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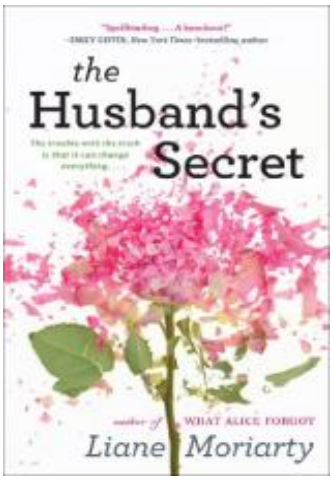
The Husband's Secret

by Liane Moriarty



About the Book

Imagine that your husband wrote you a letter, to be opened after his death. Imagine, too, that the letter contains his deepest, darkest secret --- something with the potential to destroy not just the life you built together, but the lives of others as well. Imagine, then, that you stumble across that letter while your husband is still very much alive...

Cecilia Fitzpatrick has achieved it all --- she?s an incredibly successful businesswoman, a pillar of her small community, and a devoted wife and mother. Her life is as orderly and spotless as her home. But that letter is about to change everything, and not just for her: Rachel and Tess barely know Cecilia --- or each other --- but they too are about to feel the earth-shattering repercussions of her husband?s secret.

Acclaimed author Liane Moriarty has written a gripping, thought-provoking novel about how well it is really possible to know our spouses --- and, ultimately, ourselves.

Discussion Guide

1. When Cecilia finds the letter addressed to her from her husband, "To be opened only in the event of my death," she is tormented by the ethics of opening it. Do you agree with her ultimate decision? What would you have done?
2. Consider the title THE HUSBAND'S SECRET. Several characters in the book have secrets they hold on to that they eventually reveal. Felicity and Will share the secret of their affair to Tess; John-Paul guards his secret from Cecilia until he is forced to admit it. What are the ramifications of their secrets? Is secrecy is ever warranted and justifiable?
3. Tess has suffered her whole life from crippling social anxiety. How has this made everyday situations a challenge for her? Why has she never confronted her problem? Why doesn't she tell anyone about it?
4. The Berlin Wall is referred to throughout the novel as Esther works on her school project. And in fact, we learn that Cecilia met John-Paul on the day the Wall finally came down. What does the Wall signify in the book?

5. Grief is a major theme in the novel, and many of the characters have suffered as a result of their losses. How has grief affected Rachel? Rob? Tess? John-Paul? How do they each cope? In what ways have their lives have been irrevocably altered as a result of their grieving? Do you think people can fully stop grieving and move on with their lives?
6. The concept of guilt also plays a major role in the novel. Rachel feels that because of a brief flirtation with Toby Murphy she was absent when Janie died. John-Paul continues to sacrifice things that he loves, out of guilt for what he did to Janie. It seems that these characters have never been able to recover from the feelings of guilt caused by their actions. Yet at the same time, other characters in the book do not appear to feel guilt in the same way. Consider Felicity and Will. Do they have remorse for their affair? And does Tess regret her fling with Connor? What determines how guilty one feels-is it the situation, or is it determined by the individual's character?
7. Tess and Felicity have a history of making snide comments about other people. Tess realizes this only once she is out of the comfort zone she's shared with Felicity for so many years. How has such negative energy affected her relationships with others? Do you think she and Felicity are actually cruel, or is there another reason for their unkind behavior?
8. Ethics and morals are important themes in the book. Discuss how John-Paul, Cecilia, Tess, Will, and Rachel have each done something they would not have thought possible. Have you ever acted in a way that seems entirely out of character? How did you feel? Does love cause people to do things they wouldn't normally do?
9. Consider the notion of betrayal in this book. Which characters have betrayed someone they love? Are their acts of betrayal premeditated, or are they unplanned decisions that become regrettable actions? When one person betrays another, can that person be forgiven? Or is the damage irreparable?
10. The novel is narrated in third-person and in past tense. Given the intense focus on three women, why did the author choose to tell the story from this point of view? How does this perspective add a sense of mystery and foreboding?
11. Cecilia has been married to John-Paul for fifteen years and has three children with him. Until she opens his letter, she seems to trust him and believe him to be the wonderful husband and father she's always thought him to be. But when she discovers his terrible, sinful secret, she begins to question him. How well can one know one's spouse? Is it possible to ever completely know another person?

Author Bio

Liane Moriarty is the author of the #1 *New York Times* bestsellers BIG LITTLE LIES, APPLES NEVER FALL, THE HUSBAND'S SECRET, TRULY MADLY GUILTY and HERE ONE MOMENT; the *New York Times* bestsellers NINE PERFECT STRANGERS, WHAT ALICE FORGOT and THE LAST ANNIVERSARY; THE HYPNOTIST'S LOVE STORY; and THREE WISHES. She lives in Sydney, Australia, with her husband and two children.

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