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Here One Moment  
by Liane Moriarty

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## Discussion Questions

1. Would you do anything differently if you knew the exact date you were going to die?
2. How did your opinion about Cherry change from when you first started the book to when you finished it?
3. Cherry calls herself “the butterfly” and “the agent of chaos.” What does she mean by that?
4. How do the passengers handle Cherry’s predictions in the days, weeks, and months after the flight? Do you think their lives would have unfolded differently had it been an uneventful trip? Whose story—or fate—did you feel most invested in?
5. Do you believe that fate can be fought? Can it be changed? Do you think Cherry’s predictions were based on fate or did they help put events in motion?
6. What might make a person take stock in the predictions of clairvoyants? Have you had any personal experiences with a clairvoyant that made you a believer—or a nonbeliever?
7. How does knowing Cherry’s life story help us understand her “gift”?
8. What does the book say about the power of words?
9. Do you think we all have a “psychic” ability? Do you think it’s a supernatural sixth sense or simply being highly attuned to our environment and the signs around us?
10. In the end, is Cherry correct about her predictions?
11. Discuss the writing. How does Moriarty create tension and emotion as the story unfolds?
12. What does the book tell us about chance? About intuition?
13. How do we cope with a world of uncertainty and unpredictability? How do the characters cope with the “certainty” of their fates? Is it better to know or not know?
14. Did the themes throughout the book—anxiety, fear, mortality, grief, hope—resonate with you and if so, how?

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/760973/here-one-moment-by-liane-moriarty/readers-guide/>

## Author Interview

# Liane Moriarty Has Sold 20 Million Books. She Would Rather Not Talk About It.

The author of “Big Little Lies” and several other best-sellers has a new novel, “Here One Moment.” Promoting it — doing any publicity — remains a challenge, she said  
by Elizabeth Harris

Liane Moriarty has reached a level of success few authors can claim. She has written eight best sellers, including “Big Little Lies,” “Apples Never Fall” and “The Husband’s Secret.” Several of her novels have been adapted for television, in limited series that star actors including Nicole Kidman, Reese Witherspoon, Annette Bening and Meryl Streep. All told, Moriarty has sold more than 20 million books.

Despite all that success, the author shows little interest in becoming a “brand.” In fact, she doesn’t particularly enjoy talking about herself.

But Moriarty, 57, has a new book: “Here One Moment,” which will be published on Sept. 10. And so, ahead of her book’s release, Moriarty spoke to The Times in a video interview from her home in Sydney about her work habits, the challenges of doing publicity, and how one moment can change the course of a life.

Her new novel explores that conceit. It is about a woman on a flight from Hobart, in Australia, to Sydney, who stands up mid-flight and starts telling passengers how and when they will die. She walks down the aisle of the airplane, points at them, one by one, and names their end — pancreatic cancer, age 66, or intimate partner homicide, age 25.

“Fate won’t be fought,” she says. Then the plane lands, and its passengers have to figure out how to go about their lives with these predictions in mind.

*This conversation has been condensed and edited for clarity.*

**I read that a couple years ago, you tried to take a year off writing, and you were calling it your “year of joy” — but then you failed to do that and wrote a book instead. Why did you want to step back for a year?**

I always feel a little bit odd at the end of the promotional period. Because it’s too much time talking about yourself — like I’m doing right now.

**Fair enough.**

I'm at the beginning of it now, so I'm still a little bit awkward and not quite into the zone. But there's a period I will get to in four or five weeks where I'll be in that zone. Then I'll start to feel like, Oh, you're getting a bit pleased with yourself — and then the self-loathing will start. By the end of the tour, I just need to stop completely. That's how I felt. But it wasn't so much, stop writing. It was, I don't want to start talking about myself again!

**This is a vast oversimplification but that's not very American of you.**

I know, it's definitely an Australian trait. And I guess a trait for women, as well. But as I say, there's a part in the middle where I start to kind of like it.

**Does that feel OK? Or does it feel icky?**

It feels icky. That's the part when I come home from doing an event, and while doing the event, I enjoyed it. But then in the middle of the night in the hotel room, I'll wake up thinking, "Ugh!" I can't stand imagining my little laughs and the little joke I've told.

**What is it called, "tall poppy syndrome?"**

That's definitely part of it — don't take yourself too seriously. Don't be too pleased with yourself, or they'll come and get you. So I'm going to get myself first. To be self-deprecating is a trait that we enjoy.

**Was it weird the first time one of your books was adapted? Was it weird seeing a character you created in your head out in the world, eating salad?**

Yes! It's a really interesting experience because you have to let go a little bit. I'm happy that I didn't get very involved because when I see adaptations myself, I think the best adaptations are not completely faithful to the material. It's a different medium and there should be changes. Having said that, of course, when it's my work, I don't especially want changes. It's funny because I say, "Oh, yes, I understand there should be changes." But then I think, "Don't change that!"

**A lot of writers who are as successful as you become brands in various ways. I get the sense you're not interested in that.**

I'm interested in the books and I'm interested in the readers, which is why I would never say, "I don't want to do tutoring anymore." I do love meeting the readers. If nobody ever read your books, would you still write? I wouldn't. That's part of it, that I write the book and there's a reader who reads it.

I used to take myself too seriously, not liking being called a holiday read. But now I've realized, holiday reads are the best reads. That's the time you really can immerse yourself in a book. So that's really important to me. But being an actual personality — I don't have the right personality to be a personality.

I have a marketing background. So I can see, sometimes, what a publicist wants from me, and I understand exactly why. But at the same time, I feel a great resistance to doing it because I don't want to be the product. There's just this agony of self-consciousness that can come over me.

**It is an odd match, right? Authors have to promote their books, but those skills are so different from the skills that make a great writer. It's the opposite, really. You want to sit in a room by yourself for long stretches of time — or stand in front of a group of people and explain your inner thoughts.**

It's funny that they expect you to be the sort of person who can see nobody — and now you need to be a stand-up comedian. And don't be weird and shy, but of course you are! That's exactly the sort of person who writes books.

Did you want me to tell you the story of how I came up with this book?

**Please, go ahead**

I was on a flight out of Hobart, Tasmania, which is a little island state down the bottom of Australia.

The flight was delayed, and I was sitting there and I didn't have a book. I was looking around and this cheerful thought came into my head, which was that every single person on this plane is one day going to die.

And looking back, I think there's a reason my thoughts were turning to this issue of mortality. First of all, my sister got diagnosed with breast cancer, and then I lost my father, just at the beginning of the pandemic. So then we had the pandemic when all of us started to look death in the face. Then I got diagnosed with breast cancer. My sister and I, we're both fine now, but your 50s is a time when people around you start to get diagnosed with things. At every event I'm at with my friends, we all seemed to begin with going through all our health issues — which we can't believe! You spend the rest of your life unable to believe you're getting old.

So I was thinking about mortality, and then the thought came into my head that one day, the data on how every single person on this plane — their ages and cause of death — will be known. And for some reason, that sort of blew my mind. That those facts will one day be available. And that's when I thought, imagine if that information was available right now.

**It's interesting to think about how that sort of thing happens, right? If you hadn't been on that plane, or if you had a book, maybe you just wouldn't have had that moment.**

I know, maybe I wouldn't. I wouldn't have thought of it.

A version of this article appears in print on Sept. 11, 2024, Section C, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: It All Comes Down To This.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/10/books/here-one-moment-liane-moriarty.html>

## Author Biography

Liane was born in Sydney, Australia in the spring of 1966. It was a beautiful day, according to her mother, who has an excellent memory for weather. A few hours after Liane was born she smiled directly at her father through the nursery glass window, which is remarkable, seeing as most babies can't even focus their eyes at that age.

Her first word was 'glug'. This was faithfully recorded in the baby book kept by her mother. As the eldest of six children, Liane was the only one to get a baby book so she likes to refer to it often.

She can't remember the first story she ever wrote, but she does remember her first publishing deal. Her father 'commissioned' her to write a novel for him and offered an advance of \$1. She had no agent, so accepted his first offer and wrote a three volume epic called 'The Mystery of Dead Man's Island.' Only volume 2 remains in print.

After leaving school, Liane worked in advertising and marketing and did a business degree. She got excellent marks at university until her last semester, when she did a subject which 'brought together' everything she had learned in her degree thus far. She only just passed. (No-one mentioned you were meant to retain that stuff.)

She became quite corporate for a while and wore big-shouldered suits and fretted about the size of her office. She eventually left her position as marketing manager to run her own (not especially successful) business called The Little Ad Agency. After that she worked as a (more successful, thankfully) freelance advertising copywriter, writing everything from websites and TV commercial to the back of the Sultana Bran box.

In her spare time, she wrote short stories and many first chapters of novels that didn't go any further. The problem was that she didn't actually believe that real people had novels published. Then one day she found out that they did, when her younger sister Jaclyn Moriarty called to say that her first brilliant YA novel was about to be published.

In a fever of sibling rivalry, Liane rushed to the computer and wrote a children's book which went on to be enthusiastically rejected by every publisher in Australia.

She calmed down and enrolled in a Masters degree at Macquarie University in Sydney. As part of that degree, she wrote her first novel, *Three Wishes*. It went on to be published around the world. Since then she has written eight more novels: *The Last Anniversary*, *What Alice Forgot*, *The Hypnotist's Love Story*, *The Husband's Secret*, *Big Little Lies*, *Truly Madly Guilty*, *Nine Perfect Strangers* and *Apples Never Fall*, as well as the Nicola Berry series for children. She is

forever grateful to her sister Jaci for being published first.

In August 2013 Liane's fifth novel *The Husband's Secret* was released in the US and within two weeks had climbed the charts to become a #1 New York Times Bestseller. Much champagne was drunk.

It remained on the New York Times bestseller list for over a year and was recently selected by the UK's famous Richard and Judy Book Club as one of their top reads of the last ten years.

Liane's next novel, *Big Little Lies* debuted at number one on the New York Times bestseller list, making Liane the first Australian author to debut in the top spot in the US.

Nicole Kidman and Reese Witherspoon snapped up the film and television rights. Liane was so dazzled by their combined star power she became briefly disoriented but recovered in time to accept their offer. The HBO limited series of *Big Little Lies* was a critically acclaimed smash hit which went on to win multiple Emmys. Liane managed to make it up on stage at the Emmys without tripping, which she considers one of her life's major achievements.

*Nine Perfect Strangers* was also adapted into an incredible limited television series, this time by Hulu. It featured another incredible star-studded cast including Nicole Kidman and Melissa McCarthy, and aired in 2021. Her most recent novel, *Apples Never Fall*, is currently being adapted into a limited series at Peacock.

Liane's sister Jaclyn continues to write wonderful, award-winning books for children, teenagers and adults. Her youngest sister Nicola Moriarty is also now an author of gripping, impossible-to-put-down domestic thrillers. Her other sisters have no interest in writing and they really love it when people say, "Are you one of the authors?"

Liane is now a full-time author. She has sold over 20 million copies of her books worldwide and her novels have been translated into forty languages.

She lives in Sydney with her husband, son and daughter. When she's not writing she can be found reading, demanding coffee, being taken for a brisk walk by her Labrador, skiing like she's thirty years younger than she is, recovering from skiing injuries, talking to old friends about getting old, and begging her children for help with technology.

<https://lianemoriarty.com.au/about-liane/>



## In Liane Moriarty's Bustling New Novel, Fate Takes Flight

There are stakes on the plane in "Here One Moment,"  
the latest from the Australian fiction powerhouse.

by Leah Greenblatt

Leah Greenblatt is a Times editor.

Nine novels in, Liane Moriarty's output falls somewhere between empire and institution: a reliable bastion of breezy yet propulsive storytelling, smartly informed by relevant issues of the day (infertility, wellness culture, domestic abuse). Her books claim prime real estate at chain stores and airports kiosks and regularly go on to become glossy television fodder, more often than not fronted by her fellow Australian Nicole Kidman (see "Big Little Lies," "Nine Perfect Strangers" and the upcoming "The Last Anniversary," which she'll produce).

At the same time, Moriarty is still consigned to the metaphorical broom closet of "women's fiction" — dismissed as something less than literature or damned with faint pink praise. Never mind that her latest, the busy but unhurried "Here One Moment," is as demographically diverse as a phone book. Granted, it helps when your character pool is pulled from a flight manifest: a short domestic plane ride between the sunny Tasmanian capital of Hobart and Sydney.

Or it should have been short, except for a two-hour delay that leaves passengers tetchy and frazzled, each one caught up in the private drama of mislaid plans. Among them: the 40-ish engineer missing his daughter's grammar-school "Lion King"; the contract lawyer turned bleary stay-at-home mom left to wrangle a screaming infant and a vomitous toddler; and the beautiful flight attendant spending perhaps her worst birthday on the tarmac, distributing "light snacks" and strained apologies in between desperate rummages for a tampon.

Into this maelstrom of ordinary inconvenience arrives someone who may or may not be extraordinary: a quiet woman, neatly dressed and with hair "the soft silver of an expensive kitten," who stands up in her seat 45 minutes after takeoff. "I expect catastrophic stroke," she proclaims with no particular flair, pointing to a preoccupied 50-something man on a laptop. "Age 72." And so it goes down the rows, the solemn finger of fate: Heart disease, age 84; cardiac arrest, age 91; diabetes, age 79.

Her impromptu performance might be dismissed as a kooky parlor game by the passengers whose presumptive ends still lie decades away, but it is less amusing to the ones given more immediate and violent fates: workplace accident, age 43; assault, age 30; intimate partnerhomicide, age 25. Even the baby on board, blameless except for the screaming, receives his sentence; drowning, age 7.

And when a shy, pretty 19-year-old named Kayla is killed in a car crash, as predicted, several months later, followed shortly by an elderly couple whose passing had also been ordained on the plane, the whole thing no longer seems like an obtuse in-flight joke or a fun dinner-party anecdote. “The Death Lady,” as the excitable internet soon christens her, has either seen the future or summoned it. So what does that mean for the diffident tech worker whose 30th birthday now looms with the threat of some bloody end, or the anxious newlywed whose sweet, hapless husband seems like the last man likely to murder his wife?

Moriarty is in no great rush to resolve these mysteries. Over 500-plus pages, she dips leisurely into the daily lives of a half-dozen or so characters while also doing a slow narrative striptease on the inscrutable Lady, whose name turns out to be Cherry and whose recall of her behavior on the plane is a confounding blank, even if her core memories — lost loves, career pivots, private grievances — are as fresh to her as yesterday.

All these intersecting plotlines require a certain vigilance from the reader, and an ability to retain their disparate threads from one brief, round-robin chapter to the next. Some protagonists, inevitably, are more compelling than others: Allegra, the flight attendant whose outer loveliness is belied by crippling self-doubt; the increasingly addled Paula, whose fear for her small son triggers a long-dormant case of O.C.D.; or Leo, whose hunger to be the best provider-husband-father-employee might actually be the death of him.

A lot also hangs on your investment in Cherry, whose shrouded back story takes up much of the book (I liked her odd-duck meanderings, eventually), along with your appreciation of a final “twist” that wafts in almost casually, with a let’s-just-wrap-this-puppy-up shrug.

Moriarty’s signatures are still reassuringly present, if somewhat diluted across these pages: her way of conjuring believable characters from a few short sentences — they may be archetypes, but they’re well-drawn ones — and the gentle humor and unshowy emotional intelligence that undergirds it. (She also remains one of the few mainstream fiction writers to consistently center the joys and tribulations of midlife and beyond, as if turning 40 does not in fact compel one to dissolve into dust like a cursed mummy.

As easily as it goes down, though, “Here One Moment” too often misses the tug and wallop of a good, taut thriller. In a way, the book itself feels like a generous sketch, less a fully realized novel than a work in progress still searching for its final form. Maybe that’s a job for Nicole Kidman; let her take it from here.

A version of this article appears in print on Oct. 13, 2024, Page 19 of the Sunday Book Review with the headline: Stakes on a Plane.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/10/books/review/liane-moriarty-here-one-moment>

