Armagnac, or good California brandy, traditional and solid like Hal

1 ounce Cointreau, a bit exotic like Charles

$\frac{3}{4}$ ounce fresh lemon juice, to give it a bite like Margy

Superfine sugar, for garnish, sweet like Sophie and Nell

Orange wedge and twist, because when you're Edie O'Dare in Hollywood, there's always a twist

Directions

Prepare cocktail glass by making a slit in an orange wedge and running the cut edge around the rim of the glass; then dip the rim in a saucer of superfine sugar to create a thin crust. Chill the glass until needed.

Combine brandy, Cointreau, and lemon juice in a cocktail shaker and fill with ice. Shake well until chilled, about 10 seconds. Strain into prepared glass; garnish with a twist of orange peel.

Cajun-Spiced Popcorn for Charles Landrieu

20 cups popped popcorn
½ cup butter, melted
2 teaspoons paprika
2 teaspoons lemon pepper
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees °F (175 degrees °C). Place popped popcorn in a large roasting pan.
2. Combine melted butter, paprika, lemon pepper, salt, garlic powder, onion powder, and cayenne pepper in a small bowl; pour over popcorn and stir until it is somewhat evenly coated.
3. Bake in the preheated oven for 15 minutes, stirring every 5 minutes. Remove from the oven and cool completely. Serve immediately, or store in an airtight container for later.