Once and Again

by Rebecca Serle



About the Book

New York Times **bestselling author Rebecca Serle, the author behind the ?heartbreaking, redemptive and authentic? (Jamie Ford, *New York Times* bestselling author) modern classic IN FIVE YEARS, returns with an unforgettable tale of a family of women with an astonishing gift: the ability to redo one moment in their lives.**

The women of the Novak family were each born with a gift: they can, just once, turn back time.

Lauren has known since she was 15 that her mother, Marcella, saved Lauren?s father from a deadly car accident. Dave is alive and happy, and out on the Malibu waves. But ever since, Marcella, her power spent, has lived in fear of what she won?t be able to reverse. Her own mother, Sylvia, is her polar opposite: a free-spirited iconoclast with a glamorous past she only hints at. Lauren has spent her life between these two role models --- and waiting for her own catastrophe to strike.

Then one summer, Lauren?s husband takes a job in New York, and she moves back to Broad Beach Road, back into her childhood home on the shores of Malibu. Lauren looks forward to surfing with her dad again and perhaps repairing an unspoken fracture in her relationship with her mother. What she doesn?t expect is for the boy next to door to return home as well: Stone, Lauren?s first love, who broke her heart nearly a decade before.

As Lauren falls into familiar patterns, with her family and, more dangerously, Stone, she finds herself thinking about all the choices, large and small, that have brought her to this moment. And wondering, finally, if one of them should be undone.

Discussion Guide

1. In Chapter 2, Irina reflects, ?I knew from a young age I had this ticket?and it was my job to decide which of them all

was worthy of taking back.? How does this early understanding of the ticket frame the novel?s central question about choice, regret and responsibility?

2. Lauren learns about the tickets just two months after her father?s accident --- knowledge that both privileges her and burdens her. How does knowing her mother already used her ticket shape Lauren?s understanding of responsibility and fear? In what ways does the possibility that something could happen to her father again deepen Lauren?s sense of helplessness rather than comfort?

3. Lauren?s struggle with IVF places her and Leo in a relentless cycle of money, medical treatments and cautious hopefulness. How does this ongoing pressure to ?keep trying? strain their marriage emotionally and practically?

4. In Chapter 8, we discover that Marcella learns about the ticket only after experiencing a traumatic event. How do you think the timing of this influenced her decision to go back in time? How do you think that her decision might have differed if she had known about the ticket earlier in life?

5. Sylvia?s free-spirited embrace of life stands in sharp contrast to Marcella?s fear-driven caution. Which philosophy do you relate to more?

6. Dave?s heart condition reminds the family that preparation doesn?t prevent pain. How does Dave?s refusal to let fear dictate his life challenge Marcella?s worldview?

7. Like Lauren, Stone is grappling with the inevitability of an aging parent. How does this shared experience shape their reconnection?

8. When Lauren finally uses her ticket in Chapter 21, what was your immediate reaction? Relief, frustration, understanding --- or something more complicated?

9. After Lauren?s redo, she briefly lives her dream life. Why do you think the author allows Lauren this happiness only to pull her back to reality --- and how does that make the emotional impact stronger?

10. How does Sylvia?s ideology ?To long for things to be different is to fundamentally miss the lesson of life? resonate by the novel?s end? Do you agree with it?

11. We learn that Marcella lied to Lauren about her ticket. Does this revelation change how you view Lauren?s decision to use hers? Is it selfish --- or deeply human?

12. Were you surprised that Lauren ultimately tells Leo the truth? What does this decision reveal about her growth and the novel?s final message?

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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