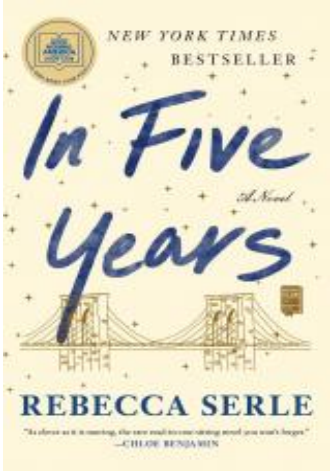
In Five Years

by Rebecca Serle



About the Book

Perfect for fans of ME BEFORE YOU and ONE DAY --- a striking, powerful and moving love story following an ambitious lawyer who experiences an astonishing vision that could change her life forever.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

When Type-A Manhattan lawyer Dannie Cohan is asked this question at the most important interview of her career, she has a meticulously crafted answer at the ready. Later, after nailing her interview and accepting her boyfriend?s marriage proposal, Dannie goes to sleep knowing she is right on track to achieve her five-year plan.

But when she wakes up, she?s suddenly in a different apartment, with a different ring on her finger and beside a very different man. The television news is on in the background, and she can just make out the scrolling date. It?s the same night --- December 15 --- but 2025, five years in the future.

After a very intense, shocking hour, Dannie wakes again, at the brink of midnight, back in 2020. She can?t shake what has happened. It certainly felt much more than merely a dream, but she isn?t the kind of person who believes in visions. That nonsense is only charming coming from free-spirited types, like her lifelong best friend, Bella. Determined to ignore the odd experience, she files it away in the back of her mind.

That is, until four-and-a-half years later, when by chance Dannie meets the very same man from her long-ago vision.

Brimming with joy and heartbreak, IN FIVE YEARS is an unforgettable love story that reminds us of the power of loyalty, friendship and the unpredictable nature of destiny.

Discussion Guide

1. From the very beginning of the book, we learn that Dannie has rules and plans laid out for everything in her life. Do you believe this helps or hinders her? How does her philosophy regarding keeping everything in its place change over the course of the novel?

2. To Dannie, the law is ?like poetry, but poetry with outcome, poetry with concrete meaning --- with actionable power? (page 10). Later she describes the law by saying that ?everything is there in black and white? (page 142). How does the law empower Dannie? To what extent do you think the law shapes how rigidly she sees the world? As the book goes on, power is often taken out of Dannie?s hands. Do you think her background makes this lack of control harder for her than it might be for others?

3. While Bella is a tragic character, she is not painted simply in an angelic light. Early on in the story, Dannie describes her as being ?spoiled, mercurial, and more than a little bit magical? (page 6). Is Bella?s portrayal as a complicated, sometimes flawed character unique given the ending of the book and the typical depiction of the tragic heroine?

4. The scene between Dannie and Aaron in Chapter 3 is mirrored by the same scene in Chapter 41. How did your impressions of the two characters change over the course of the book? Why do you think the author chose to frame the story with two identical scenes that will mean different things to the reader at different points in the story?

5. Bella gifts Dannie a print by the artist Allen Grubesic that reads: *I WAS YOUNG I NEEDED THE MONEY*. All the characters in the book are well-off financially by the time we meet them. What do you think the print?s message means in the context of the story?

6. Dannie believes that ?Bella lives in a world I do not understand, populated by phrases and philosophies that apply only to people like her. People, maybe, who do not yet know tragedy? (pages 44?45). How do you think the death of Dannie?s brother at such a young age affects her outlook? Do you think she envies Bella for not carrying a similar burden, or does she look up to her for it? How do you think the fact that Dannie has already lost someone close to her affects her when Bella?s diagnosis is revealed?

7. Bella introduces her new boyfriend as Greg, but, of course, Dannie already knows him as Aaron and has a hard time referring to him as anything other than Aaron. Why do you think he is introduced to us with two different names? Is Bella?s version of him different from Dannie?s version of him?

8. Dannie visits a therapist, Dr. Christine, once after her dream and once after she meets Aaron in real life. Why do you think she sees Dr. Christine only twice? What decisions does Dannie make after leaving these appointments?

9. How does Dannie and Bella?s relationship change after Bella?s diagnosis? How does it affect the other relationships in Dannie?s and Bella?s lives? Why do you think it?s easier for Bella to be around Aaron than it is for her to be around Dannie?

10. Were you surprised that Dannie and Aaron kissed when he reveals that the apartment is a gift from Bella? Do you think it amounts to a betrayal of Bella?s trust? How does Dannie and Aaron?s connection to Bella intensify their own relationship?

11. Fate is a concept that is played with often throughout the novel. Dannie fights to change the fate she saw laid out in her vision. Aaron told Bella he was fated to end up with her. How do fate and free will interact in the novel? Do you think the book comes down on the side of one over the other?

12. Near the end of the book, Bella tells Dannie that she is meant to have love beyond her wildest dreams because ?that?s the way you love me? (page 205). How does the book portray the roles of romantic and platonic love? How did the book subvert the idea that the great love of Dannie?s life would be one of the two men we were introduced to at the beginning of the novel?

13. Were you surprised that Dannie and Aaron did not end up together? What do you think this means for Dannie?s journey and her future relationships?

14. Magical realism is an element of the story but only when it comes to Dannie?s ability to see one evening five years in her future. Why do you think there?s a magical component in this one instance but nowhere else? Did the book?s hyperrealistic premise affect your expectations for how it would end?

Author Bio

Rebecca Serle is the *New York Times* bestselling author of ONCE AND AGAIN, EXPIRATION DATES, ONE ITALIAN SUMMER, IN FIVE YEARS, THE DINNER LIST, and the young adult novels THE EDGE OF FALLING and WHEN YOU WERE MINE. Serle also developed the hit TV adaptation "Famous in Love," based on her YA series of the same name. She is a graduate of USC and The New School and lives in Los Angeles with her husband and daughter.

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