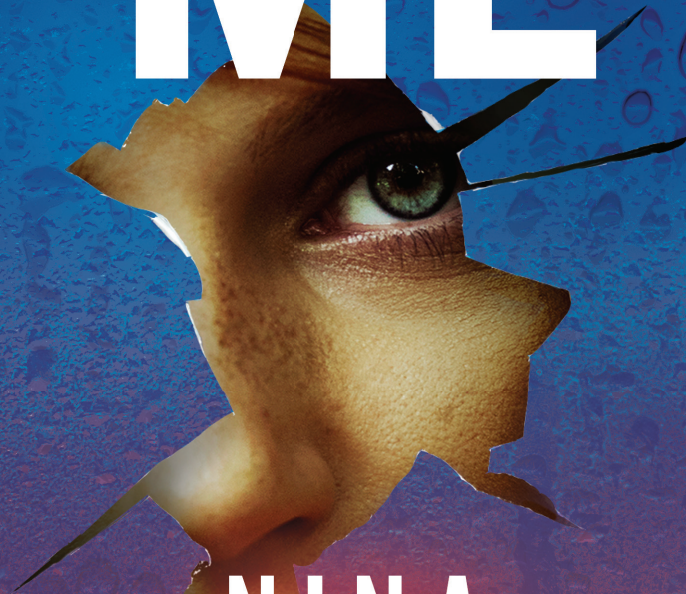


# CONVINCE ME



NINA  
SADOWSKY

BOOK CLUB KIT

# LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Reader:

While reading books has been my escape my entire life, writing my new thriller *Convince Me*, was an escape of a whole other sort.

The book was fueled by my rage about a post-truth society, in which facts are no longer facts, science is under attack, and behaving with honesty and integrity seems downright quaint. As I use writing to process my fears and furies about the world, I began to wonder how I could explore this subject matter in a novel. And since I write psychological thrillers, I asked: What makes a sociopath in the age of untruth?

Once I posed that question, the plot for the book came into my head like an arrow, right down to the final twist! Trust me, this is unusual; my normal process involves plodding along like a mule, as I outline, revise, and revise yet again and again. But with *Convince Me*, I felt clear with purpose and feverish with the need to write, and I did so, in explosive bursts whenever I could scratch out even a few minutes. It felt like I pulled that arrow right out of my forehead and into my computer one inch at a time. I realized that through the writing I was exorcising my rage.

Don't get me wrong—I'm still mad as hell about what a culture infected by the pathology of lying is doing to our country. And

I'm back to plodding like a mule as I work on my next book. But *Convince Me* marked a change for me, both in my process and in my content. The book is a ride, one that I designed to take the reader on a breathless and entertaining unravelling of the life and times of an unrepentant pathological liar. But I also hope the novel prompts readers to ask themselves questions about what they believe and why they believe it, with the recognition that the messenger is as important as the message.

If the themes I'm exploring interest you, I hope you enjoy *Convince Me*—and if you love it, as I hope you do, please spread the word.

Stay safe. Stay well. Long live books.

All my best,

Nina Sadowsky

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Justin lies to so many people throughout his life—his wife, his mother, his friends, even himself. Do you think he always knew he was lying? Do you think there was anything authentic in Justin's life? Do you agree that a good liar first lies to him or herself?
2. Do you think there is such a thing as a harmless or justifiable lie? Where do you draw the line?
3. Nina Sadowsky intersperses the novel with dictionary definitions. Why do you think she chose to do this? What effect did it have on you while reading? What insight do they give you into Annie's character?
4. At the very end of the novel, Annie wonders, "Did [Justin's] close bond with his mother provoke a first act of murderous violence against his father?" What do you think happened? Do you think that Justin was born with some seed of evil, or was his behavior learned from being Carol's son? Do you think either Carol or Justin were actually responsible for his father's death?
5. Annie says: "It appears Justin lived many lives—as a means of advancement, in order to elicit love, to manipulate, for the sheer, audacious aim of seeing [what] he could get away with." If you were a master manipulator like him, what would be the kind of life you would want to live?
6. Do you find that things that seem "too good to be true" often are? How do the novel's characters struggle to reconcile their loyalty, morality, and denial?
7. How does Annie and Will's relationship evolve as both characters navigate the fallout of Justin's death? Where do you think they will end up?
8. Our current moment is often described as a "post-truth era." Do you think we put too much value on charismatic individuals? Have you ever believed something based solely on your opinion of the person who told it to you? If so, what were the consequences?
9. Discuss the novel's ending. Do you think it's possible that there were characters we were supposed to believe who might still be lying? Who of the three narrators did you consider the most unreliable narrator?
10. At the end of the novel Annie says, "It looks like I am a storyteller in the end. It's no surprise, really. After all, I learned from the very best." What do you think is the connection between storytelling, lying, and convincing? How do they operate in tandem with one another?

# RECIPES



## ANNIE'S AVOCADO TOAST BITES

### Ingredients

- 1 small baguette (5 ounces)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 ripe avocado
- 1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- Coarse salt and ground pepper
- 2 cups grape tomatoes, quartered

Preheat oven to 350°. Slice baguette diagonally into sixteen ½-inch-thick slices; brush both sides with olive oil. Bake on a baking sheet until golden, about 8 minutes.

Halve avocado lengthwise and remove pit; scoop flesh into a small bowl. Mash with lemon juice; season with coarse salt and ground pepper. Spread on toasted bread; top with grape tomatoes.

# RECIPES

## WILL'S WEST COAST TACO CUPS

### Ingredients

- 1 pound ground beef
- ½ cup chopped onion
- 1 envelope taco seasoning
- 1 can (16 ounces) refried beans
- 2 tubes (8 ounces each) refrigerated seamless crescent dough sheet
- 1½ cups shredded cheddar cheese
- Optional toppings: Chopped tomatoes, sliced ripe olives, shredded lettuce, sour cream, guacamole, and salsa

Preheat oven to 375°. In a large skillet, cook beef and onion over medium heat 6-8 minutes or until no longer pink, breaking into crumbles; drain. Stir in taco seasoning and refried beans; heat through.

Unroll each tube of dough into a long rectangle. Cut each rectangle into 12 pieces; press lightly onto bottom and up sides of 24 ungreased muffin cups.

Fill each muffin cup with a rounded tablespoonful of beef mixture; sprinkle each with 1 tablespoon cheese. Bake 14-16 minutes or until dough is golden brown. Cool in pans 10 minutes before removing. Serve with toppings as desired.



# RECIPES

## CAROL'S CARAMEL POPCORN

### Ingredients

- 1 cup butter
- 2 cups brown sugar
- ½ cup corn syrup
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 5 quarts popped popcorn

Preheat oven to 250°. Place popcorn in a very large bowl.

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Stir in brown sugar, corn syrup, and salt. Bring to a boil, stirring constantly. Boil without stirring for 4 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in soda and vanilla. Pour in a thin stream over popcorn, stirring to coat.

Place in two large shallow baking dishes and bake in preheated oven, stirring every 15 minutes, for 1 hour. Remove from oven and let cool completely before breaking into pieces.



# COCKTAILS



## ANNIE'S APEROL SPRITZ

### Ingredients

- Ice
- 3 ounces (1 part) Aperol
- 3 ounces (1 part) dry Prosecco
- 1 ounce (a splash) club soda
- Orange slice, for garnish

Add ice to a wine glass until nearly full. Pour in equal amounts Aperol and Prosecco. Top off with a splash of club soda and add a slice of orange.



## WILL'S WATERMELON MARTINI

### Ingredients

- 1 pinch salt as needed
- 1 pinch white sugar as needed
- 1 cup watermelon juice
- ¼ cup vodka
- ¼ cup watermelon schnapps
- 2 tablespoons simple syrup
- 1 lime, juiced

Combine some salt and sugar in a small bowl, and pour onto a small, shallow plate. Moisten the rims of 2 glasses with a piece of watermelon, and dip the moistened glass rims into the salt and sugar mixture; set aside.

Pour the watermelon juice, vodka, watermelon schnapps, simple syrup, and lime juice into a cocktail shaker over ice. Cover, and shake until the outside of the shaker has frosted. Strain into the prepared glasses.



## CAROL'S CATALINA MARGARITA

### Ingredients

- 1½ ounces tequila
- 1 ounce peach schnapps
- 1 ounce blue curaçao
- ½ ounce sour mix (fresh)

In a cocktail shaker filled with ice, pour the tequila, peach schnapps, blue curaçao, and sour mix. Shake well. Strain into a chilled margarita glass. To serve frozen, combine the ingredients with 1 cup of ice in a blender and mix until smooth.

# THE LIARS AND LYING TOP TEN PLAYLIST BY NINA SADOWSKY

Listen along on Spotify at <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/2vi8m1ekJrBbEfJLc09Zc7?si=P6o5GYz-SPix0-IzUMRLKA>

1. **The Black Keys – [Lies](#)**

“I’ve got a stone where my heart should be”

2. **Black Eyed Peas – [Don’t Lie](#)**

“I lied and I cheated and I did it a little more, but after I did it, I don’t know what I did it for”

3. **The Pretenders – [Lie to Me](#)**

“You want to impress me and depress me with your web of sin”

4. **Eminem and Rhianna – [Love The Way You Lie](#)**

“Just gonna stand there and hear me cry. Well that’s alright, because I love the way you lie / I love the way you lie”

5. **Eurythmics – [Would I Lie to You?](#)**

“Would I lie to you? Would I lie to you honey? / Now would I say something that wasn’t true? / I’m asking you sugar, would I lie to you?”

6. **Dr. John – [You Lie Too Much](#)**

“Honey you lie too much. Little girl you lie too much. You pick ‘em up, you put ‘em down. You lie with every man in town”

7. **Tom Waits – [Lie to Me](#)**

“Slap me baby. Give me all of your grief. I have no use for the truth. Lie to me baby”

8. **Liz Phair - [Why I Lie](#)**

“If you ask me why I lie to you. I can tell you I don’t know myself. It’s amazingly dishonest. But I’d have to recognize it. As part of myself”

9. **Alice Merton – [Lie To My Face](#)**

“Go on and lie to my face. Tell me again how you love me while kissing another girl. Lie to my face. Say that you need me, without us there’s no other way. Tell me this won’t ever end. Tell me it over and over again. Lie to me my friend”

10. **Albert King – [Don’t Lie to Me](#)**

“There’s two kind of people I just can’t stand. Evil-hearted woman. And a lyin’ man. / Don’t you lie to me. Now don’t you lie to me. Because it makes me mad”

