

“Fresh, fast-paced and fiendishly clever.” —LISA GARDNER, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author

NEVER SAW MIE COMING

A NOVEL

VERA
KURIAN



Discussion Guide

AUTHOR'S NOTE



Dear Readers,

I can't tell you how happy I am that ***Never Saw Me Coming*** is now in your hands. The past year with this book has been a wild journey: it was sold at the height of COVID lockdown and all the work that has been done to bring it to readers has been done by people working remotely.

Never Saw Me Coming started with a random flash of an idea: what if there was a school for psychopaths? The idea was a natural melding of my background in psychology and my interest in thrillers and true crime. Even before I began writing the book, I knew something that I had always found fascinating: that a small percentage of the American population is psychopathic and that we've all probably met a few at work, at class, in our dating lives. They're not quite how they are depicted on TV, but they experience the world in a way that is radically different, and sometimes frightening.

Never Saw Me Coming is the story of Chloe, incoming Freshman and diagnosed psychopath. Chloe is entering a clinical panel study at a college in Washington D.C. where seven psychopaths receive scholarships in exchange for donating their minds and bodies to science for four years. But really, Chloe is there to spy on and kill a boy from her past who grievously wronged her. Only she doesn't know that someone on campus is hunting down the psychopaths in the program one by one.

I knew at the core of this book I wanted there to be a psychopathic girl who was agentic, who *wanted something* and would stop at nothing to get it. I had grown up with horror movies where clever girls could outplay bigger, stronger slashers and *Veronica Mars* could rely on her wits and social engineering to solve mysteries.

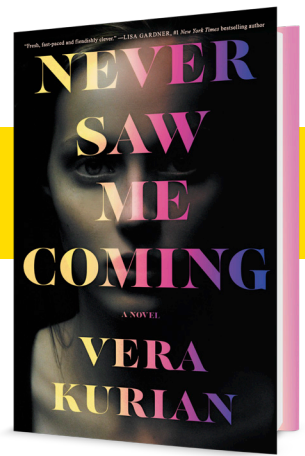
One of my goals for this novel was to show what it is really like inside the head of a psychopath—someone who fundamentally doesn't understand human emotion the way we do, doesn't have empathy but is good at faking it, and isn't bound to the moral codes that bind us. My other goal was to take what should be an objectively awful person and have you fall in love with her. In between her drive, her humor, and cleverness, readers find themselves unexpectedly rooting for Chloe—and other characters in this book. I hope you do, too.

Happy reading,

Vera Kurian

Discussion Guide

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION



- 1) NEVER SAW ME COMING is written from the perspective of psychopaths, and features other characters who are psychopaths. Did your view of psychopaths change over the course of the book? How does NEVER SAW ME COMING portray psychopathic characters differently than other thrillers?
- 2) Of the three main narrators—Chloe, Charles and Andre—which did you relate to the most? Who did you empathize with the most with and why?
- 3) The reader eventually discovers that Andre isn't really a psychopath but is only pretending to be one. When did you realize he wasn't a psychopath? Why do you think he lied to the others?
- 4) At the start of the book, Chloe is on a mission to kill Will Bachman because of what he did to her as a child. Does Chloe feel better after completing her goal? How does being a psychopath change her relationship to this trauma?
- 5) Chloe lies, cheats, steals, and eventually murders. By most standards, she's not a "likeable" character. What about her makes her a fun character to follow? Did you ever find yourself rooting for her?
- 6) Were you surprised to learn who was murdering the psychopathic students? Was her motivation justifiable? Why or why not?