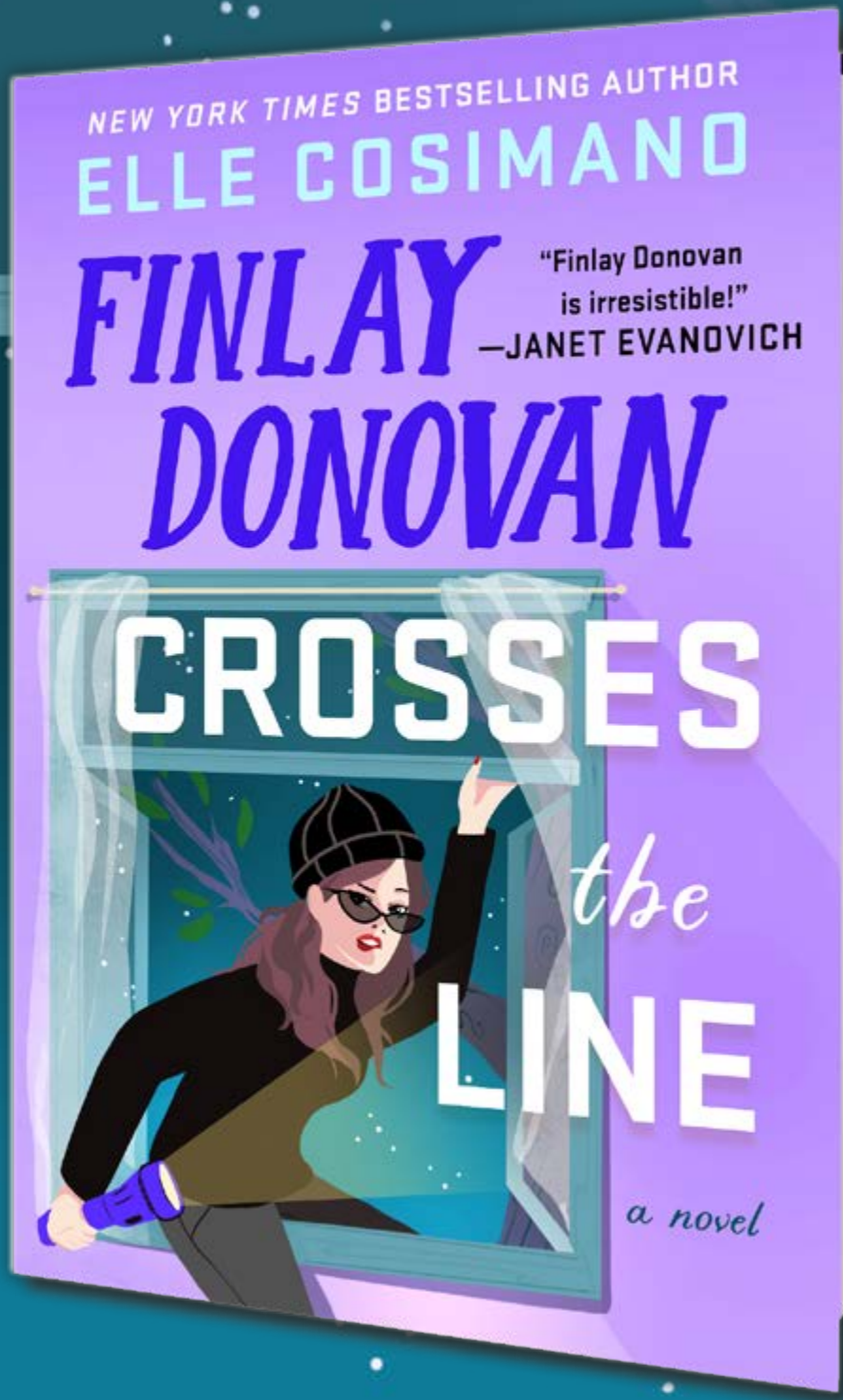


THE FINLAY DONOVAN SERIES HIT-MOM BOOK CLUB GUIDE



THE HIT-MOM BOOK CLUB KIT



MINOTAUR BOOKS

Welcome to the Hit-Mom Book Club Guide, the official companion to Elle Cosimano's *New York Times* bestselling Finlay Donovan series.

In this guide, you'll find everything you need for your book club's discussion of *Finlay Donovan Crosses the Line*, publishing March 17, 2026:

- *Finlay Donovan Crosses the Line: A Playlist* [pg. 3]
- Gloria and Norma's Famous Picadillo and Capirotada [pg. 4]
- *Finlay Donovan Crosses the Line* Discussion Questions [pg. 5]
- Five Tips for Throwing the Perfect Poker Night [pg. 6]

Does your book club need more Finlay Donovan? We've compiled the Hit-Mom Book Club Guides for each book in the series into this PDF.

Included in this booklet, you'll find companion guides for:

- *Finlay Donovan Is Killing It* [pg. 8]
- *Finlay Donovan Knocks 'Em Dead* [pg. 14]
- *Finlay Donovan Jumps the Gun* [pg. 21]
- *Finlay Donovan Rolls the Dice* [pg. 27]
- *Finlay Donovan Digs Her Own Grave* [pg. 35]

Whether you're meeting at your sorority house or via your somewhat-shady online women's forum—dust off those wig-scarves and sunglasses, grab a Panera pastry or a glass of wine, and enjoy your discussion of Finlay and Vero's latest hijinks.

We love to see your Finlay Donovan-inspired photos! Please tag us on social media and use #FinlayDonovanCrossesTheLine and #HitMomBookClub.

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MINOTAUR BOOKS

FINLAY DONOVAN CROSSES THE LINE:

A Playlist

1. ***Waste a Moment*** by Kings of Leon
2. ***Sugar Sweet*** by Benson Boone
3. ***Live in the Moment*** by Portugal, The Man
4. ***Meet Me at Our Spot*** by THE ANXIETY, WILLOW, Tyler Cole
5. ***Let Me Down Slow*** by Zöelle
6. ***I Love You, I'm Sorry*** by Gracie Abrams
7. ***Walking on a Dream*** by Empire of the Sun
8. ***Sorry I'm Here for Someone Else*** by Benson Boone
9. ***Carry You Home*** by Alex Warren
10. ***Bang Bang*** by Jessie J, Ariana Grande, Nicki Minaj
11. ***Someone To You*** by BANNERS
12. ***us.*** by Gracie Abrams, Taylor Swift
13. ***Black Hole*** by Griff
14. ***Mi Fantasma*** by Zöelle
15. ***Secrets*** by One Republic
16. ***That's So True*** by Gracie Abrams
17. ***Baby Bitch*** by Ween
18. ***t r a n s p a r e n t s o u l*** by WILLOW, Travis Barker
19. ***Riptide*** by Vance Joy
20. ***DEVIL*** by Shinedown
21. ***I Will Not Bow*** by Breaking Benjamin
22. ***Fake It*** by Seether
23. ***The Kill*** by Thirty Seconds to Mars
24. ***crushcrushcrush*** by Paramore
25. ***Wait a Minute*** by WILLOW
26. ***Un Verano Sin Ti*** by Bad Bunny
27. ***Djitos Lindos*** by Bad Bunny and Bomba Estéreo



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GLORIA AND NORMA'S FAMOUS PICADILLO AND CAPIROTADA

Gloria got busy filling a small basket with pillowy, warm tortillas, and Norma put me to work serving out bowls of stew from the pot on the stove. The rich red tomato broth was brimming with ground beef, potatoes, and onions, and a pan of something that looked like bread pudding was cooling on the counter. The sugar-crusted top was singed around the edges. Ramón helped me carry it all to the table while Vero filled a bag with ice and pressed it to Javi's lip. She set a place for him at the table, and we all took our seats.

"Thank you for letting us stay for dinner. Everything looks delicious," I said.

"It's picadillo," Gloria said. "We've all been under a lot of stress. I thought a little comfort food might be nice."

PICADILLO

[Recipe by Mely Martinez / Mexico in My Kitchen](#)

Serves 6

INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 tbsp vegetable oil
1 lb ground beef (85/15%)
1/3 cup white onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves
1 serrano pepper
1 1/2 cup diced potato (approx. 8 ounces)
1 lb diced tomatoes (approx. 2 large tomatoes)
1 beef bouillon cube
1/3 cup chopped cilantro
Salt and pepper to taste

INSTRUCTIONS:

Heat oil in a large skillet. Once oil is hot, add the ground meat to cook. Break up large lumps of meat using a wooden spoon to make sure all the little pieces are well cooked. Fry until brown, about 8 minutes.

Add the onion and garlic. Stir and cook for about 1 minute, just enough to allow the onion to get transparent, then add serrano pepper and diced potatoes. Stir and keep cooking until potatoes are slightly tender, but still firm, about 5 minutes.

Add the diced tomatoes and beef bouillon and stir again. Cover your skillet and lower the heat. Keep cooking the picadillo until your potatoes are completely cooked and the tomatoes have formed a thick sauce.

Finally, season with salt and pepper and add the chopped cilantro.

Serve with rice and warm corn tortillas. Enjoy!

CAPIROTADA

[Recipe by Yvette Marquez / Muy Bueno](#)

Serves 8-10

INGREDIENTS:

4 bolillo or French rolls
4 1/2 cups water
12 ounces piloncillo
(or 1 1/2 cups packed dark brown sugar)
4 cinnamon sticks
1 serrano pepper
6 whole cloves
3 cups shredded cheese
(Longhorn Cheddar, Colby, or cheese of your choice)
1 cup raisins
4 tablespoons butter or spray butter

INSTRUCTIONS:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees fahrenheit

Cut rolls in 1/2 inch slices and butter both sides. Layer the slices on a baking sheet and bake for 3 minutes on each side, until lightly toasted and dry. Remove and cool.

Combine water, piloncillo, cinnamon sticks, and cloves in a large saucepan. Bring to a boil then reduce heat, creating a syrup. Simmer syrup uncovered for 20 minutes. Remove from heat and let steep, covered, for 2 hours. Pour through a strainer and discard cinnamon sticks and cloves. Set syrup aside.

Spray an 8 x 10 1/2" baking dish with non-stick spray and then layer ingredients in the following order: a third of the toasted bread, a third of the raisins, a third of the cheese, and 1 1/2 cups syrup, poured evenly over the cheese. Wait 15 minutes, and then layer another third of the bread, raisins, cheese, and 1 1/2 cups syrup evenly over cheese. Let that soak for another 15 minutes, and again top with the remaining bread, raisins, cheese, and syrup. Before baking, let the dish set for another 15 minutes.

FINLAY DONOVAN CROSSES THE LINE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Stacey's social media page becomes a hub for Finlay's gossiping neighbors. Do you think public figures (including authors) deserve privacy? Do you feel Stacey's posts violated Finlay's?
2. Nick's offer to watch the children so Finlay could go to Maryland to help Vero marks a big step forward in Finlay and Nick's relationship. How do you feel about the direction of their relationship and the secret Zach accidentally revealed?
3. How did you feel about Bennett at the beginning of the story versus the end? Why do you think he came to Finlay's aid when she was confronted by Officer Dates?
4. In what ways do Norma and Gloria's relationship and antics mirror those of Finlay and Vero? When you picture Vero and Finlay five, ten, and twenty years in the future, what do you imagine?
5. Vero's family has different feelings about law enforcement than Finlay does. Why do you think that is? In what ways have your own cultural and life experiences shaped your attitudes toward law enforcement and our legal system?
6. Do you feel Vero responded appropriately to each of her sorority sisters' apologies at the end of the book? Was she right to forgive them? How would you have responded if you had been in Vero's shoes?
7. In the book, Vero says, "Why is it always up to the victim to be the bigger person?" Do you feel this is an accurate statement? Can you think of a time in your own life when you were hurt and you were expected to be the bigger person?
8. Javi's relationship with his mother is strained. Did your attitude toward Regina shift from the beginning to the end of the story? What, if anything, changed your feelings about her?
9. Jealousy is one theme explored in the book. Which characters were forced to confront their jealousy? How did you feel about the ways those characters dealt with their feelings?
10. The shower curtain became a metaphor through the story. What do you think it represents? Have you ever jumped to a conclusion only to discover you were wrong? Can you think of a few instances in the book when Finlay or Vero let their imaginations get the best of them?
11. Found family is a theme in this installment of the series more so than the rest. What examples of found families can you identify in this story? Do you have a found family in your own life?
12. At the end of the story, Finlay confronts Stacey about her social media posts. Do you think Finlay made the right decision to speak up? Do you agree with the way she handled the situation? How do you think her choice might impact her in the next installment of the series?

FIVE TIPS FOR THROWING THE PERFECT POKER NIGHT

Adapted from Entertainment For Hire

Planning a poker night is a great way to bring friends together. Just be sure you're not doing any underground fundraising for your sorority on the side! Below, you'll find a few tips for throwing a fun, casual poker night with your book club.

1. **Curate the vibe:** The perfect poker night isn't just about the card game – it's also about room setup, the snacks, and the playlist.

Most importantly, you'll need a comfortable table, where everyone can reach the cards and chips. A poker table is ideal, but a dining table or portable table with a green tablecloth will work just fine. Dim the lighting or use candles for a sophisticated vibe – and to eliminate glare on the cards. Then, queue up the perfect poker night playlist. Think sophisticated background music: jazz or lo-fi beats.

Plan your menu around easy-to-eat finger food and simple drinks that won't interfere with the card game: chips and dip, veggies and hummus, bowls of chips, nuts, or popcorn, or mini sliders or pizza. For drinks, consider beer, wine, and a signature cocktail. Be sure to provide plenty of non-alcoholic options so that players can keep a clear head for the game!

2. **Pick the right poker style:** Texas Hold 'Em is a simple and fast-moving poker style for groups of 4-10 players, making it ideal for most poker nights. If your group is more advanced, you might want to try Omaha, Seven-Card Stud, or a fun novelty round.
3. **Agree on a buy-in:** Based on the skill levels of your attendees, decide in advance whether your poker night will be casual or competitive. Then, determine whether there will be a buy-in, or if you'd rather play for chips with no money involved. If you do decide to go with a buy-in, keep it small – \$10 to \$20 range – and agree on the prize splits in advance.
4. **Make the rules clear:** One of the biggest obstacles to a perfect poker night is confusion around the rules. Before any cards are dealt, make sure everyone agrees on the points like blind structure and chip values, buy-in and re-buy options, table etiquette, and game end time or win condition. It may be helpful to print or write down the rules on a sheet of paper for easy reference throughout the night.
5. **Stick to the plan:** Set a clear end time before the evening begins. A typical poker night will run anywhere from 3-4 hours. And then, before any players leave – schedule your next event!

“It’s a widely known fact that most moms are ready to kill someone by eight-thirty AM on any given Monday.”

*—from **Finlay Donovan Is Killing It***



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THE HIT-MOM BOOK CLUB KIT



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Welcome to The Hit-Mom Book Club! In this kit,
you'll find everything you need for your book club's discussion of

FINLAY DONOVAN IS KILLING IT

by **ELLE COSIMANO:**

- Elle's Killer Lasagna Recipe
- Killing It: A Playlist
- Discussion Questions

So grab your blonde wig, scarf, dark glasses, Panera pastry, and a group of fellow readers...and start killing it!

And whether you're gathering in person or on Zoom, we'd love to see photos of your Hit-Mom Book Club meeting. Please share photos on social media using #FinlayDonovanIsKillingIt and #HitMomBookClub, and don't forget to tag us!

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MINOTAUR BOOKS

ELLE'S KILLER LASAGNA RECIPE

“Clearly amateur-killer-in-sweaty-yoga-pants was not my best look.”

—from *Finlay Donovan Is Killing It*

WHO ISN'T ROCKING THE YOGA PANTS THESE DAYS!?! AND MAKING THEIR FAVORITE COMFORT FOOD? LET'S GET COOKIN'!

SERVES: Your Entire Book Club
(or 12 servings)

PREP TIME: 40 minutes

COOKING TIME: 1 hr

PREHEAT OVEN: 375 degrees

STEP 1: Coat a 9.5 x13 DEEP casserole dish with non-stick cooking spray. This lasagna is HUGE! It will overflow a standard baking dish and spatter the bottom of your oven. Never leave evidence at the scene of the crime!

STEP 2: Pre-cook and drain a box of lasagna noodles. (If you're in a hurry, you can substitute No-Boil lasagna noodles for this recipe. Throw away the box. I won't tell. Your secret is safe with me.)

STEP 3: Prepare all three fillings. The key to solving a murder boils down to three essential ingredients: means, motive, and opportunity. Or in the case of a killer lasagna: meat, sauce, and cheesy goodness.

THE MEAT OF IT

1 ½ lbs ground meat (I prefer a mix of beef and pork, but you do you)

1 clove garlic, minced

½ large onion, chopped

2 tsp fennel seed

Dash of salt & pepper

Sauté meat, garlic, onion in olive oil until browned. Drain excess fat, season, and set aside.

GETTING SAUCED

58 oz tomato sauce

12 oz can diced tomatoes

½ large onion, chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

2-3 tbsp milk

1 ½ tbsp sugar

Italian seasoning, salt, and pepper to taste

Sauté onion and garlic in olive oil until softened. Add tomato and simmer for ~5 minutes. Add tomato sauce and remaining ingredients. Simmer for an additional 15-30 minutes.

A LITTLE CHEESY

24 oz of ricotta cheese

3 eggs, beaten into submission

¾ cup shredded parmesan

4 ½ cup shredded mozzarella (2 of these will be reserved, so don't get carried away!)

Dash of ground nutmeg

Dash of parsley

Dash of salt and pepper

Set aside two cups of mozzarella. Mix the remaining ingredients in a large bowl. Pat yourself on the back and have a glass of wine

STEP 4: Assemble the lasagna.

Spread a thin layer of sauce on the bottom of the pan (1 ½ - 2 cups to keep the noodles from sticking).

Arrange a single layer of 4 noodles to cover the sauce. Spread 1/3 of the ricotta mixture over the noodles. Sprinkle half of the meat mixture over that. Sprinkle one cup of the

reserved mozzarella over the meat. Spread a thin layer of sauce (1 ½ - 2 cups). Layer 4 more noodles, 1/3 of the ricotta mixture, and 1 ½ cups of sauce. Layer 4 more noodles, the remaining ricotta mixture, the remaining meat mixture, and 1 ½ - 2 cups sauce. Layer 4 more noodles, 2 cups of sauce, and sprinkle one cup of mozzarella over the top.

You'll see my sauce measurements are rough. If you like a wetter lasagna, go saucier. If you prefer it a little firmer, maybe go lighter on the sauce. Yeah, I went there. Don't judge. If you're using a 4-inch baker, use a sheet of aluminum foil under your pan to collect any sauce that bubbles over.

STEP 5: Cover in foil. Bake until bubbling, approximately one hour. Remove foil and continue baking for additional 5 minutes until the cheese on top is melted.

PRO TIP: Prepare ahead, refrigerate, and pop back in a 350 degree oven about an hour before dinner until heated through. It will be easier to slice and serve after it's had time to set.

KILLING IT: A PLAYLIST

“This was my life. A three thousand dollar contract for months of work, no sleep, and ten minutes in the bathroom alone.”

—from *Finlay Donovan Is Killing It*

- **Train in Vain (Stand by Me) - The Clash**
- **Celebrity Skin - Hole**
- **Nighttming - Coconut Records**
- **I Write Sins Not Tragedies - Panic! At The Disco**
- **I'm Not Okay (I Promise) - My Chemical Romance**
- **It Ends Tonight - The All-American Rejects**
- **Choke - I DONT KNOW HOW BUT THEY FOUND ME**
- **Do It All The Time - I DONT KNOW HOW BUT THEY FOUND ME**
- **Absinthe - I DONT KNOW HOW BUT THEY FOUND ME**
- **Misery Business - Paramore**
- **Hard Times - Paramore**
- **I'll Sleep When I'm Dead - Set It Off**
- **Money Problems - Max Frost**
- **No Promises - Shawn Mendes**
- **Killer - The Ready Set**
- **Partners in Crime (feat. Ash Costello) - Set It Off, Ash Costello**
- **Kill Everyone - Hollywood Undead**
- **I Don't Wanna Die - Hollywood Undead**
- **Somebody That I Used To Know - Mayday Parade, Vic Fuentes**
- **Death of Me - PVRIS**
- **Blonde - Waterparks**
- **I See You - MISSIO**
- **We Don't Have To Dance - Andy Black**
- **If It Means a Lot to You - A Day To Remember**
- **Dream Boy - Waterparks**
- **Unsteady - X Ambassadors**
- **Killer In The Mirror - Set It Off**
- **Rocketeer - Far East Movement, Ryan Tedder, Ruff Loaderz**
- **Pressure - Muse**
- **Midnight - Coldplay**
- **Serious (with Matthew Koma) - Midnight Kids, Matthew Koma**
- **Icky Thump - The White Stripes**
- **Feeling Good - Muse**
- **Circles - Post Malone**
- **Another Way Out - Hollywood Undead**
- **Hit and Run - LOLO**
- **Kill the Lights - Set It Off**
- **Happy Ending Story - Hole**



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TO YOUR LIFE, TAKE A BREAK,
AND LISTEN TO SOME KILLER MUSIC
CURATED JUST FOR YOU.**



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FINLAY DONOVAN IS KILLING IT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- *Finlay Donovan Is Killing It* takes a slightly different tone than many crime and thriller novels. How does Finlay's character contribute to this tone? Did you appreciate this twist on the genre?
- Were you surprised that Finlay is so intrigued by the note that she actually decides to scope out Harris Mickler? Why or why not?
- The lines between fiction and life are slightly blurred in this novel: Finlay is a character, but she is also a writer herself, and later in the story she uses the crimes she's been involved in as inspiration for her new book. What does this book-within-a-book setup add to *Finlay Donovan Is Killing It*?
- As early as chapter 5, the Russian mafia is mentioned. When did you put the pieces together that Finlay's accidental hit/well-planned murder by others was connected to organized crime? How does their involvement affect the story?
- Vero and Finlay's relationship is central to the story—how does it change throughout the novel?
- How does Finlay's relationship to her motherhood (and especially single-motherhood) play out throughout the novel?
- Finlay catches the attention of two very different potential romantic partners: Detective Nick Anthony and bartender/law student Julian Baker. In what ways are these men different or similar to each other? What unique heroic traits, character flaws, or potential challenges does each man present? Do you agree with the romantic decisions Finlay made through the course of the book?
- In chapter 32, Julian recites a quote inspired by the principles of Hanlon's razor: "Let us not attribute to malice and cruelty what may be referred to less criminal motives." He tells Finlay that he "makes it a point never to assume the worst about people." How does this idea reflect what we know of his character? How does Finlay's response reveal more about hers?
- Consider the theme of women supporting women. What examples of this did you see in the story? Did any of these instances surprise you? Why?

- During several scenes, Finlay wears a wig-scarf and sunglasses to hide her identity, or while she's masquerading as her ex's fiancée, Theresa. She wears the same wig-scarf and glasses in her author photo, which appears in the books she's written. What do you think the wig-scarf represents to Finn, and how does her attitude toward it change throughout the book?
- Finlay's view of her career is often self-deprecating, reflecting the various attitudes of her agent, her family, the market, and her ex toward her work. How do these attitudes change after Finn is awarded a lucrative book deal? How did Finlay's attitude change toward herself? What role do you think money plays in how society values women's contributions at home and in the workplace?
- Finlay toes the line between right and wrong throughout the book, yet she somehow manages to stay on the right side of it. Though she's tempted by the money—and curious about the potential victims—she never actually commits any of the murders herself. How would your feelings about Finlay have changed if she had killed Harris Mickler or Andrei Borovkov? Does her identity as a woman and a mother influence your answer?
- Were you surprised by the note Finlay received from Patricia Mickler at the end of the book? Do you have any predictions about who the guilty party might be?





"A funny and smart,
twisty and
surprising series."

—MEGAN
MIRANDA

ELLE COSIMANO

FINLAY *a mystery*

DONOVAN

KNOCKS

'EM DEAD

THE HIT-MOM BOOK CLUB KIT



MINOTAUR BOOKS


Welcome back to The Hit-Mom Book Club! In this kit,
you'll find everything you need for your book club's discussion of
FINLAY DONOVAN KNOCKS 'EM DEAD


by **ELLE COSIMANO:**


- **Knocks 'Em Dead: A Playlist**
- **Elle's Mom's Pot Roast Recipe**
- **The Multitasking-Mom's Essential Garage Tool Kit**
- **Discussion Questions**

Whether you're meeting in person, on Zoom, or via your somewhat-shady online women's forum—dust off those wig-scarves and sunglasses, grab a Panera pastry and a glass of wine . . . and start knocking 'em dead! We love to see your Finlay Donovan-inspired photos! Please tag us on social media and use #FinlayDonovanKnocksEmDead and #HitMomBookClub.


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MINOTAUR BOOKS

KNOCKS 'EM DEAD: A PLAYLIST

“This was my life. A three-thousand-dollar contract for months of work, no sleep, and ten minutes in the bathroom alone.”

—from *Finlay Donovan Is Killing It*

1. Killin It - Porsha, Baby C
2. Is Everybody Going Crazy? - Nothing But Thieves
3. Awful - Hole
4. The Adults Are Talking - The Strokes
5. Bad Decisions - The Strokes
6. Ex's and Oh's - Elle King
7. Lost on You - LP
8. Criminal - Fiona Apple
9. Shut Up and Let Me Go - The Ting Tings
10. Seize the Power - YONAKA
11. H B I C - Gin Wigmore
12. Simmer - Hayley Williams
13. Raise Hell - Dorothy
14. Turpentine - Hole
15. Love's Not Enough - The Mysterines
16. She's Kerosene - The Interrupters
17. The Rush - JJ Wilde
18. Coming Up Short - BLOXX
19. You and I - PVRIS
20. Sorry Not Sorry - Demi Lovato
21. Confident - Demi Lovato
22. Into You - Ariana Grande
23. Work from Home (feat. Ty Dolla \$ign) - Fifth Harmony, Ty Dolla \$ign
24. Bad Guy - Billie Eilish
25. Me Too - Meghan Trainor
26. FRIENDS - Marshmello, Anne-Marie
27. New Rules - Dua Lipa
28. Don't Call Me Up - Mabel
29. Look What You Made Me Do - Taylor Swift
30. One Woman Army - Porcelain Black
31. According To You - Orianthi
32. WITHOUT YOU - The Kid LAROI
33. Best Friend (feat. Doja Cat) - Saweetie, Doja Cat
34. my ex's best friend (with blackbear) - Machine Gun Kelly, blackbear
35. Therefore I Am - Billie Eilish

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ELLE'S MOM'S POT ROAST RECIPE

Oil sizzled on the stove, the kitchen filling with the savory smells of garlic and onion powder as Mom seared the roast. She fell into a steady rhythm of peeling and chopping.

“Have a seat,” my mother said, cracking open a bottle of red wine. Only a third of a cup went into her recipe. The rest she poured into two glasses . . .

*—from **Finlay Donovan Knocks 'Em Dead***

There are few things in life as comforting to me as the savory, rich scents of my mother's kitchen when she's cooking. Her pot roast recipe is a family favorite, and I love the way the aroma lingers in the house throughout the day as it wafts from the oven or crockpot, over a low and slow flame. This recipe is simple, delicious, and can be adapted to work around the most hectic of mom-schedules.

INGREDIENTS:

3 lbs (ish) chuck roast
3-4 carrots, chunked
3-4 stalks celery, chunked
8 oz button mushrooms (fresh or canned)
1 lb baby potatoes
1 1/2 cups water
1/2 cup red wine
1 packet onion soup mix
3 oz liquid aminos or soy sauce
1/4 tsp dried thyme
1/2 tsp dried parsley
Garlic powder
Onion powder
Pepper
1 tbsp oil

STEP 1: SEARING AND SEASONING

Heat the oil in a large skillet. Season the chuck roast on both sides with pepper, garlic powder, and onion powder. Then sear on all sides until browned. (This is usually when your family members follow their noses into the kitchen and ask, “what's cookin'?”)

Remove the meat from the pan and set aside. Keep the heat on and pour the water and wine into the hot pan. (At this point, the wine bottle is open, and it's silly to let it go to waste. Help yourself to a generous portion before proceeding.)

Using a whisk or spoon, deglaze the golden-brown bits from the pan and stir them into the liquid as it boils. Add the onion soup mix, aminos, soy sauce, and thyme and stir until blended. Remove from heat.

STEP 2: SET IT AND FORGET IT

Put the seared roast into your slow cooker. Layer the chunked veggies, mushrooms, and potatoes on the meat. Then pour the gravy over top and close the lid.

Set your slow cooker on high for five hours. Find yourself a good book, put your feet up, and finish off that bottle of wine while you wait. You've earned it.

(Disclaimer: after three hours, your house will begin to smell intoxicatingly good. Your neighbors might wander into your yard, sniffing around. Strange men might ring your doorbell proposing marriage. Random children and stray dogs might start begging at your front door. I can't be held responsible for their actions.)

Enjoy with crusty French bread and butter and plenty more wine! For thicker gravy, stir in a slurry of 1 tbsp of flour mixed with equal parts water while the cooker is still boiling (just before serving). The gravy will thicken slightly upon cooling.



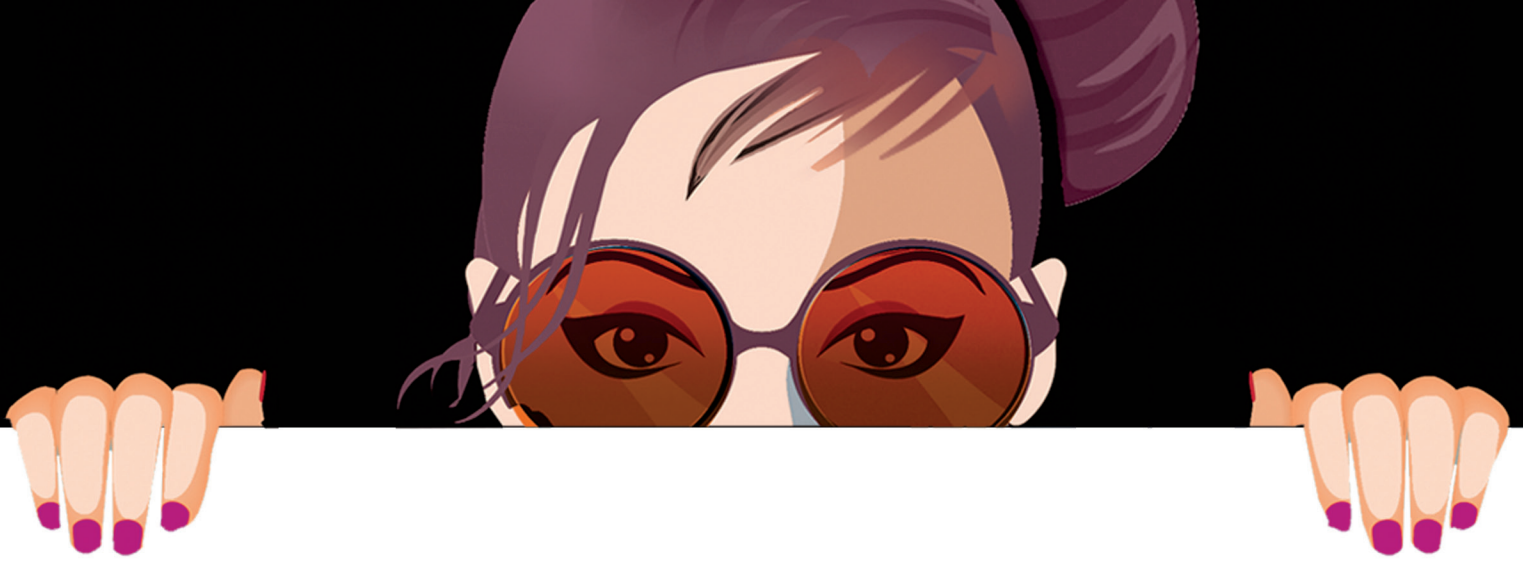
The Multitasking-Mom's **ESSENTIAL GARAGE TOOL KIT**

I thought about that stupid pink trowel in my garage—the only tool Steven had bothered to leave on the pegboard above the workbench when he'd moved out. I thought about all those empty pegs and dust-filled drawers. About the lengths Vero and I had gone to just to find a damn shovel to bury a body . . .

*—from **Finlay Donovan Knocks 'Em Dead***

THE DEFINITIVE SHOPPING LIST FOR ANY MULTITASKING MOM WHO FINDS HERSELF WITH AN EMPTY GARAGE WORKBENCH.

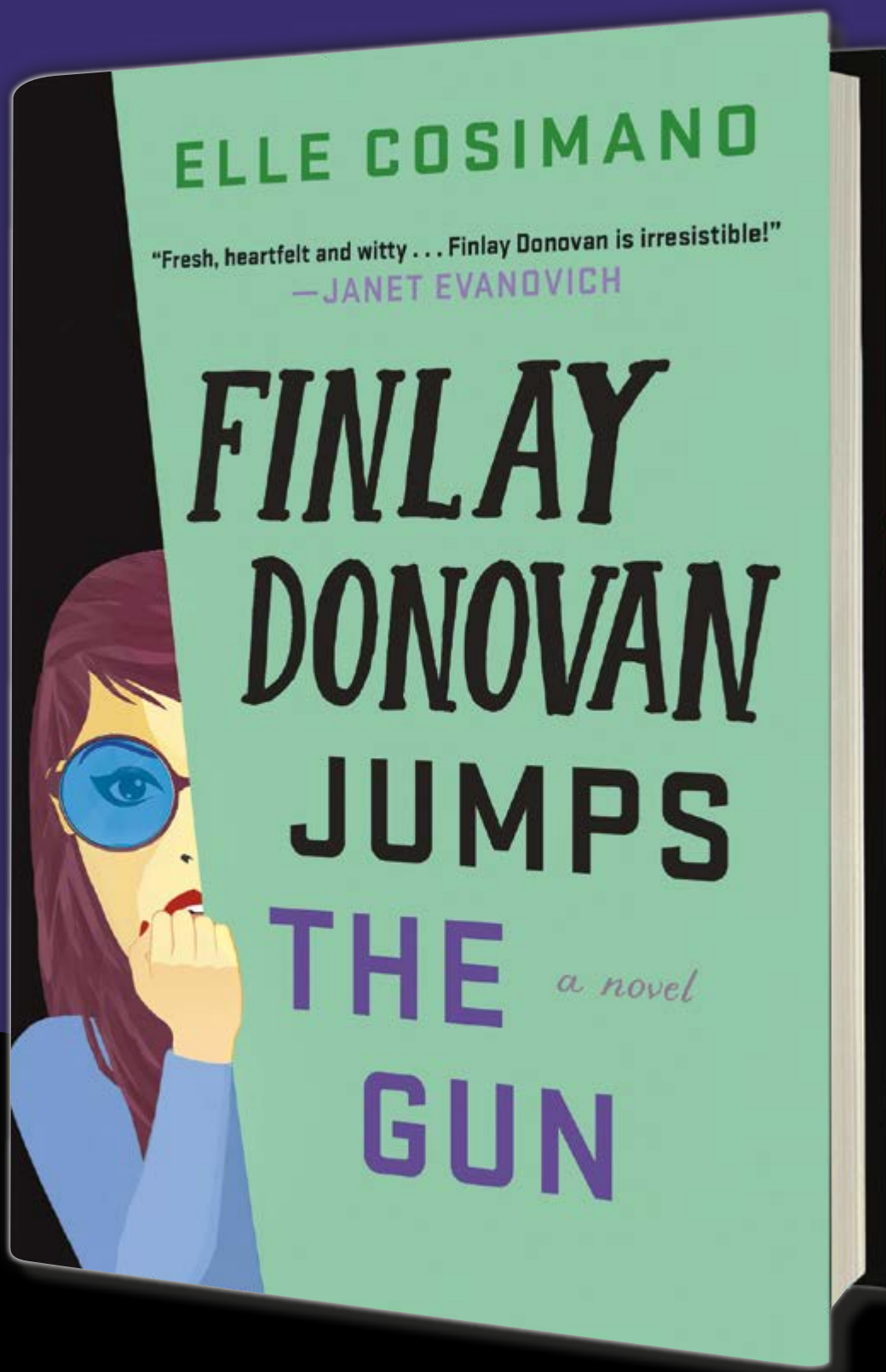
- A sturdy shovel:** you never know when you'll need to transplant a rhododendron. Or possibly a body.
- Duct tape:** there is nothing that can't be fixed with a simple roll of duct tape. Including big mouths. (Splurge for the double roll and thank me later.)
- Utility knife:** ideal for cutting duct tape. And slashing tires. But you didn't hear that from Vero or Finlay.
- A set of screwdrivers:** aside from the obvious, the right screwdriver also makes an outstanding defensive weapon.
- A pair of pliers:** great for tightening nuts. Or inflicting slow torture on the toenails of your enemies. Why limit yourself?
- A level:** chest freezers must be level in order to properly function. And we all know what happens to the contents of a freezer when it stops working. (See also: sturdy shovel)



- A tape measure:** how else will you know when you've reached a depth of six feet. Size matters.
- A flashlight:** ideal for locating lost items in the dark, narrow space behind the dryer. Or to avoid tripping on headstones in the dark.
- A hammer:** sometimes, you just need to break something. And when you need a blunt object to inflict maximum damage, there really is no substitute.
- Jumper cables:** Ladies, you do not need a man to start your dead battery for you. Unless he is a hot bartender who could double as an underwear model. In that case, definitely let him jump you.
- Gardening gloves:** will protect your fingers from calluses and keep your hands baby soft. And keep your prints off of surfaces. (See also: sturdy shovel.)
- Hacksaw:** you never know when you might need to trim a low branch from your Bradford Pear. Or trim something to fit in the chest freezer in your garage.
- Assorted batteries:** one can never be too prepared. (See also: flashlight and power drill.)
- A power drill:** Not just the ones you find in the garage. (See also: batteries.)
- Fire extinguisher:** for those nights when the meatloaf you forgot in the oven just won't extinguish itself.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The book opens with the death of the Donovan family's pet fish. How does this first, seemingly small death represent—or juxtapose—the other deaths in *Finlay Donovan Knocks 'Em Dead*?
2. Unlike in the first novel of this series, the hit ordered on Steven by FedUp was posted to the Internet. With the reveal of who wanted Steven dead in mind, why do you think it's significant that this particular murder was requested online?
3. Vero and Finlay have a closer relationship than many moms and their nannies; were you surprised to learn, after all they've been through together, how much Vero is still keeping from Finlay? Why do you think she went to so much trouble to keep her secret?
4. In Chapter 6, Vero asks Finlay what she originally saw in Steven, and she replies, "He was good at making me feel like I needed him." What was your opinion of Steven in this book—and did it shift from the start to the end? Do you think Finlay's opinion had changed?
5. In what ways are the theme of disguises and mistaken identities used in the novel? How do you think they affect the reveals of the plot?
6. Female friendships and loyalty are a key theme in the book, with romantic relationships often taking second place. In what ways do you think the best-friend pairings of Finlay/Vero and Theresa/Aimee compare to, or differ from, each other?
7. Circumstances and anecdotes from Finlay's own life end up making their way into her novel. Was this story-within-a-story technique effective for you? In what ways are Finlay's predicaments represented in her own fictional story?
8. Mothers—in both life and this novel—frequently use distraction as a parenting device. We see several instances where Finn and Vero rely on distractions to evade trouble or accomplish a difficult task. Do you think they would have used this technique if they weren't used to dealing with small children? How else might their status as caretakers actually benefit them in the world of crime?
9. The themes of motherly love and protectiveness are ever present in this series: Finlay sums it up in Chapter 46: "A mother's love. The irrepressible instinct to protect her child." How are Finlay's protective instincts and her mother's different? In what ways do they align? How did the final reveal change your understanding of that phrase—or did it?
10. By the end, it seems that Finlay has chosen Nick over Julian. Do you agree with this choice?
11. There are several cliffhangers at the end—what do you think is next for Finlay and Vero?



THE HIT-MOM BOOK CLUB KIT



MINOTAUR BOOKS

Welcome back to The Hit-Mom Book Club! In this kit, you'll find everything you need for your book club's discussion of

FINLAY DONOVAN JUMPS THE GUN

by ELLE COSIMANO:

- Jumps the Gun: A Playlist
- Finlay and Vero's Top 10 Suggestions for Spicing Up Your Romance Novel
- Nick's So-Hot Chili and His Very Impressive Biscuits Recipe
- Discussion Questions

Whether you're meeting in person, on Zoom, or via your somewhat-shady online women's forum, or in the police academy dorms—dust off those wigs, scarves, and sunglasses, grab a Panera pastry and a glass of wine, and enjoy your discussion of Finlay and Vero's latest hijinks.

We love to see your Finlay Donovan-inspired photos! Please tag us on social media and use #FinlayDonovanJumpsTheGun and #HitMomBookClub.

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Minotaur Books



MINOTAUR BOOKS

JUMPS THE GUN: A PLAYLIST

1. Not Dead Yet - DEVORA
2. Trouble - The New Respects
3. What's Coming To Me - Dorothy
4. Anarchy - Lilith Czar
5. Heroes - Dead Sara
6. favorite crime - Olivia Rodrigo
7. Blinding Lights - The Weeknd
8. Bad Habits - Ed Sheeran
9. Four Letter Words - K.Fløy
10. You Should Probably Leave - Chris Stapleton
11. Vertigo - Alice Merton
12. STAY (with Justin Bieber) - The Kid LAROI, Justin Bieber
13. I'm Sorry - Bexley
14. Bad Decisions - RedHook
15. AHHHH! - Teen Jesus and the Jean Teasers
16. girls (feat. phem) - Royal & the Serpent, phem
17. Good Girls - CHVRCHES
18. Save Me - Eliza & The Delusionals
19. Backbeat - Haywood
20. deathwish (feat. nothing,nowhere.) - Stand Atlantic, nothing,nowhere.
21. Difficult - Amy Allen
22. Bomb Through the Breeze - Hannah Wicklund
23. death wish - LØLØ
24. Dead Weight - PVRIS



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NICK'S SO HOT CHILI AND HIS VERY IMPRESSIVE BISCUITS

"Text me when you get home," Nick said, walking backward toward the training center, grinning at me like a fool.

"How about chili and biscuits at my place tomorrow night?"

"It's a date." I couldn't help stealing a preview of his biscuits as he opened the door and disappeared into the building.

This year's recipe comes from the winner of the Finlay Donovan Chili Cook-Off! There were some great recipes, but this one from the Brew City Book Club in Milwaukee grabbed me for so many reasons. The recipe was written in perfect Finlay style! The commentary cracked me up! This team really did their homework. They also included both a chili and a biscuit recipe, and both were delicious and complemented each other well. And finally, I loved how their book club all worked together to cook and enjoy the meal! The video they submitted (find it on @mollyfranbooks's IG!) perfectly captured the joy that comes with being part of a vibrant and creative book club. Their closing scene around the dinner table stole my heart. I hope you and yours have as much fun making these recipes as they-and I-did. -Elle

NICK'S SO HOT CHILI RECIPE

By the Brew City Book Club, Milwaukee, WI

Molly Brooks, Mikhaila Carbajal, Sarah Wilson, Kelly Gathman, Caroline Kuether, Morgan Farkas, Meg Hemmelgarn, Katie Thiele, Jeni McKean, Megan Stephenson, Alaina Dearing, MaryEllen Kordik, Emily Rafferty, Paige Levenhagen, Taylor Walek, Aly Castellanos, Becky Van Deraa
Recipe inspired by The Modern Proper

INGREDIENTS:

1 lb of beef (because we beef with crime)
1 lb of pork
Onion - diced
Green pepper - diced
Red pepper - diced
4 cloves garlic - minced
Enchilada sauce can (20 oz)
Can of diced tomatoes (28 oz)
Black beans, kidney beans, and pinto beans - a trifecta for the 3rd book! (1 can each)
Dash of cayenne pepper to add some spice like a stakeout make out sesh
1/4 cup chili powder
2 tbsp cumin
2 bay leaves
Salt + pepper = the perfect pair
1 tbsp sugar (keep it sweet while spicy)

STEPS:

Heat stock pot to medium.
Brown onion, peppers, and garlic until fragrant.
Add both meats and brown.
Add canned beans (rinsed), enchilada sauce, and canned tomatoes.

Add remaining seasonings.

Stir to combine.

Simmer slow and low like a slow burn romance.

If you can wait, 8 hours is optimal!

Top with hot sauce and jalapenos to keep things sizzling. Add sour cream and cheese! Throw in some cilantro, avocado, (or maybe even some greens from your freezer!)

... AND HIS VERY IMPRESSIVE BISCUITS RECIPE

By the Brew City Book Club, Milwaukee, WI

INGREDIENTS:

3 cups of flour
1 tbsp baking powder
1/2 tsp baking soda
1 tbsp sugar
1 tsp salt
1/2 cup COLD butter
1 cup sharp cheddar cheese (shredded)
1 clove garlic (minced)
1/2 tsp red pepper flakes
1 1/4 cup buttermilk

STEPS:

Preheat your oven to 450 degrees. In a large bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, sugar, salt, and baking soda.
Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in cheese, garlic, and pepper flakes. Add buttermilk. Stir until just moistened.
Form biscuits by using a heaping quarter cup. Set on a greased baking sheet two inches apart. Bake 12 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm with butter.

Finlay and Vero's Top 10 Suggestions for *SPICING UP YOUR ROMANCE NOVEL*

"Your heroine can't ride off into the sunset with her sidekick.

This is a romance novel, not Thelma and Louise."

"Thelma and Louise won an Academy Award."

"They held hands and drove off a cliff, Finlay."

1. Take your characters on a dinner date. Or better yet, let your hero cook. Nothing's sexier than a love interest who knows to make things sizzle in the kitchen! (Just remember to save plenty of room for dessert. 🍩)
2. How about a little role play? Costumes can be fun, especially in the bedroom. The perfect wig, a badge, or even a trench coat lends an air of intrigue to any romantic chapter.
3. Consider a hot make-out session in the backseat of a car. Or maybe the front seat of a car. (But definitely not in the trunk of a car if there happens to be someone else in it.)
4. Arm your heroine with a sturdy set of handcuffs or some duct tape. And possibly a safe word. (See also: role play.)
5. Will they? Won't they? Nothing increases romantic tension like forced proximity in close quarters. Lock your characters in a maintenance closet, an interrogation room, or even a police car. Then stand back as the windows fog and watch the sparks fly!
6. Revealing your hero's innermost secrets can be freeing. Consider a titillating game of Twenty Questions or Never Have I Ever between your characters. (ProTip: if your character is prone to making questionable choices, maybe she shouldn't tell him everything.)
7. Introduce an irresistible trope: Only one bed? Fake dating? Star-crossed love? Why limit yourself? Add all three!
8. Give your heroine more than one sexy love interest to choose from. Empower her to explore and discover what she wants. Then shake things up, raise the stakes, and let her change her mind.
9. Get your readers' hearts racing with a high-speed chase, a well-timed explosion, or an edge-of-your-seat B&E. Remember: after dinner-cocktails are hot, but Molotov cocktails are hotter!
10. Add some steamy dialog to your novel. "Can I turn up the heat?" and "How spicy would you like it?" are smoking hot questions in any situation! Consent conversations can (and should) be a turn-on. Have your characters check in with each other before adding spice to a scene.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Finlay Donovan Jumps the Gun* opens with the heroine, Finlay, in a standoff—but not in the way you'd expect. How does the author parallel motherhood with negotiations, and even crime-solving? Were you surprised by Mo's eventual role in the story?
2. Throughout most of this novel, we stay in one setting: the Citizen's Police Academy. Why do you think the author chose this as her backdrop, rather than the more domestic settings of previous books? How did this change of scenery contribute to or change your understanding of Finlay?
3. Finlay's writer's block seems to be worse than ever in this novel. Why do you think she's so reluctant to give her fictional counterpart a happy ending? What do you think the future holds for Finlay and Nick?
4. Once again, we discover in dramatic fashion that Vero has been keeping secrets from Finlay. Why do you think Finlay continues to trust her nanny/accountant? And why do you think Vero keeps holding back?
5. Trust—and the lack thereof—play a large role in the story overall. Discuss Nick's relationship with Joey and Charlie, and Joey's with Cam, even Finlay and Nick's. When do you think our characters take loyalty too far?
6. Mrs. Haggerty, a minor but pivotal supporting character throughout the series, gets her moment to shine in *Finlay Donovan Jumps the Gun*. Why do you think the author gave Mrs. Haggerty this act of heroism?
7. The series' most villainous villain, Feliks Zhirov, remains off-page for the majority of the book, sending threats through underlings. Though we know he is imprisoned, what do these delegation techniques tell us about his character? What about the characters of those he sends messages through—Cam and Ekatarina Rybakov?
8. Fires and heat, both literal and metaphorical, pop up frequently in this story. Why do you think the author has chosen to use flames both in inciting incidents and at the climax of the story?
9. In *Finlay Donovan Jumps the Gun*, Finlay and Vero finally discover the identity of EasyClean, a paid hit man. Were you surprised by this reveal? What red herrings in particular threw you off the scent?
10. The novel leaves Finlay and Vero driving off into the sunrise on a rescue mission. Earlier, the pair (or at least the fictional versions of them in Finlay's novel) are compared to the title characters in *Thelma and Louise*. Do you see any similarities between our characters and that beloved duo? Where do you think their next mission will take them?

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
ELLE COSIMANO

FINLAY

“Finlay Donovan
is irresistible!”

—JANET EVANOVICH

DONOVAN

**ROLLS
THE**

DICE



a novel

THE HIT-MOM BOOK CLUB KIT



MINOTAUR BOOKS

Welcome back to The Hit-Mom Book Club! In this kit, you'll find everything you need for your book club's game night-themed discussion of

FINLAY DONOVAN ROLLS THE DICE


by **ELLE COSIMANO:**

- Rolls the Dice: A Playlist
- Giada Toscano's Lemon Shortbread Cookies
- Finlay Donovan Bingo
- *Veronica Ruiz Breaks the Bank*: A Crossword Puzzle
- *Finlay Donovan Rolls the Dice*: A Crossword Puzzle
- *Finlay Donovan Rolls the Dice* Discussion Questions

Whether you're meeting in person, online, via your somewhat-shady online women's forum, or in a seedy Atlantic City hotel—dust off those wig-scarves and sunglasses, grab a Panera pastry and a glass of wine, and enjoy your discussion of Finlay and Vero's latest hijinks.

We love to see your Finlay Donovan-inspired photos! Please tag us on social media and use #FinlayDonovanRollsTheDice and #HitMomBookClub.

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Happy Reading,



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ROLLS THE DICE: A PLAYLIST

1. Trouble - Valerie Broussard
2. Unstoppable - R3HAB Remix by Sia, R3HAB
3. Play with Fire (feat. Yacht Money) - Sam Innesz, Yacht Money
4. Chapstick - COIN
5. Drunk (And I Don't Wanna Go Home) - Elle King, Miranda Lambert
6. Bitch Better Have My Money - R3HAB Remix - Rihanna, R3HAB
7. Kings & Queens - Ava Max
8. Crash My Car - COIN
9. Last Laugh - FLETCHER
10. Cross Your Mind - David Solomon
11. no body, no crime (feat. HAIM) - Taylor Swift, HAIM
12. Ain't No Rest for the Wicked - Cage the Elephant
13. Look at Her Now - Selena Gomez
14. Do I Wanna Know? - Arctic Monkeys
15. Highway to Hell - AC/DC
16. You Know I'm No Good - Amy Winehouse
17. Break My Heart - Dua Lipa
18. Cool - Dua Lipa
19. Bad Girl - Daya
20. The Man - Taylor Swift
21. Graveyard - Halsey
22. Head on Fire - Griff, Singrid
23. Fallin' (Adrenaline) - Why Don't We
24. Maybe You're the Problem - Ava Max
25. Making Love to the Dead - BEGINNERS
26. Aimed to Kill - Jade LeMac
27. Somethin' Bad (with Carrie Underwood) - Miranda Lambert, Carrie Underwood
28. Gunpowder & Lead - Miranda Lambert
29. Woman (feat. The Dap-Kings Horns) - Kesha, The Dap-Kings Horns
30. Heads Will Roll - Yeah Yeah Yeahs
31. bellyache - Billie Eilish
32. Valkyrie - Battle Tapes
33. Bad Reputation - Avril Lavigne
34. Hot One - Leyla Blue, Baby Tate, REI AMI
35. No Good - Kaleo
36. Getaway Car - Taylor Swift
37. Breakfast - Dove Cameron
38. bad guy - Billie Eilish
39. Wicked Ones - Dorothy
40. Angry Woman - Ashe
41. Stuck in the Middle With You - Stealers Wheel
42. Knife Under My Pillow - Maggie Lindemann
43. Burn - Ellie Goulding
44. Shine A Little Light - The Black Keys
45. Kill This Love - BLACKPINK
46. Roar - Katy Perry
47. You Only Live Once - The Strokes
48. Kill Of The Night - Gin Wigmore
49. I am not a woman, I'm a god - Halsey
50. Power - Little Mix
51. Power & Control - MARINA
52. The Good, the Bad, and the Dirty - Panic! At The Disco
53. She (For Liz) - Parachute
54. Mayday!!! Fiesta Fever - AWOLNATION, Alex Ebert
55. Fire Alarm - Castlecomer
56. How to Be a Heartbreaker - MARINA
57. plot line - emlyn
58. King - Lilith Czar
59. The Less I Know The Better - Tame Impala
60. Roll the Dice - Shaylen



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GIADA TOSCANO'S LEMON SHORTBREAD COOKIES

“Don’t mind my sister,” Enzo said. “Her dog is missing, and she bakes when she’s stressed. You’d think the damn dog was her kid, the way she fusses over him.” He held up his wrists and wagged his eyebrows at the fuzzy handcuffs around them. “Now, where were we?” He inclined his head toward the cookies. Vero stuffed one in his mouth. “Delicious,” he said as he began to chew. A spray of crumbs and powdered sugar dusted the carpet of dark hair on his chest. He jutted his chin toward his drink. I held the heavy glass to his lips as he slurped down a long sip.

COOKIE INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/8 cup cornstarch
- 1 1/2 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tsp finely grated lemon zest
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp lemon extract
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp citric acid
- 7/8 cup salted butter (softened)
- 1/2 cup confectioners’ sugar
- granulated sugar for dusting (optional)

GLAZE INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 cup confectioners’ sugar
- 2 tbsp limoncello liquor
- 1 1/2 tsp finely grated lemon zest
- 1/4 tsp citric acid

LEMON COOKIE INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Whisk the flour, cornstarch, zest, citric acid, and salt together in a medium bowl.
2. In a larger bowl, beat the butter and confectioners’ sugar at medium speed for 3-5 minutes until fluffy. Add half the flour mixture, the lemon juice, and the extracts, and beat to combine. Then add the remaining flour mixture and combine to form a dough.
3. Transfer the dough to a large piece of parchment paper and roll the dough into a log approximately 2 inches thick. (Optional: Sprinkle the parchment with granulated sugar and roll the formed log in the sugar, lightly dusting it. This will give the outer edges of the finished cookies a nice shine and a bit of added sweetness.) Wrap the log in the parchment paper and refrigerate for one hour.

4. Remove the dough from the fridge and cut into 1/2 inch-thick slices. Spread the slices on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper.
5. Pre-heat oven to 320°F.
6. Bake the cookies for 5 minutes, then raise the oven temperature to 350°F and continue baking for approximately 10 minutes until the cookies are lightly golden. Remove from the oven. Wait for the cookies to cool before glazing.

LEMON GLAZE INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Whisk limoncello, lemon juice, powdered sugar, citric acid, and zest until smooth.
2. Drizzle, brush, or spread over the cookies as desired.
3. Allow glaze to set for 15 minutes before serving. (Tip: for thicker glaze, add more confectioners’ sugar. For thinner glaze, add more lemon juice or limoncello.)

FINLAY DONOVAN BINGO

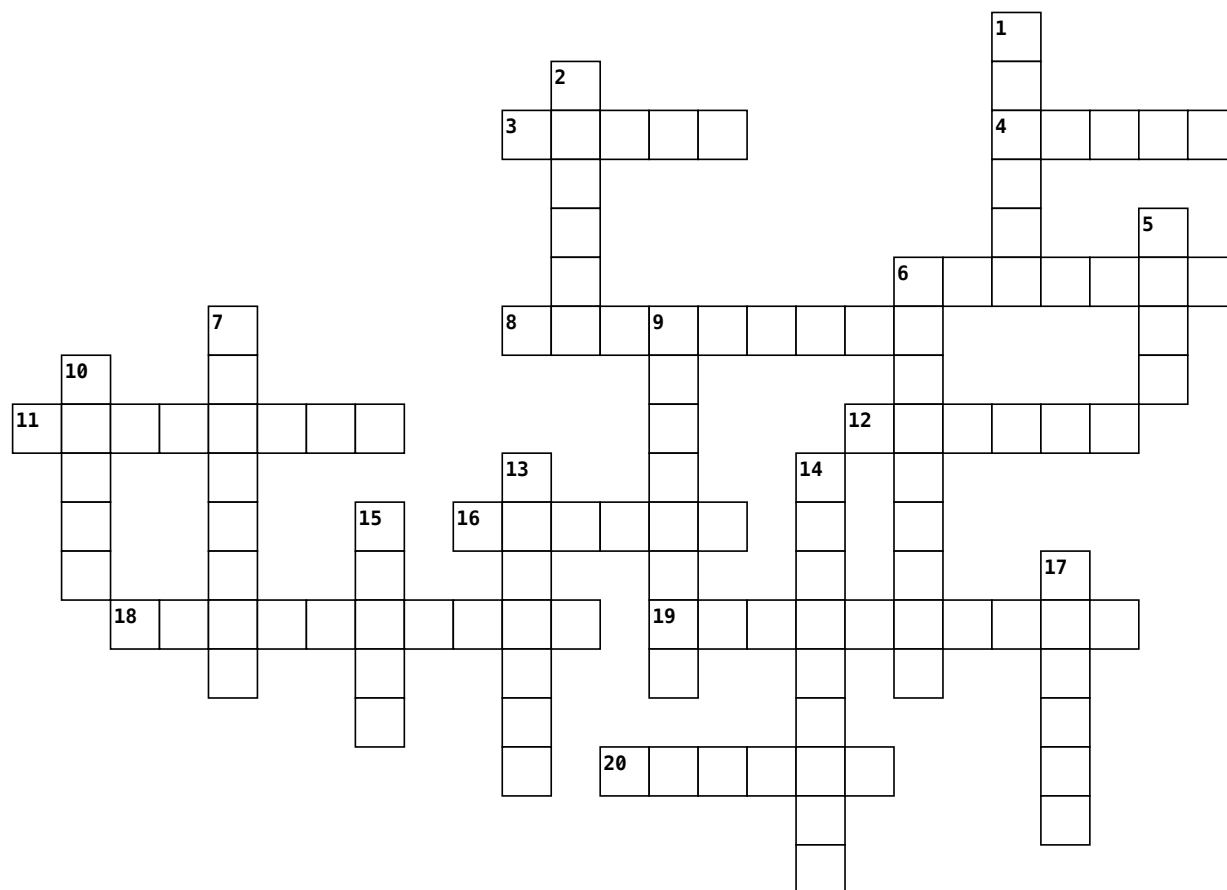
Pretend your book club is at The Royal Flush Casino Hotel by playing a round of Finlay Donovan Bingo!
Create your own bingo cards using the Finlay Donovan phrases in the sample bingo card below,
or input the words into a free online bingo card randomizer. Have fun and good luck!

VERO RUIZ	ATLANTIC CITY	STEVEN	KEVIN BACON	ZACH
PANERA BREAD	MRS. HAGGERTY	THE CITIZEN'S POLICE ACADEMY	S.H.	THE ROYAL FLUSH CASINO HOTEL
WIG- SCARF	EASY CLEAN	FINLAY DONOVAN (Free Spot!)	DELIA	GIADA TOSCANO
HOT COP	CHUBBIES	GEORGIA	STOLEN CAR	MARYLAND
FELIKS ZHIROV	JAVI	GIRLS TRIP	RUSSIAN MOB	WRITER'S BLOCK

VERONICA RUIZ BREAKS THE BANK: A CROSSWORD

If you've read *Veronica Ruiz Breaks the Bank*, the new novella in the Finlay Donovan series, you'll understand why we're featuring a custom crossword puzzle in this Hit-Mom Book Club Guide. If you haven't read VRBTB yet, what are you waiting for?! It's available wherever ebooks and audiobooks are sold.

"The man, presumably Philip, walked past them to his station, never once looking up from the folded section of newspaper in his hand. "Sorry," he mumbled down at his crossword puzzle, "I was stuck on number seventeen. Seven letters down, a platinum queen." "Beyoncé," Vero answered."



Across

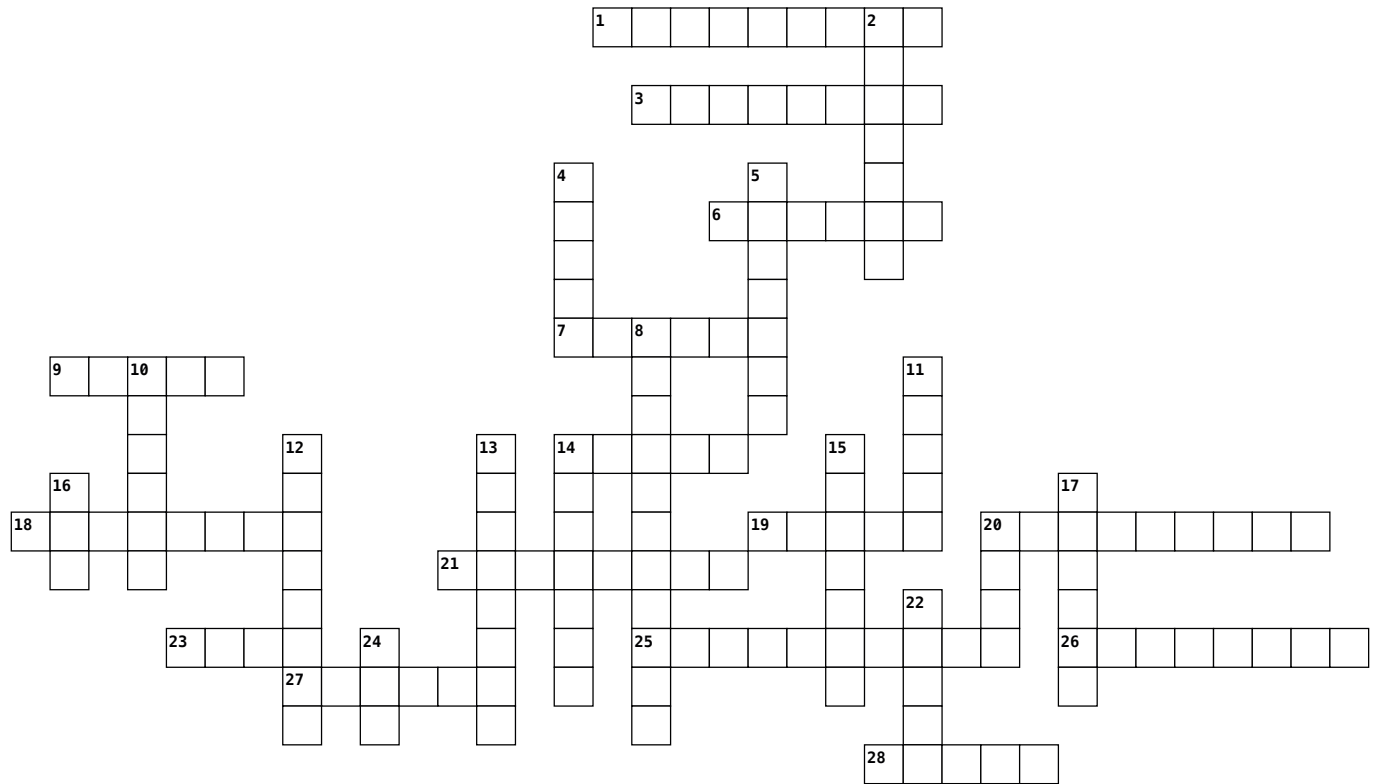
3. Terence's lunch trash
4. Where Javi sleeps
6. Vero and Javi have matching ones
8. Darren pretends to read it
11. Where the thief was caught
12. What Vero steals from Helen
16. Javi's ride
18. Wild Bird Store purchase
19. Vero's mom's cake
20. Vero's opportunity

Down

1. What Darren threw away
2. Vero broke into it
5. What Vero bought at a yard sale
6. Vero's sorority job
7. Vero's home state
9. Terence's job
10. Ramón's daunting task
13. What Vero's hiding from
14. Philip's favorite activity
15. What's hidden in Helen's car
17. Vero's promotion

FINLAY DONOVAN ROLLS THE DICE: A CROSSWORD

And because we had so much fun with the VRBTB crossword puzzle, here's one for
Finlay Donovan Rolls the Dice!



Across

1. Joey chews on this
3. Not Chubby's
6. Zach's blanket
7. Dangerous lenders
9. Ricky the _____
14. Ike's gold _____
18. Bath bomb scent
19. Giada's cookies
20. Table game
21. Finlay's dad's favorite game
23. Vero's crush
25. Cam's treasure
26. What Susan wears to bed
27. Marco's piece
28. Kevin _____

Down

2. What Nick gives Finlay
4. Spider and bat
5. Stripper Steele
8. Missing car
10. What Steven is hiding
11. Boardwalk entertainer
12. Vero's estranged sisters
13. Charlie's weapon
14. Matching letters
15. Fortune teller
16. Georgia's soft spot
17. Kat's occupation
20. Tarp color
22. Chop shop dinner
24. Where Marco was found

FINLAY DONOVAN ROLLS THE DICE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In this book, Finlay is dealing with impostor syndrome. Her agent, Sylvia, suggests this is normal for writers and her that self-doubts will pass, but not all of Finlay's insecurities are rooted in doubts over her identity as an author. In what other ways is Finlay feeling like an impostor and why?
2. Throughout the story, we see instances of women helping women. Even in the strip club and in Romelda's shop, women are lending each other a hand. How many examples can you find throughout the story? In what ways does each instance reinforce this theme in the book?
3. At the climax of the story, Finlay orchestrates a series of events that rely on the involvement of two powerful women, both of whom she fears, and isn't sure are trustworthy. Were you surprised by the women Finlay enlists to help her? Why do you think these women, including Finlay, make the choices they do? How much of a gamble is this on Finlay's part—do you think she expected them to agree to help her?
4. In the beginning of the story, Finlay rejects Vero's suggestion that they resort to violence to rescue Javi. Instead, Finlay insists that she and Vero solve their problems using their words using negotiation. At what point do we see Finlay's position shift? In what ways does Finlay both take action and use her words to solve her problems?
5. Romelda, the psychic, made several predictions before Finlay and Vero left her shop. Do you think Romelda could truly see the future, or do you believe Finlay and Vero interpreted their fortunes based on coincidences as they happened?
6. When Vero and Javi finally reunite, he confesses his reasons for walking away from their relationship years ago—that he was ashamed of a mistake he'd made and he feared he wasn't worthy of her. Which other characters in the story have made similar choices to conceal mistakes from their loved ones? Do you agree with their choices? Why?
7. While in Atlantic City, Finlay learns that her mother and father are having marital issues. Do you think the trip was good for Susan? What fears, regrets, or desires did you see Susan projecting onto her own children's relationships?
8. Steven has an eye-opening experience caring for the children in Atlantic City. What do you think he learns during the trip? What do you think of his revelations about partnership and co-parenting?
9. Nick presents Finlay with a piece of evidence he found in Charlie's suitcase, suggesting he knows she was somehow involved. Yet he doesn't accuse her. Instead, he tells her about the realization he's had about Charlie and Joey, two other partners who lied to him, both for very different reasons. What was Nick implying by sharing these thoughts with Finlay? If he suspects she might be hiding something, why does he choose to look the other way?
10. At the end of the novel, Finlay reflects on her affection for Vero and her fear that one day Vero will inevitably decide to move out and start a family of her own. How has their relationship grown and changed over the course of the series? How do you predict it will change in the future, as the children grow older and both Finlay and Vero each develop romantic partnerships of their own?

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DONOVAN

**DIGS
HER
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a novel



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FINLAY DONOVAN DIGS HER OWN GRAVE

by **ELLE COSIMANO:**

- *Finlay Donovan Digs Her Own Grave: A Playlist*
- *Stacey's Killer (Not Entirely Guilt-Free) Brownies*
- *Finlay Donovan Digs Her Own Grave Discussion Questions*
- *Finlay Donovan Cut-Out Decorations*

Whether you're meeting in person or via your somewhat-shady online women's forum—dust off those wig-scarves and sunglasses, grab a Panera pastry and a glass of wine, and enjoy your discussion of Finlay, Vero—and Mrs. Haggerty's—latest hijinks.

We love to see your Finlay Donovan-inspired photos!




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Happy Reading,
Minotaur Books



MINOTAUR BOOKS

STACEY'S KILLER (NOT ENTIRELY GUILT FREE) BROWNIES

"I think we have a problem," Vero sang in a panicky voice.

"You know those brownies I bought from Stacey? The ones I hid in the freezer?"

I sat up in my seat. "What about them?"

"I think Mrs. Haggerty took them to her book club meeting."

In *Finlay Donovan Rolls the Dice*, neighbor Stacey is renowned throughout the community for the marital aides she sells from the back of her station wagon along with her killer chocolate brownies. They are indeed a guilty pleasure, in more ways than one. (IYKYK.)

Below, you'll find her secret recipe. Enjoy these scandalously decadent dark chocolate brownies with as little or as much guilt as you and your book club desire, either by following the recipe as it is written... or by adding a few enhancements of your own. (I'm not judging.)

No matter how you choose to enjoy your brownies, do so responsibly (and according to the laws in your state). –Elle Cosimano

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup granulated sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup confectioner's sugar
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 cups Dutch processed (or dark) cocoa powder
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup dark chocolate chips
- $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp sea salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup salted butter, melted
- 2 large eggs + 1 egg white
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup light oil
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

DIRECTIONS:

1. Preheat oven to 325°F. Spray an 8x8 baking dish with oil to keep the brownies from sticking.
2. Next, sift the cocoa, flour, and confectioner's sugar together. Then combine with the remaining dry ingredients in a medium bowl and set aside.
3. In a separate large mixing bowl, whisk together the eggs, butter, oil, and vanilla.

4. Add the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients, then stir until thoroughly combined. The batter will be very, very thick. The sight of it may cause salivation, vocalizations of arousal, and possibly naughty thoughts. This is a normal part of the dessert preparation process and should not result in premature guilt. There will be plenty of time for that later—we haven't even gotten to the best part!
5. Pour the batter evenly into the baking dish.
6. Bake for 45-50 minutes until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out (mostly) clean. (They will be gooey from the melted chocolate chips inside.)
7. Allow the brownies (and your raging desire) to cool completely before slicing and serving.
8. Serve with vanilla ice cream or your favorite port or brandy. And remember, a little dessert can be fun on your own, but it's always better with a friend.

FINLAY DONOVAN DIGS HER OWN GRAVE

The Official Playlist

1. *Too Sweet* by Hozier
2. *Risk* by Gracie Abrams
3. *Good Luck, Babe!* by Chappell Roan
4. *we can't be friends (wait for your love)* by Ariana Grande
5. *Scared to Start* by Michael Marcagi
6. *stranger* by Olivia Rodrigo
7. *I Had Some Help* by Post Malone (feat. Morgan Wallen)
8. *You Need Me Now?* by Girl in Red (feat. Sabrina Carpenter)
9. *The Door* by Teddy Swims
10. *Bang Bang* by Jessie J, Ariana Grande, Nicki Minaj
11. *Someone To You* by BANNERS
12. *Sorry* by Justin Bieber
13. *Dial Drunk* by Noah Kahan (with Post Malone)
14. *Lose Control* by Teddy Swims
15. *You Love Who You Love* by Zara Larsson
16. *Wrecking Ball* by Miley Cyrus
17. *Stupid for You* by Waterparks
18. *Plastic Hearts* by Miley Cyrus
19. *Kiwi* by Harry Styles
20. *Demons* by Hayley Kiyoko
21. *People I Don't Like* by UPSAHL
22. *Walls Could Talk* by Halsey
23. *Looking at Me* by Sabrina Carpenter
24. *broken* by lovelytheband
25. *Fuck Up The Friendship* by Leah Kate
26. *Talk Too Much* by COIN
27. *Troublemaker* by Oily Murs (feat. Flo Rida)
28. *Unconditionally* by Katy Perry
29. *Happy Now* by Zedd, Elley Duhé
30. *Maps* by Maroon 5
31. *Scared to Be Lonely* by Martin Garrix, Dua Lipa
32. *Don't* by Ed Sheeran
33. *IDGAF* by Dua Lipa
34. *I'm a Mess* by Bebe Rexha
35. *Liar* by Camila Cabello
36. *Close To Me* by Ellie Goulding, Diplo, Swae Lee
37. *Don't Start Now* by Dua Lipa
38. *Back To You* by Selena Gomez
39. *Heart Attack* by Demi Lovato
40. *Ruin My Life* by Zara Larsson
41. *Cake By The Ocean* by DNCE
42. *Adore You* by Harry Styles
43. *Slow Hands* by Niall Horan
44. *Starving* by Hailee Steinfeld, Grey, Zedd
45. *Story of My Life* by One Direction
46. *Mercy* by Shawn Mendes
47. *One Last Time* by Ariana Grande
48. *Drag Me Down* by One Direction
49. *Say You Won't Let Go* by James Arthur
50. *Closer* by The Chainsmokers, Halsey



Scan the QR code
to listen now

"A car stereo thumped in the distance, the bass growing louder as it came into view. I squinted to see who it was as the car rolled slowly toward my house. Mrs. Haggerty was due back any minute, but I didn't imagine anyone in her book club listened to their music loud enough to wake the dead.

I cringed when the squared-off hood of an ancient-looking sedan cruised toward my driveway. Cam sat proudly behind the wheel. Mrs. Haggerty was riding shotgun."

FINLAY DONOVAN DIGS HER OWN GRAVE

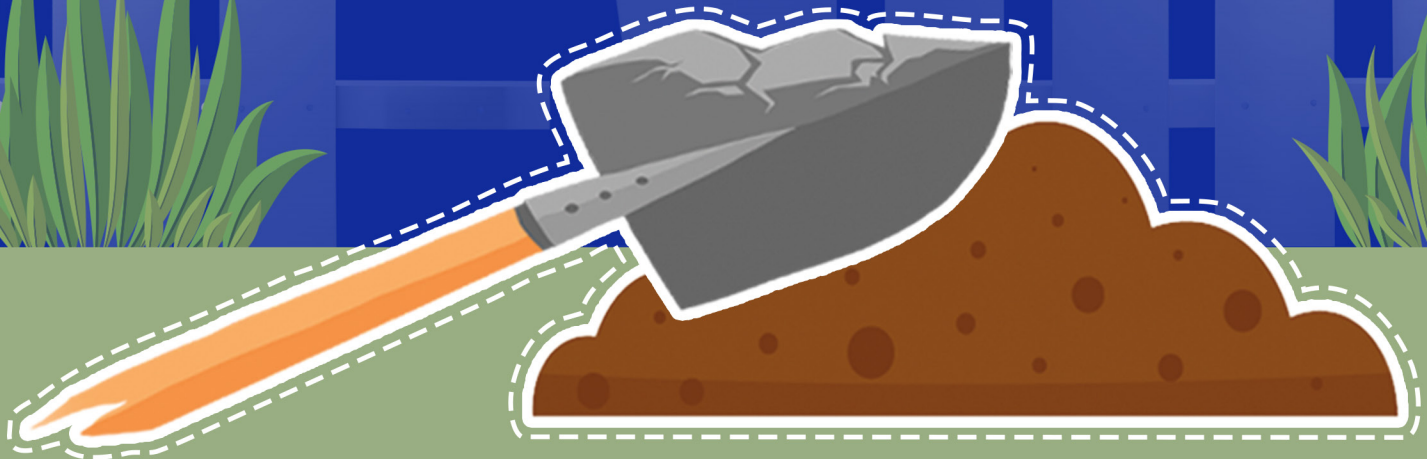
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. *Finlay Donovan Digs Her Own Grave* features Mrs. Haggerty's book club throughout the story. What role does the book club play in building a community for its members? Have book clubs created a sense of community in your own lives?
2. The novel begins with Delia being suspended from school for defending herself against a bully. How does this mirror the way society and authority figures often dismiss aggression against women? Did the principal's response to the incident surprise you? How about that of Cooper's mother? Or Mrs. Haggerty?
3. Both Finlay and Vero explore the theme of honesty in a relationship as they grow closer to Detective Nick and Javi, respectively. Bearing in mind all of their past experiences, the knowledge of which could potentially endanger their loved ones, what is your opinion about the amount of information they share—or don't?
4. Finlay once again faces the many challenges of parenthood. But with Vero, Mrs. Haggerty, and Finlay's mother around, Finlay gets to see firsthand how different generations view the proper way to handle these situations. How do these characters, in particular, take on different responsibilities when caring for Finlay's children? What do those choices reveal about their priorities when it comes to parenting?
5. Women supporting women plays such a large role in this novel. In what ways do the different characters—namely Finlay, Vero, Mrs. Haggerty, and the book club members—demonstrate this through their actions?
6. Mrs. Haggerty makes a point that everyone in her book club has a role to play. What are some examples of this in the story? Do your book club members take on different roles in real life? How do each of you contribute to the club?
7. Finlay faces many twists and turns, but one of the most shocking moments for her is when she realizes her perception of Mrs. Haggerty is very different from reality. Has someone in your life ever surprised you once you got to know them?
8. One running storyline features Finlay's agent chasing down a TV deal for Finlay's novels. Do you agree with Finlay's hesitations about broadcasting her writing to a wider audience, given the connections between her stories and real crimes she's found herself mixed up in? What book-to-film or -TV adaptations have you watched that were based in some truth? Did that affect how you felt about the content or its creator?
9. Once you learned of the true intentions behind Mrs. Haggerty's book club, did your feelings change toward her as a character? How about by the end of the book? In general, does the end ever justify the means?
10. At the end of the novel, Vero is extradited for old charges of thefts, though she claims she is innocent. What do you predict will happen to her in the next book? How do you think this will affect the future of Finlay and Vero's relationship?

FINLAY DONOVAN CUT-OUT DECORATIONS

In Mrs. Haggerty's book club, "Everyone has a job to do. Everyone contributes."

Here's your chance to wow your book club with your contribution: Finlay Donovan decor! Make your meeting extra Finlay-festive by printing, cutting out, and displaying these graphics.





**FINLAY &
VERO &
JAVI &
DET. NICK**