

## **Casting Breakdown (from the script):**

*The Book Club Play is a modern comedy featuring 6 principal characters: 3 female and 3 male, with up to five additional small roles for actors who deliver single monologues. (The small roles have a VERY flexible time commitment and only require regular evening attendance during full runs, tech, and the run of the show.) While the characters identify specifically as male and female, actors should audition for the roles that best suit their gender identity. As this is a play, there is no singing.*

ANA SMITH (w): 30s. Pronounced "Ah-nuh." Beautiful. Charming. Smart. Accomplished. Organized. A columnist for a daily paper. The "Mother Bee." Her grace masks a need to control.

ROBERT NOVUM SMITH RJ (m): 30s. ANAs' golden-boy, handsome, charismatic, underachiever husband who is starting to search for meaning. Met in college. Upper-crust background.

WILLIAM LEE NOTHNAGEL (m): 30s. ROB's conservative, well-read, well-dressed, disciplined college roommate. ANAs' former boyfriend. History buff. Unmarried.

JENNIFER MCCLINTOCK (w): 30s. ANAs' friend. Pretty. Shy. Smart. Tends to burst out with awkward truthful comments. Despite some lack of self-confidence, she is the grounding center of the group. Unorganized and oblivious to her own attractiveness. Unmarried.

LILY LOUISE JACKSON (w): Black, 20s. A go-getter. Former debate captain who is on the cusp of all current trends and yet can still put her foot in her mouth in social occasions. Laughs at appropriate and inappropriate times. A great lover of books and ANAs' protégée at the paper.

ALEX (m): 30s. The new guy. A very smart, well-read academic who has lost his moorings and is searching for real connections. Professor of comparative literature.

**Casting Note (from the script): ALEX can be cast in any race or ethnicity. LILY must be black. ANA, JEN, WILL and ROB can be any race and ethnicity except black.**

### **Additional roles (may be doubled):**

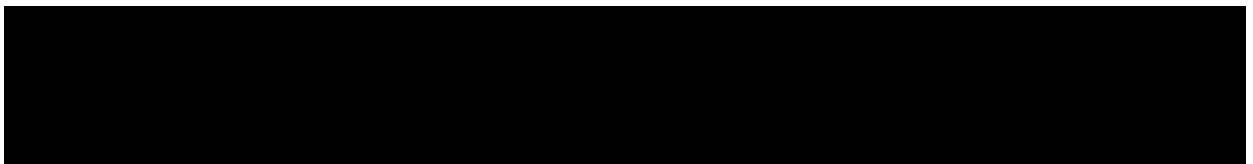
SAM, Wal-Mart guy

FRANK, Secret Service agent

ELSA, jaded literary agent

MRS. SIMPSON, skydiver

CARL, inmate book dealer.



Alex, Lily, Ana, Will, Jen, Rob

→ ALEX. How about *Twilight*? Did *Twilight* make you tingle all over?

LILY. It certainly stirred some feelings ...

ANA. Excuse me?

WILL. Is that an appropriate question to ask on a first ... Book Club?

JEN. Lily, it totally made me tingle, too!

ROB. Really?

ANA. Rob didn't read the book!

WILL. Lucky Rob.

LILY. OK, let me fill you in. A young seventeen-year-old girl, Bella Swan, moves to the rainy town of Forks in the state of Washington to live with her father. She describes herself as clumsy and ordinary.

ALEX. But all the boys in school, even the elusive, hyperhandsome Edward Cullen, seem interested in her.

LILY. That's right!

ALEX. Edward is attracted to Bella because the scent of her blood beckons him.

LILY. You see: Edward Cullen is a vampire.

WILL. A vegetarian vampire—

ROB. So that's why we had tofu for dinner.

WILL. And he hungers for Bella—to go to prom with him.

ROB. Prom? How can a vampire go to high school?

WILL. He's been seventeen for a hundred years.

ROB. But doesn't the sun kill vampires?

ACT I

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LILY. No, the sun makes Edward sparkle.

ALEX. Like glitter.

ROB. You're making this up.

JEN. Actually the author, Stephenie Meyer, made it up.

ALEX. Apparently, not all vampire cultures are the same.

ANA. There is NOTHING cultured about this book.

WILL. Amen.

LILY. Edward loves Bella but also yearns to drink her blood. And she loves him. But they can't make love ...

ALEX. Because he's scared that in the heat of passion, he would lose control and ... eat her. X

~~(LILY looks down at her Kindle and perhaps reads a passage from the book. Maybe the three things of which Bella is certain. JEN sighs loudly in response to the passage.)~~

WILL. Well, I'll just say this. I thought this book was dreadful. No action, poorly written. It's sexist and stupid. The heroine is a love-sick girl willing to give everything up for a vampire boy.

ANA (agreeing with WILL). Just look at how Edward is described in chapter thirteen.

~~(Perhaps ANA reads aloud the passage where Bella admires Edward while lying in the meadow. Perhaps JEN, LILY and ROB sigh in response to the passage.)~~

WILL. Ana, I highlighted the same ridiculous paragraph.

ANA. This is certainly not literature.

ALEX. Oh, and what makes something literature?

ANA. Not vampires! Not poor writing. Not poor plot. This is trivial!

Rob, Ana, Jen, Lily, Will, Alex

ACT II

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~~JEN & LILY. Aww! Bromance!~~

WILL. I don't know how I would have survived all these years  
~~without your straight-forward honesty and your friendship.~~

ROB. Thanks, bro.

WILL. And can I tell you? No matter how hard, you should  
always tell the truth. It will set you free and lead you to  
happiness.

ROB *(beat. Maybe ROB strongly hugs WILL in appreciation  
and confesses)*. I didn't read *Return of Tarzan*. I'm sorry. I  
couldn't get through it.

ANA. Rob, you didn't read the book you picked?

ROB. Tarzan was nothing like I remembered. I guess I'm not  
fifteen years old anymore!

ANA. You didn't read *Return of Tarzan*?

ROB. No, honey.

ANA. Rob!

ROB. And there's something else, Ana.

ANA. What?

ROB. I turned down the promotion.

~~ANA. You turned down the vice president promotion? Why?~~

~~ROB. Being a V.P. is not who I want to be ... at all.~~

~~ANA. Rob?~~

→ ROB. And Ana: I kissed Jen.

ANA. WHAT?!!!

JEN. Oh God.

ROB. I kissed Jen.

LILY. Whoa.

WILL. Um, buddy.

ANA. You kissed Jen?

ALEX. Oh boy.

ANA. What? When?

ROB. During Book Club ... After *The Age of Innocence*.

ANA. During my Book Club. How?

ROB. I just leaned over ... and kissed her.

ALEX. On the lips?

ANA. Alex! What are you doing in this conversation?

ROB. I kissed her. On the lips.

JEN. Ana, it was ... nothing!

ANA. Jen. What is it with you and married men!

ROB. This is not Jen's fault.

ANA. I am your wife, Rob.

ROB. I was confused, and Jen is a good friend ... but this happened because of us.

ANA. So this is our fault?

ROB. No. It's mine. I've done what was expected of me because it was easier than figuring out what I wanted. I want the flower of life. I want to grow. I want to try new things. And I think you do too. Ana, my "Age of Innocence" is over.

ANA. Oh my God. That friggin' book ...

ROB. Ana, I'm sorry.

ANA. Sorry?! Sorry?! You read one book for Book Club and you're confused? Rob, you are my husband who kissed my friend Jen. Jen, you kissed my husband and brought that idiot into my Book Club. Will, my first love, you decide to re-write our entire history. And you all did it in my Book Club at my house! On camera! In front of everybody! Have you no sense? Have you no respect? Have you no manners? Lily, you are the only true blue person here.

LILY. Ana, I need to tell you something. The *Herald* wants to attract a younger, hipper, more *urbane* audience. Ana, they offered me the Friday column.

ANA. My Friday column? You are taking over my Connections column?

LILY. I wanted you to hear it from me ... Ana, I'm so sorry.

ANA. You don't even like paper, you talented, little freak.

LILY. It's not personal.

ANA. It's personal to me! (*Stunned.*) You are my Book Club.

ROB. Ana—are you ... OK?

ANA. Jesus H. Christ! No, Rob! I'm not OK! What is wrong with you people! Turn off that camera!

JEN. Ana, we can't!

ANA. Take it down! Take it down! Oh God. This is too much! Nobody can see this!

WILL. We can't stop the camera.

ANA. Cover it! Cover it!'

~~(ANA grabs a blanket and throws it over the camera. The stage goes dark for a couple of seconds. In the dark:)~~

ANA (*cont'd*). Arghh! I want to smash that machine!!

JEN. Ana, no!

WILL. Not the vase!

ANA. Lars, you've ruined my life. You've ruined my Book Club.

ROB. Ana!

LILY. Careful!

ANA. Lars, I hate you. I hate your film.

(ANA yells, out of control.)

# ELSA

**Projection: ELSA JONES-EISENBLITZ, Literary Agent, New York, N.Y.**

*Spotlight on ELSA [played by PUNDIT or JEN]. She is wearing big eyeglasses, a shawl.)*

ELSA. Humans need five things ... four of which we share with other animals: water, food, shelter and sex. The unique fifth thing humans need is story. The sixth thing is stories about sex—hell, I'm kidding!

But, seriously, there are like seven billion people that inhabit our planet, and every one of us has a story. Some, like my father, keep their story inside; most, like my mother, tell theirs to the neighbors, and a few like, 2 billion people, take the time to jot something down for posterity.

Writing a book is hard work. It takes heart. It takes discipline; it even sometimes takes, God help me, talent.

I can't even tell you how many millions of manuscripts are submitted each year, but it's a friggin' heartbreaking colossal number. And these are the facts. Of the millions and millions of manuscripts that are submitted each year only 250,000 are published. And out of the 250,000 books that are published, most Americans read an average of less than three. You do the math.

Writing a book takes courage. Getting it published takes luck.

But getting someone to read your book takes a friggin' miracle.

*(Lights out.)*

# FRANK

FRANK. Book Clubs? Yeah, I know about Book Clubs. I've been in a Secret Service Book Club for fifteen years.

My favorite books are *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Old Man and the Sea* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, all by Ernest Hemingway.

The most important part of my life is Book Club. People come and go, but the Book Club stays. There are certain unalterable rules you must follow if you want Book Club to survive and thrive.

One: Trust no one. Everyone must be vetted by the Book Club. Sure so-and-so might be someone's best friend, but that doesn't mean he won't pose a serious threat to Book Club.

Two: Take no prisoners. If a rogue element does somehow infiltrate Book Club, you must be ruthless, absolutely ruthless, in removing him.

Three: Protect your leader. Book Club will collapse without the firm hand of authority and rule of law.

Ignore these rules at your Book Club's peril.

You have been warned.

SAM

**Projection:** SAM W. THOMPSON, Stock Manager for Wal-Mart, Amarillo, Texas.

*Spotlight on PUNDIT or ROB wearing a blue Wal-Mart vest with a nametag and smiley-face button.)*

SAM. I can say without doubt that Book Clubs are truly an economic phenomenon and Wal-Mart is a proud participant, feeding the nation's hunger for books. Our pricing policies enable most families to be able to own and enjoy novels, biographies and bestsellers. And the numbers speak for themselves: over a million copies sold of *The Da Vinci Code*; *Harry Potter*, can't keep him on the shelf. *The Chicken Soup* books, sell like hot cakes.

And you know, not only do we encourage America to read, we encourage our employees by offering them a significant employee discount. I do believe we might have some intra-Wal-Mart Book Clubs, where employees from all Wal-Marts in a twenty-five-mile radius get together to discuss novels. And let me say something that I have no way of qualifying, but I believe that employees find these Book Clubs so satisfying that it has made the issue of unions completely irrelevant in our organization. *(Beat.)*

My favorite book? A personal question, no sure, I'm happy to address that ... Just remember ... not to judge a book by its cover. My favorite book ... I would have to say is: well, I'll say it: *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov. Why? His use of language, humor, his ability to take the most horrid of situations and find a voice of humanity. Each turn of the phrase lands you in an unexpectedly original yet real place. *(Pause.)*

No, I'm afraid Wal-Mart does not carry *Lolita*.

Carl

**Projection: Carl Banks, Book Dealer, Bay State Correctional Center, Framington, Massachusetts.**

*Played by PUNDIT or ALEX in an orange jumpsuit.)*

CARL. Here in the big house. We have a different sort of currency. Long days here, in the joint. And everyone is looking for some kind of release.

They call me "The Bookend." It goes like this. First three chapters, I am able to provide for free. You like that and want more, well ... the next three will cost you three cigs.

Hooked and need another fix? Well chapters seven to nine will be a whole pack. And the book junkies ... they come and beg for the last chapters. Ha! That's where the price jacks up to full chocolate bar. And that's when the craziness begins, the begging, the threats, the altercations. Shoot, one punk is in solitary today for perpetrating on my person to cut me if I didn't tell him the ending to *Presumed Innocent* by Scott Turow.

I protect myself and I do not read one word from those books. It's simple freakenomics. If you want to stay safe ... never dabble in what you deal.



MRS. SIMPSON

**Projection: Mrs. Edith P. Simpson, Retired Librarian,  
High Point, North Carolina.**

*Spotlight on EDITH [played by PUNDIT or LILY]. Wind is blowing. She is wearing goggles and a helmet and is about to jump out of a plane.)*

MRS. SIMPSON. I am Mrs. Simpson. And today I am thrilled to be learning to sky dive.

Old Librarians can be crazy that way.

I am delighted to give you chickadees two little bits of advice.

One: read books. Real books. Books you can hold in your hand and carry in your head and your heart. My life has been decorated by every one of my foster kids and by every book I've ever read. In fact, yesterday, after sixty-two years of trying, I finally finished reading *Ulysses* by James Joyce.

Which brings me to my second bit of advice which is this: Get off your ass and do something with what you read. Because reading about life is not the same as living your life. Not the same at all. WHEEEEE! (*Jumps.*)