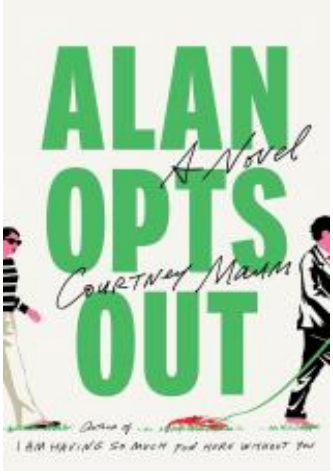
Alan Opts Out

by Courtney Maum



About the Book

In this timely and comedic take on ambition, consumerism and the sticker price of privilege, an ad exec who bombs the biggest pitch of his career decides to forgo capitalism and live off the land of his suburban Connecticut home. Perfect for readers of Rufi Thorpe and Taffy Brodesser-Akner.

Alan Anderson is a powerful advertising executive who has built a successful life and thriving business by making people buy stuff they don?t actually need. He?s up for the biggest pitch of his career and the account *everyone* wants: US Dairy. Cow?s milk sales are plummeting, and the C-Suite wants to see trendy oat milk kicked to the curb. But when an anarchist farmer tanks Alan?s presentation, Alan bombs the pitch but ends the day with an epiphany. No longer will he exploit the insecurities of others in the service of capitalism. Alan is opting out.

This development is anathema to his wife, Vivian. She?s just a few positive affirmations, a swimming pool and an exacting series of social tests away from finally becoming part of the elite women?s club, the Queen Annes, in their adopted town of Greenwich, Connecticut. As if contending with a daughter who wants to write plays (!) and another who has an unnatural empathy with animals isn?t enough to manage, she can only watch as Alan moves into their backyard playhouse to live off the land and --- worse --- spend time with the family. But instead of shocking the neighbors, Alan?s commitment to a less-is-more lifestyle seems to be catching on. Could everyone want what Alan is not selling?

Funny, sexy, intelligent and poignant, ALAN OPTS OUT is the most ambitious novel to date by celebrated author Courtney Maum, acclaimed for her stories that tackle big, chewy subjects of our post-modern America with wit and heart.

Discussion Guide

1. ?Have you ever considered the long-term impacts of what you?re doing? Of telling people that what they have is not

enough?? Why do you think Daniel?s words have such a profound effect on Alan? Does Alan fully embrace a ?less is more? mentality by the book?s end?

2. Vivian?s personal history plays a large role in the decisions she makes and compulsions she demonstrates throughout the book. Do you think her behavior is warranted based on what we know of her past?

3. In their current form, do the Queen Annes represent female empowerment and support, reinforce older clichés and oppress the women in and around the organization, or some combination of both?

4. If Alan had been anyone else, would that have changed how his behavior was received? Do you think there?s a certain level of privilege built into his behavior?

5. Throughout the novel, a character named Fred keeps reappearing to sell wares and sow discord in the neighborhood group chat. Did you have an idea of who Fred was before we officially learned their identity? What do you think Fred's motivation was for their actions online and off?

6. Vivian wants a swimming pool so that Bailey and Sunny will fit in better with their peers. She buys Sunny the most expensive and popular helmet for her horseback riding and makes sure Bailey attends the most exclusive school. Can you understand why she prioritizes what she does for her daughters?

7. Ultimately, this is a book about what really matters at the end of the day: not things, but people. In what small ways throughout the novel did you see the Anderson family?s relationships with each other grow?

8. How did you feel about the ending? What do you think is next for the Andersons?

9. Do you think "the American Dream" is achievable? If so, did the Andersons ever reach it at any point in the novel?

Author Bio

Along with her latest novel, ALAN OPTS OUT, Courtney Maum is the author of five previous books, including the romantic comedy TOUCH (a *New York Times* Editors? Choice) and the memoir THE YEAR OF THE HORSES, chosen by the ?Today? show as one of the best reads for mental health awareness.

Creator of the groundbreaking publishing guidebook BEFORE AND AFTER THE BOOK DEAL and the bestselling Substack newsletter by the same name, Maum is an educator and writing coach hellbent on preserving the joy of art-making in a culture obsessed with turning artists into brands.

In addition to her advocacy work for writers at The Author?s Guild, Courtney runs a workshop in New Mexico where she combines 20 years of experience in advertising with a deep love of craft to help writers boost their confidence and industry know-how.

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