

# *Louisiana Catch*

## Instructor's Manual

This instructor's manual is a companion guide to *Louisiana Catch*. It contains discussion topics and questions for each chapter. Educators can use this manual in their classrooms to stimulate critical thinking, explore the novel's key themes, and analyze the characters' decisions and motivations at various points.

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## General Discussion

1. What is the significance of the title *Louisiana Catch*, and how does it apply to the novel's various themes?
2. In what ways are the similarities between Eastern and Western society evident in the novel? For example, did any of the characters, particularly those close to Ahana, like Naina and Masi, surprise you in any way? Discuss how family relationships differ culturally.
3. Much of the book is a study on what it means to be a survivor of abuse and how that impacts your relationship with self and the world at large. What aspects of this message may be powerful enough to bring about lasting and meaningful change in the lives of survivors?
4. Ahana meets both Rohan and Jay online through social media networking websites. Discuss your experiences with developing friendships or romantic relationships online.
5. Why does Ahana join an online therapy group instead of seeing a therapist in person?
6. Some of the novel's most important revelations are reported through reflections and the wellness practices of yoga, meditation, and running. How effective was each tool?
7. It takes Ahana a while to get used to Rohan's playfulness. When someone has been through something as traumatic as rape or abuse on an ongoing basis, it becomes hard to discern if someone is being playful—because it could be the person's personality or insecurity on display—or someone is being abusive and manipulative. What would you say are the signs of someone being abusive or manipulative?
8. What was the effect on you of reading the story through Ahana's eyes? How might you have reacted to the book differently if it were written in third person?
9. Did the book change your general views toward South Asians in any way? Did the book inspire you to learn more about the culture and traditions?
10. How did the book impact your understanding of sexual assault survivors?
11. What role does Mumma play in Ahana's journey? How did Ahana's early life influence her socially, emotionally, and psychologically?
12. What lessons did Ahana learn from having her mother in her life?
13. How involved should parents be in the lives of their adult children? Does Ahana's mother help or harm Ahana's agency as an adult?
14. Why is Ahana's relationship with Rohan Brady an important one in her healing journey?
15. What was your impression of Ahana and Rohan's relationship? What bond did they share? Despite the tumultuous beginning, do you think Rohan's presence strengthened Ahana in any way?
16. What factors kept Ahana from getting close to Rohan emotionally?
17. What role(s) does Ahana's cousin Naina fulfill in Ahana's life?
18. Why can't Ahana let go of Jay DuBois despite his falseness in the online therapy groups?

19. Jay is an online stalker, and Ahana, along with a few other female characters in the book, like Amanda and Tanya, becomes a victim of catfishing. How prevalent is catfishing and cyberstalking in your opinion?
20. How can you tell if you are being catfished? List at least four warning signs.
21. How does Ahana's background as a survivor of marital rape make her susceptible to catfishing?
22. How did the novel's three distinct places—New Delhi, New York, and New Orleans—reflect the three distinct parts of Ahana's identity?
23. What is your favorite quote from the book?
24. Which characters did you enjoy reading about the most within *Louisiana Catch*? What makes them interesting?
25. What themes can readers find in *Louisiana Catch*?

## Chapter By Chapter

### Chapter One

1. Discuss Ahana's emotions at the start of the scene. How would you characterize her state of mind?
2. What effect did the opening scene have on your reception of the story that follows?
3. Why was it important for Mumma to have the conversation about New Orleans, Ahana's ex-husband Dev, life experiences, and love in this chapter?
4. What significance did this conversation have in Mumma and Ahana's life?
5. Has someone dear to you ever sat you down and given you valuable advice, and then that was the last time you ever saw that person?

### Chapter Two

1. What can you make of Ahana's personality by the state of her behavior in the hospital?
2. By the end of the chapter, what can you decipher about Ahana's biggest weakness?

### Chapter Three

1. How does Ahana handle her mother's sudden passing?
2. Discuss Ahana and her mother's relationship based on this chapter.
3. What is the reason behind Ahana's obsession with yoga and running? How does it help her?
4. Can you tell what Naina's role will be going forward in the book?
5. In your opinion, what was the standard of living of Ahana's family in New Delhi?

### Chapter Four

1. Can you tell what the two key themes of the rest of the novel might be from this chapter?
2. How similar or different are Jay Dubois and Rohan Brady's personalities online, and how does that impact their relationships with Ahana in the beginning?
3. Discuss your thoughts, emotions, and fears about online friendships and social media networking.
4. Whom do you think Ahana is more comfortable interacting with, Jay or Rohan?
5. What can you tell about the various class distinctions in Ahana's New Delhi household?

### Chapter Five

1. What is it about Jay that makes Ahana lower her guard?
2. Examine the complex character of Dev Khanna—Ahana’s ex-husband.
3. What did you learn about New Delhi high society in this chapter?
4. Discuss the revelation Ahana has about her mom and her upbringing when she encounters Dev at the fundraiser at the Hyatt Regency.

### Chapter Six

1. Why is Ahana cautious around Rohan in the beginning? Discuss Ahana’s paradox and state of mind.
2. Can you get a sense of Ahana’s social life in New Delhi from the description?
3. Do you think Rohan is being playful or hurtful in this chapter?
4. In your opinion, is Ahana fair in her treatment of Rohan? How does he help her in setting up her social media presence?
5. What can you tell about Ahana’s emotional relationship with New Delhi after the man on the two-wheeler harasses her?
6. What symptoms of PTSD arise when Ahana is triggered after the incident at the traffic lights?
7. What in your opinion is the turning point that causes Ahana to go from disliking Rohan to accepting that he is actually a good man?

### Chapter Seven

1. What role does yoga play in Ahana’s healing from sexual assaults inflicted by Dev?
2. In your experience, have yoga, meditation, and pranayama helped people cope with their stress?
3. Discuss why Naina’s presence is pivotal in Ahana’s healing journey as well as in life.
4. Why might Naina advocate for Rohan without ever meeting or speaking with him?
5. Though Ahana resists initially, it’s obvious that Rohan cares about the *No Excuse* Conference and Ahana’s success. Discuss the importance of Rohan Brady on the rest of Ahana’s life.

### Chapter Eight

1. Ahana is a survivor of marital rape who is still healing. Discuss the places where you can tell she is triggered in this chapter.
2. Consider Ahana’s experience in the New Delhi metro. Relate and compare any similar incidents you may have experienced, witnessed, or been told about.
3. What impact did Ahana’s marriage to Dev Khanna have on her daily life experiences?
4. Discuss how Jay and Rohan handle the news of Ahana’s harassment in the metro and what it tells us about each man.
5. In your opinion, what behavioral patterns are revealed in both Jay and Rohan during

- and after Ahana's trip to Sydney that change their relationship dynamics with her?
6. What did you learn about Ahana's relationship with her father in this chapter?
  7. By reading about Ahana, have you learned anything about recognizing signs if someone you know is having old PTSD symptoms arising? triggered?
  8. Research how you can help if you find a loved one is a victim of domestic violence. List at least five ways.
  9. A pivotal moment in the story is when Ahana sends a terse message to Jay—what do you think that message represents?

## Chapter Nine

1. This chapter starts with Ahana admitting she was pathologically dependent on her mother. Do you recall when she first acknowledges it?
2. Tell us what you believe is going on in Ahana's mind when she compares the contrasting lives of the haves and have-nots in New Delhi.
3. In following Ahana's emotions at brunch in the club with her friend Maya and the other women, what were your emotions? Do you think Ahana is justified in feeling out of place? Or do you think she is being an introverted snob?
4. After Rohan teases Ahana about her "Crisp Connecticut housewife look," can you tell if Ahana is finally coming to terms with the workings of the online world?
5. Do you start to see a pattern in Jay's communications? How does that make you feel?
6. What significance do you think social media and the online world have on the story?
7. Chutney brings up the topic of boundaries with Ahana and advises her to be more protective of her space. In your opinion, how does having boundaries in your life help you stay safe and mentally healthy?

## Chapter Ten

1. What does Naina's solo trip to New Delhi tell us about her personality?
2. Do you feel that Ahana and Naina, despite being first cousins, have polar opposite personalities? Name three ways Naina is distinctly different from Ahana.
3. What can you tell about the environment of Ahana's New Delhi home once Naina arrives? What role does the domestic help play in that environment?
4. Why is Naina suspicious of Jay and supportive of Rohan?
5. Have you ever met someone online and something about that person didn't add up? What aroused your suspicions?
6. Examine why Ahana carries shame about her past and how that impacts her confidence in the *No Excuse* Conference.
7. Why do you think Rohan checks on Ahana and gets upset when Ahana refers to his supposedly prurient lifestyle?
8. When Ahana questions Jay about his personal life, he sends her a nasty message. Naina declares in this chapter that Jay is micromanaging Ahana's emotions and is a

pathological narcissist. And she scolds Ahana for being clueless. Discuss Ahana's emotional state at this point.

9. Why do you think women who have been past victims of intimate-partner violence are more vulnerable to abuse in future relationships?

## Chapter Eleven

1. Naina's visit to New Delhi seems pivotal in making Ahana see certain things in Jay. Do you agree or disagree with her approach? Support your position.
2. When Ahana's team doesn't select Jay's artwork, he gets upset and updates his social media accounts with a needy and whiny post. At this moment in the story, what did you think when you read this line: "Sore loser! It made me respect him even less."
3. What can you tell about the rapport between Ahana and Rohan as they talk about *laddoos* and Sazerac?
4. Have you ever eaten an Indian dessert? Which is your favorite?
5. By now, what is your impression of the kind of mother Rohan's mom was?
6. Do you at any point fear for Ahana or sympathize with her when Dev shows up at the airport and accuses her, and she realizes he has been stalking her online? How did you feel when you realized that Jay and Dev could be connected on social media?
7. Have ever felt vulnerable sharing information on social media?
8. In this chapter, Ahana screams at Dev, "No, it is over. Stay away from me." Then Ahana tells the reader, "For the first time, I wagged my index finger at him. He stepped back. Whether my words would stop Dev or not, it didn't matter in the moment. I dared to set boundaries. I dared to speak for myself. I boarded the flight with my head held high." How does she find the courage to stand up to the man who violated and stalked her?
9. What does Ahana's visit to New Orleans and her time spent with her Masi do for her and her friendships with Rohan and Jay?
10. Why does Ahana think New York holds so much promise? How does her life in New York compare to the one in New Delhi?
11. Review the meeting between Ahana and Rohan at the Brooklyn Bridge. Why is Ahana so upset by him? Why is Rohan so taken by Ahana?
12. Discuss what might have prompted Rohan to behave the way he did.

## Chapter Twelve

1. Why do you think Ahana is so hesitant to receive any media attention?
2. Why does Ahana react so vehemently at Grand Central station?
3. What makes Ahana a tough colleague to be around?
4. What have you learned so far about the purpose of the *No Excuse* Conference?
5. Do you think Ahana and Rohan's personal stories and where they grew up affect the way the two handle difficult situations?

6. Do you have friends from a different culture or ethnicity? Discuss your experiences with friendships.
7. Talk about whether Rohan brings out a lighter side in Ahana or whether his behavior triggers her and insults her sensibilities.
8. Discuss how Ahana's reflections in this passage are critical at this point in the book: "How long would I punish myself for a mistake I didn't commit—be it my inability to predict that Dev would change after marriage, or to see that Mumma had heart troubles? I had assumed responsibility and started to feel guilty about things that had nothing to do with me. I had been this good kid and perfect daughter while growing up. I was organized and predictable. I was overprotected. Perhaps that's why I couldn't make peace with my reality: my life was imperfect and I couldn't control any of it."

### Chapter Thirteen

1. Discuss how Ahana calling Rohan at the crack-of-dawn and suggesting meeting with him for an urgent reason compares to her relationship with her other friend Jay whom she has been avoiding?
2. In what ways is Ahana finally starting to heal and move on with her life?
3. At this point in the story, when you read Ahana saying the following lines to Rohan, what do you think is going on inside Ahana's head? "He has never had to visit a colleague in the hospital because she was gang-raped in broad daylight in the middle of Delhi; Hedick has never been groped every day of the week as he steps onto public transportation in Delhi; Hedick has never had a motorbike rider start masturbating in traffic right next to his window, and have it be an obscene but everyday occurrence. What the hell does he know about women and violence? What does he know about feeling violated every single day in your life?"
4. After reading Ahana's story about how she and her ex-husband met and got married, what is your impression of the dating culture in India?
5. Discuss the significance of parents' approval in marriages in Indian culture.
6. Why do you think Ahana chose not to disclose that she was a survivor of sexual assault even though she told Rohan she was a divorcée?
7. Examine how Rohan's Southern charm can seem like a personal attack to Ahana. Do you believe that engaging in conversations with people of other cultures can help eliminate stereotypes and confusions?
8. Review Ahana's chaotic start to the day and how it affects the intimate conversation that follows.
9. What was so significant about hanging out with Rohan this particular morning? Discuss the various ways Rohan and Ahana become closer friends after this one morning.
10. Describe Ahana's inner conflict with New Delhi.
11. Discuss the comparison Ahana draws between life in New York City and life in New Delhi.
12. In this chapter, Ahana visits the temple. Have you ever visited a Hindu temple?
13. Talk about Ahana's state of mind as Jay starts to berate Mexicans and gaslights Ahana,

saying she is looking for a reason to be disappointed in him.

14. There are signs when someone is exhibiting sociopathic behavior. One method is what Jay does; he tries to make Ahana believe she is manifesting situations and refusing to understand his reality. Have you ever been at the receiving end or witnessed such behavior?
15. Review the pros and cons of online friendships and relationships.
16. When you read, “A part of me wondered whether Dev and Jay had connected over social media—all the hints that Jay had been dropping about my past made me nervous. Dev hadn’t made any contact since the airport incident. I needed to stay connected with Jay to find out what he knew and whether he was in communication with my ex-husband,” do you fear for Ahana? What are your immediate thoughts?

### Chapter Fourteen

1. Examine the significance of Rohan cooking Ahana a surprise dinner on her mother’s birthday.
2. Do you have a favorite Cajun dish that Rohan didn’t cook for Ahana? What would that be?
3. Rohan, an American man, is a great cook while Ahana, an Indian woman, can’t find her way around the kitchen. Do you believe the book is successful in breaking gender stereotypes?
4. Discuss the symbolism behind Rohan revealing details of his childhood to Ahana.
5. After reading this chapter, do you believe all Indian mothers are like Ahana’s mother?
6. Why does Rohan leave so abruptly?
7. What is your impression of Jay at the end of this chapter?
8. Compare and contrast Jay and Rohan. How are the intimacy and closeness different in Ahana’s relationship with each man?

### Chapter Fifteen

1. What do these three lines tell us about Rohan’s character? “Sorry to wake you up. I was worried whether your family is all right. There was an earthquake in Delhi. Write down your dad’s contact information. We have offices in Delhi. I’ll have someone check up on him.”
2. Do you think Ahana has started to trust Rohan by now?
3. Talk about how Rohan envisions Ahana should handle the conference and his boss Hedick.
4. Research and discuss the impact of violence on women and society in general.
5. Examine Ahana’s talk about violence against women, in particular intimate partner rape, at the big meeting.
6. Did you know that marital rape is still considered legal in many countries?
7. Research the impact of intimate partner violence on victims and survivors.

8. Ahana has become more tolerant of Rohan's humor—why is that?
9. Do you believe all children have similar experiences in their childhood?
10. Explain how Rohan and Ahana's childhoods impacted who they turned out to be as adults.
11. By the end of this chapter, Rohan says, "You are a good friend, Ahana. I'm on your side." Do you think Rohan only has platonic feelings for Ahana?

## Chapter Sixteen

1. Analyze the transformation in Ahana's demeanor and overall behavior when she is in Rohan's company.
2. Do you think Ahana has started to develop any feelings for Rohan in this chapter?
3. Explore why this scene is crucial to the book: "We ran. We looked happy. We competed. We didn't have to make eye contact with the other runners we crossed. Rohan, every now and then, tried to run in front of me, so I would slow down. Such a *paagal*. We ran to run away from whatever each of us was running away from. It would seem running gave us both an out. In Delhi, I often had to wear a mask because of the polluted air in the mornings. At night, if I decided to go for a run, I had to worry about my safety. I clenched my jaw thinking about New Delhi. In New York, people and the weather let me be."
4. Discuss your understanding of harassment in New Delhi. What are the choices available to women?
5. What does Ahana's story about monkeys tell us about her?
6. Examine Rohan's state of mind when he says to Ahana, "I mean it, Matron. Move here. New Orleans, much like New Delhi, is notoriously famous for its sweltering hot summers, cuisine that makes your taste buds sing, and legendary musicians. And you can tell me more of your monkey stories."
7. Discuss your take on Jay.
8. Why does Ahana not disconnect with Jay despite these inner thoughts: "The first time I'd seen Rohan's photograph, right before he and I connected over social media, I never felt anxious or fearful. Rohan looked cheeky, handsome, and a bit of a cad. But there was something warm about his face. There was coldness in Jay's eyes."
9. Why does Ahana hesitate to tell Naina about Jay and the bizarre online exchange with him?
10. Naina can be harsh when she cares about someone and worries about his or her safety—do you think that's the only way to protect the people we love, or are there other methods?
11. Review Ahana's feelings toward Naina.
12. Do you think Naina is fair in judging Ahana?
13. Spending some quiet time alone helps Ahana reflect on her conversations with Jay. How do you connect with your inner voice?
14. What has been your favorite ensemble from Ahana's closet?

15. There is obvious chemistry between Ahana and Rohan. Why does Ahana refuse to take the next step despite enjoying Rohan's company and feeling jealous of his attentions to the female maître d'?
16. Rohan organizes a beautiful dinner for Ahana at Mom's Kitchen. Do you know anyone who cares about someone the way Rohan cares for Ahana?
17. Discuss the conversation Rohan has with Ahana about Jay, her behavior, therapy, and friendships.
18. Do you think Ahana is weak or loyal for not cutting ties with Jay despite all the emotional trauma?
19. Study Ahana's thought process when Rohan says, "Sometimes, you are so oblivious to everything. Everything can't be spelled out, Ahana."
20. What can you tell about Naina's fiancé, Josh Rossi?
21. Rohan and Naina get along instantly. Have you ever met a person and felt the same sense of ease that the two felt around each other?
22. Discuss the repartee between Naina and Josh.
23. Naina gets upset and screams at Ahana at the club. What do you think is happening in this scene?
24. Do you believe on some level Ahana identifies with Jay's grief even at this stage?
25. "I felt alone in that crowd. I felt a part of nothing. All I wanted from Naina was a little empathy, but what I got was harsh criticism and judgment. It felt like I didn't matter to anyone. The more I cared, the more it all hurt. I felt like a prisoner in my own body. I wanted to go away from these familiar faces and memories." Analyze Ahana's emotions at this point.
26. Why does Ahana talk to Mike and accept his drink despite her initial hesitation?
27. How is Rohan an answer to Ahana's unspoken prayers on the dance floor?
28. Why is Josh the best person to diffuse the tension at the club and take Ahana home?
29. "I know Naina loves you more than she loves me. But sometimes you have to let people who love you know what's acceptable and what's not." What does this dialogue tell us about Josh?
30. In this chapter, Ahana learns a few lessons from interacting with Rohan, Naina, and Jay. What does each mean for Ahana?

## Chapter Seventeen

1. Discuss Ahana's reflections from the time she wakes up to the time she gets to the yoga studio.
2. In your opinion, why did Rohan Brady show up at Ahana's yoga studio?
3. Do you think Rohan relies on humor to deflect tension?
4. "I am tired of going unseen. I am sick of not mattering to people." What does this statement tell us about Ahana? Who are the people she is referring to in this conversation?
5. What evidence is there that yoga impacts Ahana's mental state and brings clarity to her

thought process?

6. In what ways might yoga help survivors with PTSD?
7. Have you ever practiced yoga? What has been the impact on your overall state of being because of it?
8. Examine the character of Jay in detail, specifically after he contacts Ahana and complains about Amanda.
9. Ahana realizes that Jay is selfish, abusive, narcissistic, and a misogynist. Why do you think she continues to keep the lines of communication open with him?
10. Point out the various times so far when Ahana has either been warned or sensed possible danger when it comes to Jay.

## Chapter Eighteen

1. "When I reached Naina's apartment, she was clad in her pajamas, drinking coffee. Always strong. Always black. Always fresh. Her taste in coffee spoke so much about the person she was: unabashedly bold." What does this tell us about Naina's character?
2. What role does the brand Lululemon play in Ahana's life? Do you think it's important to her healing?
3. Ahana finally confesses to Naina that her ex-husband Dev used to rape her. What is your impression of why Ahana didn't leave him sooner?
4. Discuss your understanding of the effect rape has on a woman's mental and physical self. What kind of shame is Ahana referring to when she says, "I was still struggling with everything, so I lied a little. "It only happened a few times," and looks away when it happened a few times a week?
5. Why do you think Naina brings her high school boyfriend's death into the conversation?
6. Debate whether you think Naina is protective of Ahana.
7. What is Naina implying here? "All I am saying is that Rohan has principles, and he would never take advantage of you. Jay, on the other hand, I don't trust one bit. It took him less than a day to badmouth and abuse the woman he didn't love but did love but didn't date but is heartbroken over."
8. Naina offers to have Jay kicked out of the online therapy group. What, in your opinion, is the main reason why Ahana says, "No, don't do that."
9. Do you sense any change in Ahana's communication with Jay at this point? What do you think is going through her detective mind?
10. Would you have reacted differently than Ahana to Jay's whining and badgering if faced with a similar situation?

## Chapter Nineteen

1. In your opinion, do Rohan and Ahana make a good team?
2. Discuss the character and role of Tanya. Why is she important to the story?
3. How does Tanya's experience with Jay make Ahana more determined in her resolve to

protect women?

4. What was significant about the car ride Ahana and Rohan shared to Manchester Distillery?
5. “All my doubts and hunches about Jay had come true. He didn’t even belong in the online therapy group. I had to let Naina’s mentor know or file a lawsuit or get someone to slap the shit out of Jay. Ugh. I ran my hands over my face. But I needed more proof to make a case or take any action against Jay.” In your opinion, is Ahana stalling on taking action against Jay? Is she getting too caught up in getting her own life in order?
6. “Many pointed to Rohan as ‘The man of the hour.’ Rohan shone the spotlight on me instead and introduced me as ‘The reason we were all in the room together.’” How does Rohan’s generous gesture make you feel?

## Chapter Twenty

1. Discuss the Indian family dynamics you read about in this chapter. Do you find commonality between Eastern and Western family ties?
2. Have you attended an Indian wedding or an engagement ceremony before? What was your experience like?
3. Does this chapter influence your opinion in any way about Indian weddings and celebrations?
4. How is New Orleans typically portrayed in the media? Does *Louisiana Catch* match or challenge these stereotypes? Here are a few film portrayals: *Live and Let Die*, *The Pelican Brief*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, *The Big Easy*, *King Creole*, *Tightrope*.
5. In this chapter, we get the sense that Ahana’s mind is constantly preoccupied with Rohan. “After an exchange of multiple messages, I knew his flight details, what time he would arrive at the party, right down to the kind of drink and peanuts he planned to order on the airplane.” Do you think Ahana and Rohan are just friends or something more is brewing by now?
6. Why does Ahana dance with her cousin despite her initial hesitation?
7. What is Rohan’s state of mind after interacting with Ahana’s family?
8. What is the significance of Rohan attending Naina and Josh’s engagement party?

## Chapter Twenty-One

1. Discuss Ahana’s hesitation and discomfort in dealing with Hedick.
2. Why do you think Ahana lies to protect Rohan?
3. In your opinion, do you see a transformation in Ahana where she stands up not only for herself but also for Crystal and Rohan?
4. Who or what, in your opinion, is the reason for the change?

## Chapter Twenty-Two

1. Jay refuses to take any responsibility for his actions. Have you ever met someone who has done the same to you?
2. The cabbie says to Ahana, "Life is too short to give another minute to anyone or anything that doesn't make you happy." What is the significance of these words?
3. How do you feel about the way Ahana handles Jay before she enters Rohan's apartment?
4. What does Rohan's apartment tell us about him?
5. "I'm used to being on my own, Ahana. I have never had anyone take care of me ever since I was a kid." Compare and contrast Rohan and Ahana's upbringings and the involvement of their respective parents.
6. By this point in the book, it is obvious that Ahana and Rohan have feelings for each other. Then why does Ahana scream when he grabs her wrists playfully?
7. After making the delivery to Ms. Goldstein and helping Crystal, Ahana decides to clear up everything with Rohan and explain why she threw a tantrum. Do you think Rohan empowers Ahana and she realizes that his friendship is one of her biggest strengths?
8. Something shifts inside Ahana when she says, "I started to run. Not away from my problems or people; toward what I needed to sort out." What do you understand these words to mean?

## Chapter Twenty-Three

1. A pivotal moment occurs in the story when all that Ahana has ever held in her heart as a secret is out in front of Rohan. What is your emotional reaction to it?
2. Share your thoughts, emotions, and fears about marital rape after reading Ahana's confession.
3. List as many times as you can think of when Ahana alludes to her ex-husband Dev violating her.
4. Why does Ahana think the kiss could mean different things to her and Rohan?

## Chapter Twenty-Four

1. Why do you think Ahana decides to go out with Rohan? Do you think she is certain about her feelings for him?
2. Discuss the emotional reasons behind Ahana's desire to meet with Jay despite her fears that he is stalking her.
3. What are your feelings about Jay? How does he make you feel?
4. "Sever ties. Block him. Disappear the way Amanda did. Why meet with this bastard?" Do you agree with Naina's suggestions?
5. Why does Ahana ask Naina not to involve Rohan at this point?

## Chapter Twenty-Five

1. At this moment in the story, what did you think when you read this line: “Jay didn’t recognize Salinger’s famous words when he had repeatedly told me, ‘I have every line from *The Catcher in the Rye* memorized.’”
2. “His mendacity came naturally to him. Jay was a formidable adversary; he could think on his feet. Maybe, somewhere I had been hoping that Jay would be a little bit stupid—why else would he hit on three women in the therapy group and never once think that he would eventually get caught?” Analyze Ahana’s thinking at this time.
3. What is the significance of the Ahana-Jay meeting in the café? Why is Ahana taken aback by Jay?
4. Compare and contrast how Jay and Rohan treat Ahana. What does it say about their characters?
5. Why doesn’t Ahana leave despite finding out that Jay knows aspects of her past that she hadn’t discussed with him? How attached is she to finding out the truth?
6. “I didn’t think Jay knew how to get rid of the slime in his personality.” What drives Ahana to this conclusion?
7. Ahana has a hunch that she shouldn’t go into the park with Jay, but she ignores her instincts. Why do you think she does this?
8. Point out the various instances so far where Ahana was warned of possible danger.
9. Did you feel fearful for Ahana’s safety or of what she might discover?
10. Have you ever encountered a personal attack or been mugged? How did it affect you and shape your thinking?
11. Would you have reacted differently from Ahana to the badgering of the muggers if faced with a similar situation?
12. Why did Ahana refuse to hand over her handbag to the muggers?
13. Examine Jay’s behavior after the attack.
14. In your opinion, is Ahana in control of the situation now?

## Chapter Twenty-Six

1. Discuss why Ahana feels two conflicting emotions when she thinks about Jay and the attack: wanting to sympathize and yet wanting to distance herself from him.
2. “When I stepped out of the shower, I noticed he had already updated his social media profiles. There was a picture of his broken glasses and the caption read, ‘When Batman gets hurt saving Gotham.’” Why does Ahana laugh humorlessly at Jay’s post?
3. With Amanda and Tanya commenting on Jay’s post, why does Ahana start to think about her own safety?
4. How does Ahana’s yoga practice help her find perspective in this chapter?
5. Why does Ahana choose to call Josh instead of Naina or Rohan to talk about Jay and the mugging incident?
6. Review how Ahana gives a rundown of the incident to Josh.

7. What is your impression of Rohan when Ahana says these words to herself? “My heart sank. I was ridiculously late. I hoped Rohan didn’t assume the worst—that I didn’t want to meet him.”

## **Chapter Twenty-Seven**

1. Discuss the event at the bar. Why is Dionysus an important venue in Rohan’s life?
2. On her date night with Rohan, why do you think Ahana makes statements like, “You should be proud; I might actually pick up a man tonight.”
3. Analyze Rohan’s behavior this evening and compare and contrast it to Ahana’s.
4. Why does Ahana smile at the stranger?
5. In your opinion, is there any connection between Ahana gulping down drinks, breaking into a dance move, and then hitting on Rohan?
6. Review Ahana’s overall behavior at the bar.
7. Why does Rohan refuse to take the next step with Ahana despite having feelings for her?
8. Why does Rohan believe that Jay did his research on Ahana? Do you agree with his postulation?
9. Why does Ahana decide to leave the bar?
10. Why did Rohan call for a car service for Ahana instead of dropping her off personally?

## **Chapter Twenty-Eight**

1. Examine Ahana’s state of mind when she wakes up and is distressed.
2. Why does she decide to avoid Rohan? Do you agree with her decision?
3. Why does Josh insist that Ahana not meet with Jay?
4. Josh tells her that Jay is a sociopath and has done time for aggravated assault. Did you see that coming?
5. Discuss your feelings about Jay further. When did you start to see red flags in his behavior?
6. Ahana finds out that Jay doesn’t live in NYC, has a criminal record, that his mother is alive, his parents live together in Baton Rouge, and that Jay is married and financially dependent on his wife. Discuss how Ahana handles all of this information.
7. Ahana doesn’t like Jay romantically, so he has to figure out other ways of catching her in his net. Did that make you fear for Ahana’s safety?
8. Do you know anyone who has been a victim of online stalking, especially catfishing? If so, knowing that healing differs from person to person, what was this survivor’s journey like?
9. After reading this chapter, can you identify the tell-tale signs of an online predator and catfishing stalker?
10. “A bad person, once again, was able to make me feel bad about my life.” Expand on this. What is Ahana alluding to?

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

1. In this chapter, Ahana declares, “I am sick of men controlling my life. I am done with being an emotional yo-yo. Starting today, I am putting up better boundaries. I am going to find strength inside me.” Why did these words come to Ahana’s mind? What do they mean?
2. Why does Ahana go out for a run?
3. How do you clear your thoughts when stressed?
4. “Darkness started to creep inside of me. I was less than thirty blocks south of where the attack had happened. It was the middle of the day. But the fear of the unknown suddenly started to haunt me. I looked over my shoulders.” Discuss whether you think fear has returned to Ahana.
5. What do you think Ahana means when she says about Naina, “I was surprised how non-judgmental she was for a change”?
6. “Ahana, I want you to remember this isn’t your fault.” In your opinion, what has led to the transformation in Naina’s tone in this chapter?
7. Share your thoughts and emotions about Naina’s role in Ahana’s life.
8. Do you have someone like Naina in your life—a person who watches your back and protects you against both the known and unknown?
9. “Isn’t that what Masi’s death and your divorce taught you—life happens when you are planning it? Get on the plane now, Ahana.” What significance do you think these words have on the story and Ahana?
10. “My mind kept going back to Rohan. I wanted to update him on everything. But it felt like he didn’t want me. I didn’t realize how much it could hurt to be in love and not have the man you loved be in love with you.” A pivotal moment occurs when Ahana admits she is in love with Rohan but believes he doesn’t love her back. Why do you think Ahana feels this way despite Rohan’s unfaltering attention toward her?

## Chapter Thirty

1. In Ahana’s observations, how does life in New York compare to the one in New Orleans?
2. Why does she miss Rohan in NOLA, specifically?
3. “Hedick told me you’re in NOLA. Since you refuse to communicate with me, I won’t bother you further. My team will work closely with you. All the best for the conference.” Discuss Ahana’s inner state of turmoil upon reading Rohan’s text message.
4. What is your opinion of the in-laws’ side in Indian marriages?
5. Discuss your understanding of a good Indian bride according to this chapter.
6. Why do you think Ahana says to Naina, “I don’t think you would have lasted a day in an Indian marriage”?
7. Why do you think Ahana was unable to recognize that Jay was a psychopath with ulterior motives?

8. Examine the importance of the conversation between Naina and Ahana about Rohan and how it influences the rest of Ahana's life.
9. When Naina blurts out, "It seems to [me] that you don't want to be happy," what do you think she means by it?
10. Discuss whether you think Naina sides with Rohan and picks on Ahana. Or do you believe she is in Ahana's corner, showing her the good in her life?
11. Why does Ahana feel strange being in NOLA and not seeing it through Rohan's eyes?
12. Why do you think Jay abruptly messages Ahana? Do you think he knows she is on to him?
13. "Little did I know that I would come to America to heal myself and would discover the man I love." Despite these feelings, what is Ahana's hesitation about Rohan?
14. What is Naina's response to that?
15. "You allowed yourself to be you in front of Rohan, because deep down you know he is a good guy. When you find someone who makes you happy and you want to keep around, you do something about it." Discuss your thoughts about Naina's advice to Ahana at the restaurant.
16. "I closed my eyes and tried to picture what happiness would feel like—I saw Rohan." Can you get a sense of Ahana's thinking by this point in the chapter?

### Chapter Thirty-One

1. Discuss your feelings when you find out that Rohan is waiting in Ahana's hotel lobby for her.
2. In your opinion, should Naina have interfered in bringing Ahana and Rohan closer together?
3. Did you have a hint that Masi too was in on the plan of getting Ahana and Rohan together?
4. Have you ever eaten a *laddoo*? What did you think of it?
5. "I didn't want to live in the past, but it occurred to me that while Jay had deliberately made me walk into a precarious situation, Rohan was making sure I stayed out of harm's way." What significance does this realization hold in the story?
6. Review the importance of the conversation between Ahana and Rohan when they go for a walk by the Mississippi River.
7. Would you agree that both Ahana and Rohan are healing from betrayal and battling abandonment issues because of their past experiences?
8. In your opinion, did their individual, emotional baggage impact how they behaved toward each other in the past?
9. Share your emotions and thoughts about Rohan's commitment toward Ahana.
10. In this chapter, we learn that Rohan's presence in Ahana's life empowers her as a woman and feminist leader. Have you had someone in your life whose presence inspired you to become a better version of yourself?
11. In following Ahana's journey and Jay's involvement to the bar in NOLA where Ahana,

Naina, Josh, and Rohan meet, what were your emotions? Did you feel fearful for Ahana's safety or what she might encounter? Did you feel anger toward Jay? Were you shocked to read that people like Jay exist and it's not easy to put them behind bars?

12. Naina patiently explains to Ahana, "Your entry into the online world seemed to have sent tendrils out that you cannot retract, and snakes like Jay know how to pick up on your scent." Have you ever been stalked? Or met someone online who knew more about you than he or she should?
13. Ahana admits that her mother's love made her vulnerable instead of strong on some days—do you agree with her stance?

## Chapter Thirty-Two

1. Ahana starts her day with yoga and meditation to collect her thoughts and confidence. How do you start your day? Do you have any morning rituals?
2. Discuss Masi's role in this chapter.
3. Do you see any similarities in family relationships between Eastern and Western cultures? For example, did any of the older characters in the novel, particularly those close to Ahana like Masi and Chutney, surprise you in any way? Discuss how family relationships differ culturally.
4. What lessons did Ahana learn from losing her Mumma?
5. Rohan says to Ahana, "You are spearheading the largest women's conference in the world, Ahana. You're calling attention to the heinous issue of violence against women that should be addressed. I am so proud of you." Ahana was driven by some goals in her life following her divorce and her mother's sudden demise. Do you agree with them? Which one do you think was the toughest? What is the boldest goal you have ever envisioned? How far did you go to pursue it?
6. "Let's go to New Delhi after Naina's wedding. Show me around all the places where your mom liked to hang out." What does this tell us about Rohan's character?
7. What significance do Ahana's reflections on her relationship with her mom have on the story throughout the book?
8. Do you believe in these words by Ahana's Mumma? "When you set your intention and you are truly honest about what you want out of life, the universe conspires to make it all happen."
9. Some of the conference's most important details are reported through Ahana's observations. How effective is that tool?
10. Have you organized or attended a conference?
11. How instrumental was social media networking in creating awareness and spreading the word about the event?
12. "Most events were focused around women learning and realizing how important it was to use their voices." In your opinion, how important are stories and women's voices?
13. "I felt empowered, being at the conference. I was listening to gruesome stories, but I didn't personalize them. I was surrounded by serious discussions, but I had carved out space for the man who made me realize that my vulnerabilities only made me stronger. I

- felt a shift in me and it felt good. In that moment, *No Excuse* came alive in every cell and pore in my body.” Discuss Ahana’s thinking here.
14. Who and what, in your opinion, are the big reasons for the transformation in Ahana where she goes from being a domestic violence survivor to the organizer of the largest feminist conference?
  15. At the end of the second day of the conference, Ahana attends Naina’s informal sangeet and mehendi ceremony where Ahana organizes an Indian wedding outfit, keeping Rohan’s taste in mind. Discuss how the intimate few moments with Rohan in front of the mirror help her let go of all the emotional baggage and scars she had carried around from her marriage to Dev.
  16. Do you recall when Dev’s sadistic personality and Ahana’s marital rape were first mentioned in the story?
  17. Review your understanding of the functions associated with Hindu wedding celebrations. How do they seem different from Western ceremonies?
  18. Research the significance of applying henna to the hands and feet of an Indian bride. Why is the custom practiced, and why is it essential for women to achieve a certain shade of henna?
  19. Have you ever put *mehendi* in your hands? Do you believe in any similar traditions?
  20. “There he was, indulging my aunts, playing with my nieces and nephews, joking and binge-drinking with all the uncles, and partying with the cousins. The natural tendency to draw in people and garner their attention was tattooed on Rohan’s forehead.” What do these thoughts tell us about Rohan in this chapter?
  21. What is your understanding of Bollywood dancing?
  22. Ahana fears Jay’s sudden disappearance. Do you think her fears are justified? Did you expect Jay to show up at the conference and create a ruckus?
  23. Naina explains, “Jay probably has no involvement in this anymore because he is a narcissist and might have moved on to some other drama in his life. You’ll be fine, Ahana.” Discuss what this tells us about Jay’s mindset.
  24. Talk about Rohan’s role on the last day of the conference and the impact of his presence on Ahana’s final speech.
  25. After Ahana shares the truth about sexual assault and domestic violence in her previous marriage, why does she feel empowered?
  26. Discuss the importance of the ending. “Just like that, Dev and Jay’s power evaporated. The damage they had done, it didn’t matter any longer. I was now too strong for them to hold any control over my life. I finally felt free.”

## Dramatis Personae

- Ahana Chopra..... Women’s rights advocate in New Delhi, India  
 Amanda ..... Member of the online therapy group  
 Athena ..... Ahana’s Shih Tzu  
 Baburao ..... Ahana’s driver in New Delhi  
 Chutney ..... Mumma’s youngest sister, who lives in New Delhi  
 Crystal ..... Rohan Brady’s assistant  
 Dev Khanna ..... Ahana’s ex-husband in New Delhi  
 Jay Dubois ..... Ahana’s colleague in online therapy  
 Josh Rossi ..... Cop in NYC and Naina’s fiancé  
 Lakshmi ..... Domestic help at Ahana’s parents’ house in New Delhi  
 Masi..... Mumma’s sister, who lives in New Orleans  
 Mausaa ..... Husband of Masi  
 Megan Black ..... PR Head, *Shine On*  
 Michael Hedick..... Rohan Brady’s boss in the US (“Dracula”)  
 Naina..... Ahana’s cousin, daughter of Masi  
 Rohan Brady ..... Publicist in NYC and NOLA, and Ahana’s conference colleague  
 Sarah Goldstein..... Professor at Columbia University  
 Shelly Roy ..... Executive Director, Freedom Movement  
 Socrates..... Rohan Brady’s Golden Retriever  
 Tanya..... Member of the online therapy group

## A Few Recipes of Dishes Mentioned in the Novel

### Chicken Biryani

- 2 lbs. chicken breast cut into chunks
- 2 cups of cooked Basmati rice
- 1 tbsp. ginger paste
- 1 tbsp. garlic paste
- 1lb. thinly sliced red onion
- 2 tsp. coriander powder
- 6 green cardamoms
- 1/4 tsp. chili powder
- 6 tbsp. plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tsp. garam masala powder
- 2 pinches saffron
- 4 green chilies—sliced
- 2 tomatoes chopped
- 2 tsp. cumin seeds
- 6 tbsp. sunflower oil
- 1 tsp. powdered turmeric
- 1 tbsp. milk
- 1 tbsp. ghee
- 4 tbsp. minced mint leaves
- salt as required

Soak saffron in slightly warm milk and put aside. In a large bowl, combine Greek yogurt, turmeric, chili powder, and half of the ginger and garlic paste. Marinate the chicken breast with this blend and set aside for about 45 minutes.

In a pan, heat sunflower oil on medium heat. Once hot, add the cumin seeds, slit green chilies, and green cardamom for a couple of minutes or until they crackle. Add the sliced onion and fry until it turns pinkish-brown in color. Add the remaining garlic paste, then chopped tomatoes, and then ginger paste. Cook until oil starts to leave the sides of the pan. Add coriander powder and the marinated chicken and mix it up. Cover with a lid and stir occasionally so the chicken isn't burnt. Add a little water if the paste feels too thick. Add ghee.

Once the chicken is cooked, in a separate baking pan, layer rice and chicken and rice again. Sprinkle garam masala, chopped mint leaves, and saffron soaked in milk. Cover with aluminum foil and put in the oven for 10 minutes on 350 degrees Fahrenheit.

Serve hot with cucumber raita.

## Seekh Kabab Indian Style

- 2 lbs. lean ground chicken (or lamb or goat)
- 2 medium red onions—finely chopped
- 1 large egg—beaten
- 2 tbsp. roasted chickpea flour
- ½ cup fresh mint leaves—finely chopped
- ½ cup cilantro—finely chopped
- 1 tbsp. ginger paste
- 1 tbsp. garlic paste
- 1 tsp. cumin powder
- 1 tsp. coriander powder
- ½ tsp. red chili powder
- ¼ cup vegetable oil
- Salt to taste
- skewers

In a large bowl, mix ground chicken, onions, chopped mint, chopped cilantro, ginger paste, and garlic paste. Mix it up with a spoon or ladle. Then add the beaten egg, roasted chickpea flour, cumin powder, coriander powder, chili powder, and salt. Mix again and cover. Refrigerate for two hours. Mold about 1 cup of the chicken mixture to form sausages around skewers. Make sure the meat is spread to an even thickness. Refrigerate until you are ready to grill. Preheat grill for high heat. Brush liberally with oil and arrange kebabs on grill. Cook for 10 minutes, or until well done, turning as needed to brown evenly.

Serve with chutney and salad.

## Mango Lassi

- 1 cup plain non-fat yogurt
- ½ cup milk
- ¼-½ cup canned mango pulp (depending on how sweet and thick you want it)
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom

Add all of the ingredients to a bowl or in a blender and purée until smooth. Serve immediately.

## About the Author

BIO: Sweta Srivastava Vikram ([www.swetavikram.com](http://www.swetavikram.com)), featured by Asian Fusion as “one of the most influential Asians of our time,” is a best-selling author of twelve books, a five-time Pushcart Prize nominee, mindfulness writing coach, social issues advocate, and a certified yoga and Ayurveda counselor who helps people lead creative, productive, and healthier lives. *Louisiana Catch* (Modern History Press 2018) is her debut US novel. It's the #1 new release on Amazon under women's divorce fiction and featured on the UK's list of “Books to Read in 2018.” Born in India, Sweta spent her formative years between the Indian Himalayas, North Africa, and the United States collecting and sharing stories. She writes hopeful stories about multiculturalism and women's issues with a healthy dose of suspense, reflections, wellness, and food. Sweta, whose work has appeared in *The New York Times*, amongst other publications, across nine countries on three continents, is an award-winning writer and graduate of Columbia University. She lives in New York City with her husband, and in her spare time, she teaches yoga to female survivors of rape and domestic violence. You can find her on: Twitter (@swetavikram), Instagram (@swetavikram), and Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/Words.By.Sweta>).