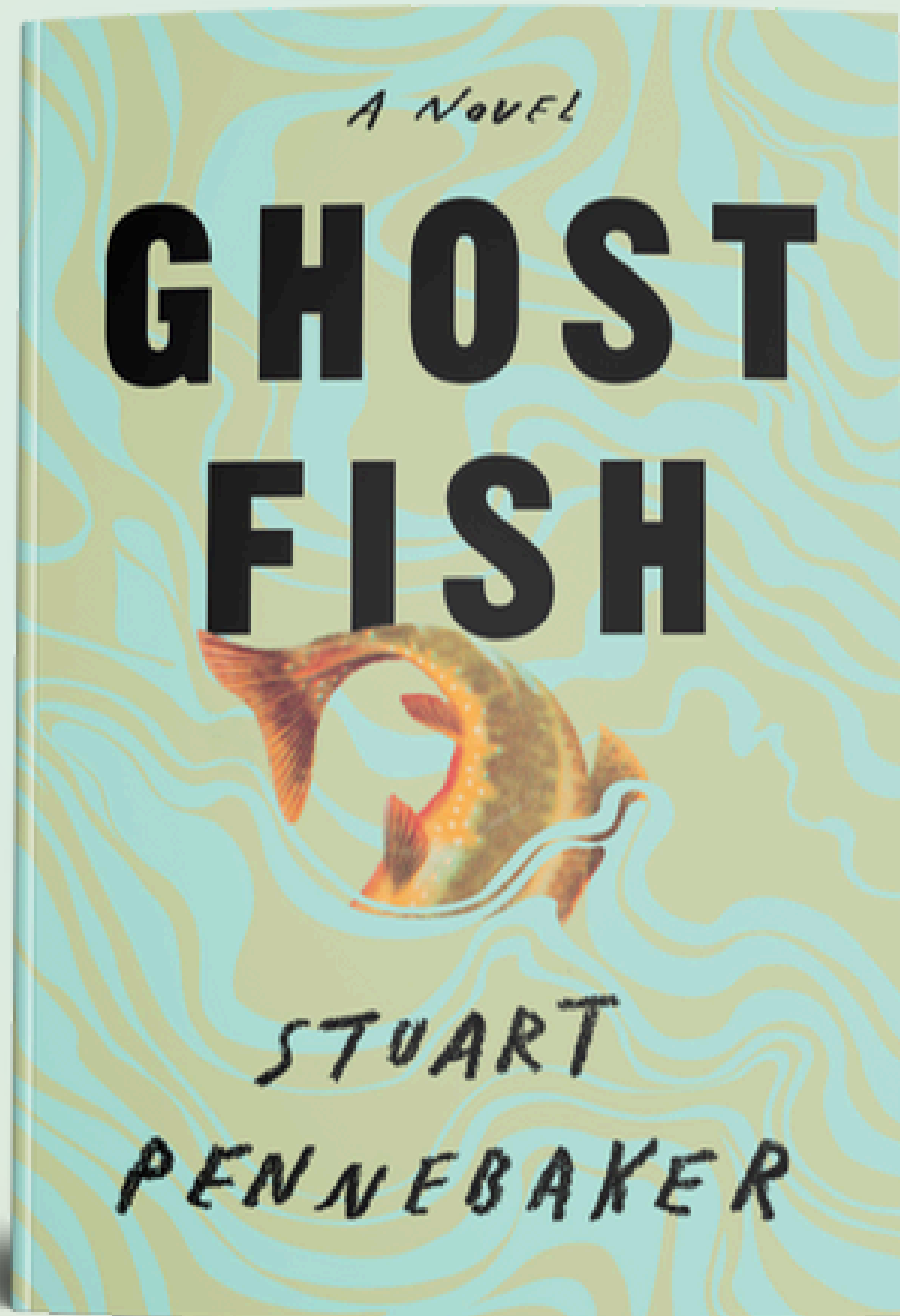


# GHOST FISH BOOK CLUB KIT



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do Alison and Gabrielle become close? Is their relationship based on who they are, what they need from each other, or some combination of the two??
- 2 Why does Alison stay distant from her roommates?
- 3 When they're younger, Alison shuts Jen out, but when she moves to the city, Jen at first seems like a friend again. How do you think their history plays into how things unfold between them?
- 4 Why is Clementine a fish?
- 5 Alison begins taking her sister with her everywhere she goes, determined to protect her. In what ways is this a metaphor for her grief? How do Alison's actions throughout the book relate to her identity as a sister?
- 6 Do you think that Alison truly lets go of her sister in Florida? Why does Clementine leave when she does?
- 7 Why is Alison so determined to love New York, and why does she decide to leave? Did New York itself play a role in that decision? Did the city help Alison find herself or did it hold her back, and how?
- 8 In what ways is Alison using her time with the ghost fish to repent for her actions from years earlier?
- 9 What is Alison's relationship to sisterhood and womanhood? How does her relationship with her sister compare to her relationship with Gabrielle?



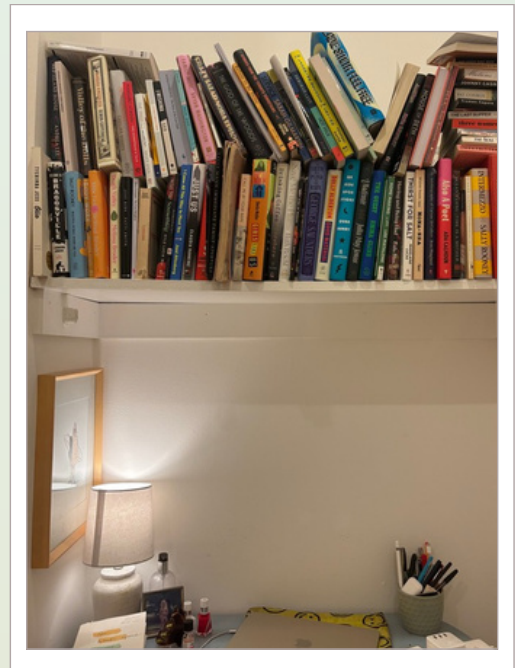
# Q&A WITH *STUART* *PENNEBAKER*

## **What was the hardest scene to write in this novel?**

I always find beginnings tricky! The first draft opened with Alison still living in Georgia, and a later draft started with her sister floating in through the window. I believe it was the suggestion of the book's very smart editor, Morgan Wu, to start in the action of Alison's new life, and I'm happy that we landed on a party scene. This has always felt like a summer story to me and what's more summery than an overstuffed, under-air-conditioned house party where you meet someone new and intriguing?

## **What is the view from your writing space?**

I write in what can only be described as a precarious cubicle in my tiny apartment in NYC. At some point I would love to live in a house with no internet access and a gorgeous sweeping view of the ocean, but for now, I like sitting in this distraction-less box that feels reminiscent of the study carrels I favored in the basement of my college's library. I don't write everyday; I prefer carving out a whole weekend day and really focusing rather than trying to eke out some writing in the forty-five minutes before I have to go to work. This setup lets me concentrate when I have a slice of time to work.



### **What are you reading?**

I finally finished *Lonesome Dove* over the weekend! It was my first ever western and it took me a little bit to get into, but once I did, whew—I get why everyone's talking about it. And I think it's really fun that this huge book from the eighties is being read so widely right now. I'm about halfway through *The Cook* by Maylis de Kerangal, which is a taut story, only about a hundred pages, that follows a young man who is stumbling into a life as a chef. If you like *The Bear*, especially the episode set in Amsterdam, you might like this too.

### **Do you have a favorite place to read?**

The subway or any body of water.

### **What's your Zodiac sign? Is it accurate?**

I'm a Libra through-and-through—characteristically indecisive, with particular, stubborn taste.

### **What are you listening to?**

Right now I'm obsessed with Renny Conti's most recent self-titled album. He's based in Brooklyn and played one of the best shows I've seen in recent memory at Night Club 101 earlier this summer; I've had his music on repeat since. I'm also really enjoying Haim's new album, perfect summer music!

### **What book are you looking forward to reading next?**

There are so many good books coming out in the next couple of months, I'm spoiled for choice! I'm looking forward to reading Chloe Caldwell's new memoir, *Trying*, and Sally Mann's craft book, *Art Work*. I'm also eagerly awaiting *Hothouse Blooms*, Austyn Wohlers's debut novel, which sounds surreal and shimmery and perfectly strange.



# STUART'S NYC

**Most of the places Alison goes in Ghost Fish are fictional but here are some real places in the East Village I love...**

**C&B:** Decadent breakfast but go early or during the week to avoid a line.

**Smør Bakery:** Favorite place to grab a coffee or a quick snack. I've eaten 1,000 scones here since they opened.

**Lê Phin:** My favorite place for my favorite snack, a Vietnamese iced coffee.

**Dumpling Man:** Cash-only late night (or anytime!) dumplings and beer. I would eat here every night if I could.

**Holiday Cocktail:** The East Village's oldest dive and my favorite place to take friends when they're in my neighborhood.

**Joy Face:** Dancing!

**From Lucie:** Cake!

**Beron Beron:** A cozy, unfussy dinner spot.

**Cloak & Dagger:** A boutique that feels peeled off the streets of Paris. They have everything from vintage dresses to basket bags to pleasingly patterned socks.

**East Village Books:** A cluttered, cash-only bookstore—heaven! Your favorite book is stuffed into one of the shelves in the back of this store, I promise.

**East Village Postal:** While you can mail things here, you can also buy notebooks, stationery, and other sundries. My favorite notebook is the spiral Rollbahn with graph paper.

**Tompkins Square Park:** A park bench in Tompkins is a nice place to read a book or gossip with your neighbors. The people watching cannot be beat either—someone is always playing a piano or breaking up with their significant others, and bird watchers often swing by to check on the hawks that live in the park.

**Village East:** My favorite movie theater in the world, the Jaffe Art Theatre, is especially worth seeing!

**ALISON'S PLAYLIST  
TO WANDER TO**

