"The most delightful, absorbing, and hilarious book I have read in ages!"

—CHRISTINA LAUREN, New York Times bestselling author

a hovel

Hundred

Reading Group Guide

- 1. Noora is quick to accept her job offer from *Vinyl*, even after seeing some glaring red flags during her interview (like the box of tissues in the beauty closet). If you were in her shoes, would these red flags be enough to deter you from your dream job?
- 2. Even though the *Vinyl* Digital team is young and progressive, microaggressions still run rampant in the office. What microaggressions did you notice throughout the novel? Have you seen similar behaviors in your own experiences in an office?
- 3. This novel was written by an industry insider. How do you feel about her take on the media industry? Does this align with your own expectations of what it's like to work for a major publication?
- 4. Noora does her best to be a decent person, free of biases and problematic behaviors. However, she is only human. Despite her best efforts, her narrative is still flawed and not always self-aware. Where did you notice Noora failing to

IMAN HARIRI-KIA

meet her own standards of political correctness? Do you think her narration ever strays from her own values?

- 5. Cal is swoon-worthy at first, but he eventually reveals himself to be quite the opposite. Did you see any red flags in Cal's character before his final confrontation with Noora?
- 6. What do you think of Loretta's intentions in her feud with the Digital team? Do you admire her desire to keep the Print team alive, or do you think her motivations were more malicious?
- 7. One of the biggest dilemmas Noora faces is her decision to pick sides in the war between Print and Digital. If you were Noora, what would you do? Would you stay loyal to the Print team or act as a spy for the Digital team? Do you think Noora made the right call?
- 8. In the world of *A Hundred Other Girls*, Loretta is famous as a feminist icon, but her actions in the novel don't often feel very feminist. How do you think her old-school mentality fails in the modern age? Would you consider her a feminist by today's standards?
- 9. What was your reaction when Jade's tweets were leaked to the media? How does your own perception of cancel culture affect your reaction?
- 10. What does the title *A Hundred Other Girls* mean to you after finishing the book?

A Conversation with the Author

How did your own experiences in the media industry influence your decision to write this book?

I've worked at every level in print and digital media, from entry-level assistant to deputy editor. In order to write this book, I drew inspiration from each and every position— *Vinyl* is no one magazine but rather an amalgamation of the industry. Over the years, I've watched passionate employees grow disillusioned with their "dream roles" as they fight for job security. I came to realize that the true pulse of their content—the reader—was getting lost. I wanted to write a story dedicated to finding it again.

The feud between the Print and Digital teams at *Vinyl* is a key component in the plot. Do you think print and digital media are at war in reality? Have you seen this same tension in your career?

Between print magazines trying to appeal to advertisers targeting a Gen Z audience and digital newsrooms attempting to balance meeting traffic goals with producing clickbait, I've definitely seen this tension play out in real life. But I actually believe that both teams are united in their fight for survival, with print brands facing the threat of folding and

IMAN HARIRI-KIA

digital platforms living in fear of layoffs. Although the two are often pitted against each other, they're both struggling to create sellable content without compromising their integrity.

What's your writing process like? What was your process for writing A Hundred Other Girls?

In many ways, I've been writing this book in my head since I was a little girl. I've always been obsessed with coming-of-age novels but felt like I never had access to heroines who looked like me or had families like mine. I wanted to write a novel that was both fun and insightful, with a completely diverse cast of characters whose identities were integral to who they were without being key to the plot. In other words, representation without tokenization. And ever since I began my career in media and saw how different—and diverse—the industry has grown since *The Devil Wears Prada*, I knew it was high time for an updated depiction.

I still work full-time as a writer and editor, so I wrote this book after-hours, drawing on all the industry drama that I had been privy to, both first- and secondhand. In order to paint a full picture, I interviewed a lot of my former colleagues, read articles published in *Business of Fashion* and *Women's Wear Daily*, and digested more pop culture than I care to admit. I wanted this book to feel as timely in 2022 as it did when I wrote in 2019. I never could have predicted that it would feel even *more* urgent and topical today than it did three years ago!

What was your favorite scene to write?

Oh my God, this is so tough because I had so much fun delving into all of the scandal, gossip, and intrigue surrounding the world of *Vinyl*. Selfishly, I'm going to have to go with Noora and Cal's romp in the beauty closet. As a former sex and relationships editor, I've always dreamed of writing a

A HUNDRED OTHER GIRLS

spicy scene that featured a young woman who was unabashed about chasing her own pleasure, taking control of her sexual agency. From her incorporation of a sex toy to her disappointment in Cal's, er, performance, I really loved exploring what sex can look like when women clearly communicate their needs. It felt so true to life and unlike anything else I've ever read in the genre.

Which character was the most challenging to write?

All of the characters are morally gray and therefore, were a challenge to write, but I found Loretta to be the most nuanced. On the one hand, she's clearly a narcissist who has zero awareness of how her actions and words impact the people around her. But she's also obviously driven by her insecurities and has had to overcome so much in order to thrive in a patriarchal environment—she's earned her icon status. Navigating Noora's push and gravitational pull to Loretta often toed the line because I wanted readers to understand why, after everything is said and done, Noora is still torn about where her loyalties lie.

What's the most important thing you hope readers take from A Hundred Other Girls?

The title of the book alludes to an old-guard, toxic, "lucky to be here" mentality that permeates many industries and encourages burnout culture, a mentality that pits women against other women and belittles their self-worth. I hope that, by reading this, readers are encouraged to draw boundaries and are reminded that they are more than their job descriptions. Your voice can never be reduced to a title, and your identity can never be packaged for clicks. Your perspective is unique and valuable because it's *yours*. You are inherently worthy.