Come Sunday

by Isla Morley



About the Book

Sweeping from the hills of Hawaii to the South African veldt, Come Sunday marks the debut of a wondrously talented storyteller. What a novel this is! Isla Morley?s transcendent work makes our spirits soar. Morley?s splendid talent reminds us of Barbara Kingsolver?s spirited prose, along with the piercing truth of Jodi Picoult. We are also reminded of how it felt, long ago, to dive into the drama of **The Thorn Birds**.

Come Sunday centers on Abbe Deighton, the independent-minded wife of a minister in Hawaii. Abbe isn?t a native Hawaiian. She grew up in a broken home in turbulent apartheid South Africa, seeing things she shouldn?t have seen... and still doesn?t entirely understand. But she is trying to put them behind her, working to enjoy her life in her leaky house on a Honolulu hillside with a precocious three-year-old daughter, Cleo, and her husband, Greg.

Abbe?s world explodes when the unimaginable happens: her daughter is struck and killed by a car. Cleo?s death launches Abbe into new terrain, where she is forced to examine her relations with the people she professes to love, her tenuous faith, and the events surrounding the calamitous last summer in the homeland of her youth. Searching for a reason to go on, Abbe returns to the South Africa of her childhood, a world where curses were cast, secrets were kept, and a murder was concealed. It is there that Abbe will have to make the harshest of choices, one that blurs the lines of blame and forgiveness, fate and faith.

A moving tribute to the power of hope --- and the promise of home --- **Come Sunday** is a luminous novel that will enchant your reading group at every turn.

Discussion Guide

1. At its heart, **Come Sunday** is a tale of joy reclaimed. What is the source of Abbe?s resilience? Which small moments gave her the grandest glimpses of hope?

2. Isla Morley portrays the experience of parenthood with a blend of unflinching candor and wise tenderness. How was Abbe?s identity as a woman shaped by her relationship with her own mother? How was her brother, Rhiaan, affected by his father?s shadow? How does the relationship between mothers and daughters compare to that of fathers and sons?

3. Discuss the novel?s two locales. Do they share any similarities? What traces of South African culture does Abbe miss the most? Who is her greatest source of comfort in Hawaii and in South Africa?

4. What made Greg and Abbe compatible in so many ways? Why was it necessary for her to let him go? In what way was this decision destined to bring peace to both of them?

5. In chapter five, Abbe compares Greg to Sal, commenting that Greg is comparable to a playground sandbox, while Sal is like a merry-go-round. ?It is hard to get hurt in the sandbox,? she says. ?After my father, it was all I ever wanted in a man.? By the end of the novel, how does she feel about trust and love?

6. How is Abbe healed by returning to her homeland? How does she define ?home? at various points in the novel, from the modest house she shares with Greg to the restored, fruitful farm of her youth? Where have you felt most at home, and most restored, throughout your life?

7. What were the most lasting lessons that Abbe learned from Beauty, both as a child and when she returned later in life?

8. What transformations took place in Abbe after she began to see her mother as a lion who would do anything to protect her children? What images best capture the spirit of your mother?

9. In emotional terms, what did it take to bring about the reunion with Abbe?s brother, Rhiaan? What accounts for their very different approaches to life?

10. Near the end of chapter twenty, in the midst of the attack, Abbe hears Pepsi sing the words that give the novel its title. What does Sunday come to mean for Abbe? How does the media?s depiction of the crime differ from the way Abbe experienced it?

11. What is the effect of the first-person voice that drives the novel? What is special about Abbe?s perspective on the world?

12. How does Abbe combine rational thinking and faith to call into question the nature of God? Ultimately, what answers does she find?

13. In chapter twenty-two, Abbe and Rhiaan debate whether their mother?s secret actions affected them. Abbe argues that ?who she was influences who we are, how we act.? Rhiaan thinks that?s a moot point: ?What you did . . . [was] because of who you are.? Who did you side with in this argument? How much was your identity influenced by family lore?

14. As the author introduced you to South Africa, her birthplace, what surprised you most about its history and culture, and about life there after apartheid?

15. What aspects of hope are captured in the novel?s structure, tracing the journey from Good Friday to Ascension Day?

16. How did you react when Abbe initially rebuked Greg for forgiving Mr. Nguyen? What leads to her change of heart? Describe the greatest difficulty you ever experienced with forgiveness.

17. What were Cleo?s greatest gifts to those who knew her?

Author Bio

Isla Morley grew up in South Africa during apartheid, the child of a British father and fourth-generation South African mother. She now lives in Los Angeles with her husband (a minister) and daughter and an assortment of animals. Her debut novel, COME SUNDAY, was published by Sarah Crichton / FSG (2009). It was awarded the Janet Heidinger Kafka Prize for Fiction in 2009 and was a finalist for the Commonwealth Prize. It has been translated into seven languages.

Critical Praise

"**Come Sunday** is a rare and luminous novel. I felt the emotions under my skin, had to put the book down to settle myself, then kept reading through the night. Isla Morley explores interior and exterior worlds with sharp and tender insight."

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