

We Can Only Save Ourselves

author: Alison Wisdom

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Synopsis

author	Alison Wisdom
readBy	Jesse Vilinsky
inLanguage	english

Alison Wisdom's addictive, down-the-rabbit-hole debut reads like *The Girls* by way of *The Virgin Suicides*, with an extra dash of Cheever's unsettling suburbia. The result is sinister and surprising: a novel I couldn't put down, and one that I kept thinking about long after I'd reached its unexpected, chilling end." —Emily Temple, author of *The Lightness*

One of *Newsweek*, *Bustle*, and LitHub's Most Anticipated Books and Goodreads' "Debut Novels to Discover in 2021," *We Can Only Save Ourselves* is the story of one teenage girl's unlikely indoctrination and the reverberations in the tight-knit community she leaves behind.

Alice Lange's neighbors are proud to know her—a high-achieving student, cheerleader, and all-around good citizen, she's a perfect emblem of their sunny neighborhood. The night before she's expected to be crowned Homecoming Queen, though, she commits an act of vandalism, then disappears, following a magnetic stranger named Wesley to a bungalow in another part of the state. There, he promises, Alice can be her true self, shedding the shackles of conformity.

At the bungalow, however, she learns that four other young women seeking enlightenment and adventure have already followed him there. Her new lifestyle is intoxicating at first, but as Wesley's demands on all of them increase, the house becomes a pressure cooker—until one day they reach the point of no return.

Back home, the story of Alice's disappearance and radicalization is framed by the first-person plural chorus of the mothers who knew her before, who worry about her, but also resent the tear she made in the fabric of their perfect world, one that exposes the question: Isn't suburbia a kind of cult unto itself?

Combining the sharp social critique of Celeste Ng's *Little Fires Everywhere* with the elegiac beauty of

Emma Cline's *The Girls*, this is a fierce literary debut from a writer to watch.

Reader's comments

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