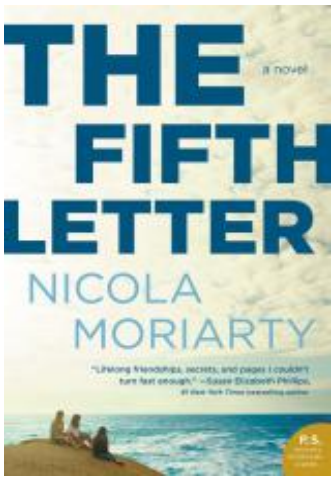
The Fifth Letter

by Nicola Moriarty



About the Book

Best friends from high school, Joni, Deb, Eden and Trina had always looked forward to the vacations they spent together. But the demands of careers, husbands and babies gradually pulled them apart, and now their annual getaways may be a thing of the past. Joni doesn?t want to lose her friends, and this year she?s coaxed them all back together for some fun at a beach house.

Late on a laughter- and wine-filled night, the women dare one another to write anonymous letters, spilling her most intimate thoughts like they did as teenagers. But the fun game meant to bring them closer together turns painfully serious, exposing cracks in their lives and their relationships. Each letter is a confession revealing disturbing information. A rocky marriage. A harrowing addiction. A hidden pregnancy. A heartbreaking diagnosis.

Days later, Joni notices something in the fireplace --- a crumpled and partially burned fifth letter that holds the most shattering admission of all.

Best friends are supposed to keep your darkest secrets. But the revelations Joni, Deb, Eden and Trina have shared will have unforeseen consequences...and none of them will ever be the same.

Discussion Guide

1. The book?s narrator, Joni, is disappointed to learn that her childhood friends don?t share everything like they used to. Do you think she?s being dramatic? How many of your secrets do you share with your friends?

2. Do you believe Joni as a narrator, or do you think her point of view is skewed?

3. Even in her letter, Joni didn?t share what was happening in her quest for a child. Why do you think she held that back,

even as she was hoping for greater connection with her girlfriends?

4. One of the secrets revealed is that someone has a crush on another woman?s husband. Is this sort of feeling better kept private or discussed openly? Would you have shared such a secret?

5. It was Joni who pulled Deb, Trina and Eden into a friendship on that first day of school, and her who brings them together in the cottage years later. Does everyone have a role in a friendship group? Discuss the consequences of this and how these roles change over time.

6. For years Eden kept what really happened in Adelaide a secret from her friends. Even when given the opportunity to share her secret in the letter she backed out of spilling the truth. What did you think when you learned her truth? Were you surprised?

7. Drinking is a recurring topic in the novel, from Deb?s drunken escapade at school to Eden?s horrific attack in Adelaide to Trina?s behaviour at Eden?s dinner party. Do you think the story would be different if these women hadn?t overindulged?

8. Are friendships with those you meet in childhood different to ones formed later in life? How does meeting at a young age change your relationship?

9. Joni and Eden are both desperate to win the Dirty Thirty Challenge. Is competitiveness healthy within friendships? When does it become too much?

10. In one of the letters the woman reveals worries over being a bad mother while her husband is ready for a second child. Reading the examples given in the letter, are the concerns legitimate? Why do you think that these pressures still concern women more than men?

11. Were you surprised when you learned who wrote the fifth letter? Who did you think wrote it while you were reading? Discuss the ways in which the author toys with the reader.

Author Bio

Nicola Moriarty is a Sydney-based novelist, copywriter and mum to two small (but remarkably strong-willed) daughters. In between various career changes, becoming a mum and completing her Bachelor of Arts, she began to write. Now she can?t seem to stop. Her previous works include the novel THE FIFTH LETTER, which was published in several countries and optioned by Universal Cable Productions for film and television.

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