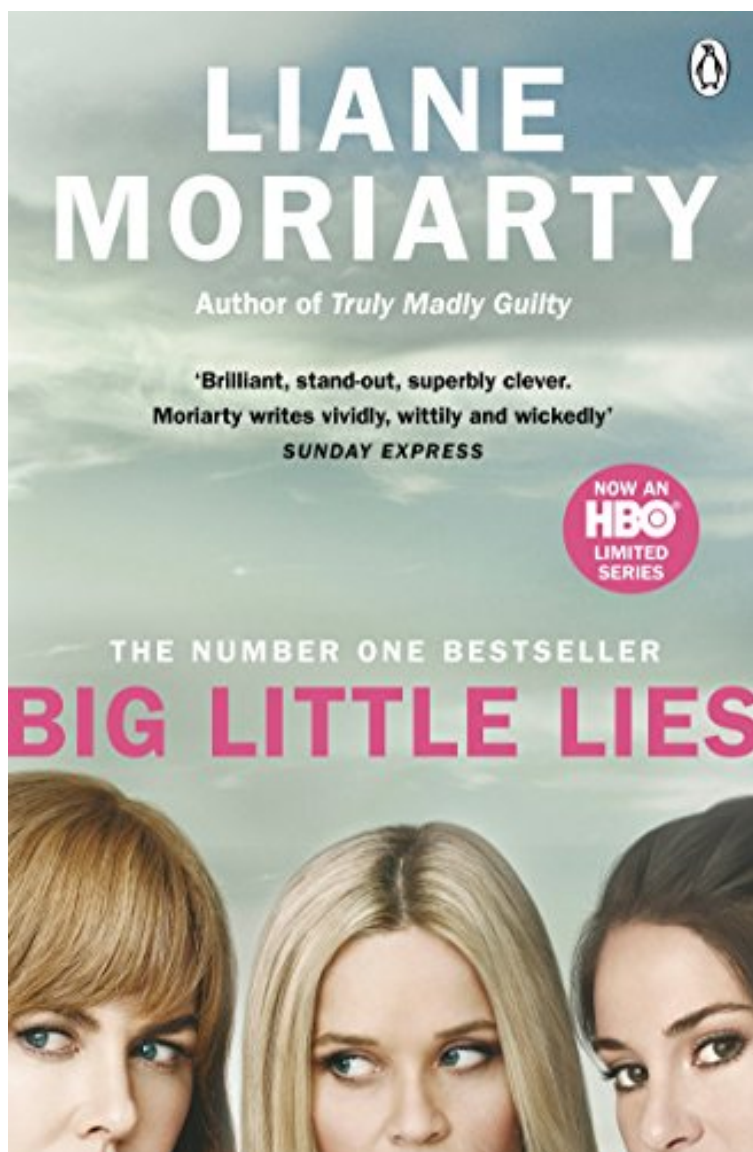


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[Library ebook] Big Little Lies: Now an HBO limited series

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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe number one BESTSELLING novel behind the EMMY AWARD WINNING HBO series starring Nicole Kidman, Reese Witherspoon, Alexander Skarsgrd and Shailene Woodey.'Let me ask you a question. Would you like a series that has everything? Good. Because it is, emphatically, HERE' The Guardian'Depth, class and a sense of humour' The Times'Artful and arch, a compelling and sad satire' Vanity Fair _____Perfect family, perfect house, perfect life; Jane, Madeline and Celeste have it all . . . or do they? They are about to find out just how easy it is for one little lie to spiral out of control. From the author of Truly Madly Guilty and The Husband's Secret comes a novel about the dangerous little lies we tell ourselves just to survive.Jane hasn't lived anywhere for longer than six months since her son was born five

years ago. She keeps moving in an attempt to escape her past. Now the idyllic coastal town of Pirriwee has pulled her to its shores and Jane feels as if she finally belongs. She finds friends in the feisty Madeline and the incredibly beautiful Celeste, two women with seemingly perfect lives - and their own secrets. But at the start of a new term, an incident involving the children of all three women occurs in the playground, causing a rift between them and other parents. Minor at first but escalating fast, until the whispers and rumours become vicious and spiteful, and the truths blur into lies. It was always going to end in tears, but no one thought it would end in murder . . . Don't want Big Little Lies to end? Then why not order Liane Moriarty's new hit, Truly Madly Guilty. Praise for Liane Moriarty: 'Brilliant, stand-out, superbly clever. Moriarty writes vividly, wittily and wickedly' Sunday Express 'A nuanced psychological study of the elements of motherly and matrimonial behaviour' The Sunday Times 'Blame and guilt, forgiveness and retribution, love and betrayal. A tense page-turning story . . . a great read' Mail on Sunday 'Staggeringly brilliant . . . literally unputdownable' Sophie Hannah 'Blending romance, comedy and mystery, this is a wonderful book - full of brains, guts and heart' Sunday Mirror 'Tolls a warning bell about the big little lies we tell to survive' Washington Post 'A fantastically nimble writer, so sure-footed that the book leaps between dark and light seamlessly' Entertainment Weekly

1. That doesn't sound like a school trivia night, said Mrs. Patty Ponder to Marie Antoinette. That sounds like a riot. The cat didn't respond. She was dozing on the couch and found school trivia nights to be trivial. Not interested, eh? Let them eat cake! Is that what you're thinking? They do eat a lot of cake, don't they? All those cake stalls. Goodness me. Although I don't think any of the mothers ever actually eat them. They're all so sleek and skinny, aren't they? Like you. Marie Antoinette sneered at the compliment. The let them eat cake thing had grown old a long time ago, and she'd recently heard one of Mrs. Ponder's grandchildren say it was meant to be let them eat brioche and also that Marie Antoinette never said it in the first place. Mrs. Ponder picked up her television remote and turned down the volume on Dancing with the Stars. She'd turned it up loud earlier because of the sound of the heavy rain, but the downpour had eased now. She could hear people shouting. Angry hollers crashed through the quiet, cold night air. It was somehow hurtful for Mrs. Ponder to hear, as if all that rage were directed at her. (Mrs. Ponder had grown up with an angry mother.) Goodness me. Do you think they're arguing over the capital of Guatemala? Do you know the capital of Guatemala? No? I don't either. We should Google it. Don't sneer at me. Marie Antoinette sniffed. Let's go see what's going on, said Mrs. Ponder briskly. She was feeling nervous and therefore behaving briskly in front of the cat, the same way she'd once done with her children when her husband was away and there were strange noises in the night. Mrs. Ponder heaved herself up with the help of her walker. Marie Antoinette slid her slippery body comfortably in between Mrs. Ponder's legs (she wasn't falling for the brisk act) as she pushed the walker down the hallway to the back of the house. Her sewing room looked straight out onto the school yard of Pirriwee Public. Mum, are you mad? You can't live this close to a primary school, her daughter had said when she was first looking at buying the house. But Mrs. Ponder loved to hear the crazy babble of children's voices at intervals throughout the day, and she no longer drove, so she couldn't care less that the street was jammed with those giant, truck-like cars they all drove these days, with women in big sun-glasses leaning across their steering wheels to call out terribly urgent information about Harriett's ballet and Charlie's speech therapy. Mothers took their mothering so seriously now. Their frantic little faces. Their busy little bottoms strutting into the school in their tight gym gear. Ponytails swinging. Eyes fixed on the mobile phones held in the palms of their hands like compasses. It made Mrs. Ponder laugh. Fondly though. Her three daughters, although older, were exactly the same. And they were all so pretty. How are you this morning? she always called out if she was on the front porch with a cup of tea or watering the front garden as they went by. Busy, Mrs. Ponder! Frantic! they always called back, trotting along, yanking their children's arms. They were pleasant and friendly and just a touch condescending because they couldn't help it. She was so old! They were so busy! The fathers, and there were more and more of them doing the school run these days, were different. They rarely hurried, strolling past with a measured casualness. No big deal. All under control. That was the message. Mrs. Ponder chuckled fondly at them too. But now it seemed the Pirriwee Public parents were misbehaving. She got to the window and pushed aside the lace curtain. The school had recently paid for a window guard after a cricket ball had smashed the glass and nearly knocked out Marie Antoinette. (A group of Year 3 boys had given her a hand-painted apology card, which she kept on her fridge.) There was a two-story sandstone building on the other side of the playground with an event room on the second level and a big balcony with ocean views. Mrs. Ponder had been there for a few functions: a talk by a local historian, a lunch hosted by the Friends of the Library. It was quite a beautiful room. Sometimes ex-students had their wedding receptions there. That's where they'd be having the school

trivia night. They were raising funds for SMART Boards, whatever they were. Mrs. Ponder had been invited as a matter of course. Her proximity to the school gave her a funny sort of honorary status, even though shed never had a child or grandchild attend. Shed said no thank you to the school trivia night invitation. She thought school events without the children in attendance were pointless. The children had their weekly school assembly in the same room. Each Friday morning, Mrs. Ponder set herself up in the sewing room with a cup of English Breakfast and a ginger-nut biscuit. The sound of the children singing floating down from the second floor of the building always made her weep. Shed never believed in God, except when she heard children singing. There was no singing now. Mrs. Ponder could hear a lot of bad language. She wasnt a prude about bad language her eldest daughter swore like a trooper but it was upsetting and disconcerting to hear someone maniacally screaming that particular four-letter word in a place that was normally filled with childish laughter and shouts. Are you all drunk? she said. Her rain-splattered window was at eye level with the entrance doors to the building, and suddenly people began to spill out. Security lights illuminated the paved area around the entrance like a stage set for a play. Clouds of mist added to the effect. It was a strange sight. The parents at Pirriwee Public had a baffling fondness for costume parties. It wasnt enough that they should have an ordinary trivia night; she knew from the invitation that some bright spark had decided to make it an Audrey and Elvis trivia night, which meant that the women all had to dress up as Audrey Hepburn and the men had to dress up as Elvis Presley. (That was another reason Mrs. Ponder had turned down the invitation. Shed always abhorred costume parties.) It seemed that the most popular rendition of Audrey Hepburn was the Breakfast at Tiffanys look. All the women were wearing long black dresses, white gloves and pearl chokers. Meanwhile, the men had mostly chosen to pay tribute to the Elvis of the latter years. They were all wearing shiny white jumpsuits, glittery gemstones and plunging necklines. The women looked lovely. The poor men looked perfectly ridiculous. As Mrs. Ponder watched, one Elvis punched another across the jaw. He staggered back into an Audrey. Two Elvises grabbed him from behind and pulled him away. An Audrey buried her face in her hands and turned aside, as though she couldnt bear to watch. Someone shouted, Stop this! Indeed. What would your beautiful children think? Should I call the police? wondered Mrs. Ponder out loud, but then she heard the wail of a siren in the distance, at the same time as a woman on the balcony began to scream and scream. Gabrielle: It wasnt like it was just the mothers, you know. It wouldnt have happened without the dads. I guess it started with the mothers. We were the main players, so to speak. The mums. I cant stand the word mum. Its a frumpy word. Mom is better. With an o. It sounds skinnier. We should change to the American spelling. I have body-image issues, by the way. Who doesnt, right? Bonnie: It was all just a terrible misunderstanding. Peoples feelings got hurt, and then everything just spiraled out of control. The way it does. All conflict can be traced back to someones feelings getting hurt, dont you think? Divorce. World wars. Legal action. Well, maybe not every legal action. Can I offer you an herbal tea? Stu: Ill tell you exactly why it happened: Women dont let things go. Not saying the blokes dont share part of the blame. But if the girls hadnt gotten their knickers in a knot . . . And that might sound sexist, but its not, its just a fact of life. Ask any man not some new-age, artsy-fartsy, I-wear-moisturizer type, I mean a real man not a real man, then hell tell you that women are like the Olympic athletes of grudges. You should see my wife in action. And shes not even the worst of them. Miss Barnes: Helicopter parents. Before I started at Pirriwee Public, I thought it was an exaggeration, this thing about parents being overly involved with their kids. I mean, my mum and dad loved me, they were, like, interested in me when I was growing up in the nine-ties, but they werent, like, obsessed with me. Mrs. Lipmann: Its a tragedy, and deeply regrettable, and were all trying to move forward. I have no further comment. Carol: I blame the Erotic Book Club. But thats just me. Jonathan: There was nothing erotic about the Erotic Book Club, Ill tell you that for free. Jackie: You know what? I see this as a feminist issue. Harper: Who said it was a feminist issue? What the heck? Ill tell you what started it: the incident at the kindergarten orientation day. Graeme: My understanding was that it all goes back to the stay-at-home mums battling it out with the career mums. What do they call it? The Mummy Wars. My wife wasnt involved. She doesnt have time for that sort of thing. Thea: You journalists are just loving the French-nanny angle. I heard someone on the radio today talking about the French maid, which Juliette was certainly not. Renata had a housekeeper as well. Lucky for some. I have four children, and no staff to help out! Of course, I dont have a problem per se with working mothers, I just wonder why they bothered having children in the first place. Melissa: You know what I think got everyone all hot and bothered? The head lice. Oh my gosh, dont let me get started on the head lice. Samantha: The head lice? What did that have to do with anything? Who told you that? I bet it was Melissa, right? That poor girl suffered post-traumatic stress disorder after her kids kept getting reinfected.

Sorry. Its not funny. Its not funny at all. Detective-Sergeant Adrian Quinlan: Let me be clear: This is not a circus. This is a murder investigation.

2. Six Months Before the Trivia Night

Forty. Madeline Martha Mackenzie was forty years old today. I am forty, she said out loud as she drove. She drew the word out in slow motion, like a sound effect. Fooorty. She caught the eye of her daughter in the rearview mirror. Chloe grinned and imitated her mother. I am five. Fiiiive. Forty! trilled Madeline like an opera singer. Tra la la la! Five! trilled Chloe. Madeline tried a rap version, beating out the rhythm on the steering wheel. Im forty, yeah, forty Thats enough now, Mummy, said Chloe firmly. Sorry, said Madeline. She was taking Chloe to her kindergarten Lets Get Kindy Ready! orientation. Not that Chloe required any orientation before starting school next January. She was already very firmly oriented at Pirriwee Public. At this mornings drop-off Chloe had been busy taking charge of her brother, Fred, who was two years older but often seemed younger. Fred, you forgot to put your book bag in the basket! Thats it. In there. Good boy. Fred had obediently dropped his book bag in the appropriate basket before running off to put Jackson in a headlock. Madeline had pretended not to see the headlock. Jackson probably deserved it. Jacksons mother, Renata, hadnt seen it either, because she was deep in conversation with Harper, both of them frowning earnestly over the stress of educating their gifted children. Renata and Harper attended the same weekly support group for parents of gifted children. Madeline imagined them all sitting in a circle, wringing their hands while their eyes shone with secret pride. While Chloe was busy bossing the other children around at orientation (her gift was bossiness, she was going to run a corporation one day), Madeline was going to have coffee and cake with her friend Celeste. Celestes twin boys were starting school next year too, so theyd be running amuck at orientation. (Their gift was shouting. Madeline had a headache after five minutes in their company.) Celeste always bought exquisite and very expensive birthday presents, so that would be nice. After that, Madeline was going to drop Chloe off with her mother-in-law, and then have lunch with some friends before they all rushed off for school pickup. The sun was shining. She was wearing her gorgeous new Dolce Gabbana stilettos (bought online, thirty percent off).. It was going to be a lovely, lovely day. Let the Festival of Madeline begin! her husband, Ed, had said this morning when he brought her coffee in bed. Madeline was famous for her fondness of birthdays and celebrations of all kinds. Any excuse for champagne. Still. Forty. As she drove the familiar route to the school, she considered her magnificent new age. Forty. She could still feel forty the way it felt when she was fifteen. Such a colorless age. Marooned in the middle of your life. Nothing would matter all that much when you were forty. You wouldnt have real feelings when you were forty, because youd be safely cushioned by your frumpy forty-ness. Forty-year-old woman found dead. Oh dear. Twenty-year-old woman found dead. Tragedy! Sadness! Find that murderer! Madeline had recently been forced to do a minor shift in her head when she heard something on the news about a woman dying in her forties. But, wait, that could be me! That would be sad! People would be sad if I was dead! Devastated, even. So there, age-obsessed world. I might be forty, but I am cherished. On the other hand, it was probably perfectly natural to feel sadder over the death of a twenty-year-old than a forty-year-old. The forty-year-old had enjoyed twenty years more of life. Thats why, if there was a gunman on the loose, Madeline would feel obligated to throw her middle-aged self in front of the twenty-year-old. Take a bullet for youth. It was only fair. Well, she would, if she could be sure it was a nice young person. Not one of those insufferable ones, like the child driving the little blue Mitsubishi in front of Madeline. She wasnt even bothering to hide the fact that she was using her mobile phone while she drove, probably texting or updating her Facebook status. See! This kid wouldnt have even noticed the loose gunman! She would have been staring vacantly at her phone, while Madeline sacrificed her life for her! It was infuriating. The little car appeared to be jammed with young people. At least three in the back, their heads bobbing about, hands gesticulating. Was that somebodys foot waving about? It was a tragedy waiting to happen. They all needed to concentrate. Just last week, Madeline had been having a quick coffee after her ShockWave class and was reading a story in the paper about how all the young people were killing themselves by sending texts while they drove. On my way. Nearly there! These were their last foolish (and often misspelled) words. Madeline had cried over the picture of one teenagers grief-stricken mother, absurdly holding up her daughters mobile phone to the camera as a warning to readers. Silly little idiots, she said out loud as the car weaved dangerously into the next lane. Who is an idiot? said her daughter from the backseat. The girl driving the car in front of me is an idiot because shes driving her car and using her phone at the same time, said Madeline. Like when you need to call Daddy when were running late? said Chloe. I only did that one time! protested Madeline. And I was very careful and very quick! And Im forty years old! Today, said Chloe knowledgeably. Youre forty years old today. Yes! Also, I made a quick call, I didnt send a text! You have to take your eyes off the road to text.

Texting while driving is illegal and naughty, and you must promise to never ever do it when you're a teenager. Her voice quivered at the thought of Chloe being a teenager and driving a car. But you're allowed to make a quick phone call? checked Chloe. No! That's illegal too, said Madeline. So that means you broke the law, said Chloe with satisfaction. Like a robber. Chloe was currently in love with the idea of robbers. She was definitely going to date bad boys one day. Bad boys on motorcycles. Stick with the nice boys, Chloe!

said Madeline after a moment. Like Daddy. Bad boys don't bring you coffee in bed, I'll tell you that for free. What are you babbling on about, woman? sighed Chloe. She'd picked this phrase up from her father and imitated his weary tone perfectly. They'd made the mistake of laughing the first time she did it, so she'd kept it up, and said it just often enough, and with perfect timing, so that they couldn't help but keep laughing. This time Madeline managed not to laugh. Chloe currently trod a very fine line between adorable and obnoxious.

Madeline probably trod the same line herself. Madeline pulled up behind the little blue Mitsubishi at a red light. The young driver was still looking at her mobile phone. Madeline banged on her car horn. She saw the driver glance in her rearview mirror, while all her passengers craned around to look. Put down your phone! she yelled. She mimicked texting by jabbing her finger in her palm. It's illegal! It's dangerous! The girl stuck her finger up in the classic up-yours gesture. Right! Madeline pulled on her emergency brake and put on her hazard lights. What are you doing? said Chloe. Madeline undid her seat belt and threw open the car door. But we've got to go to orientation! said Chloe in a panic. We'll be late! Oh, calamity! Oh, calamity was a line from

a children's book that they used to read to Fred when he was little. The whole family said it now. Even Madeline's parents had picked it up, and some of Madeline's friends. It was a very contagious phrase. It's all right, said Madeline. This will only take a second. I'm saving young lives. She stalked up to the girl's car on her new stilettos and banged on the window. The window slid down, and the driver metamorphosed from a shadowy silhouette into a real young girl with white skin, sparkly nose ring and badly applied, clumpy mascara. She looked up at Madeline with a mixture of aggression and fear. What is your problem? Her mobile phone was still held casually in her left hand. Put down that phone! You could kill yourself and your friends! Madeline used the exact same tone she used on Chloe when she was being extremely naughty. She reached in the car, grabbed the phone and tossed it to the openmouthed girl in the passenger seat. OK? Just stop it! She could hear their gales of laughter as she walked back to her SUV. She didn't care. She felt

pleasantly stimulated. A car pulled up behind hers. Madeline smiled, lifted her hand apologetically and hurried back to be in her car before the lights changed. Her ankle turned. One second it was doing what an ankle was meant to do, and the next it was flapping out at a sickeningly wrong angle. She fell heavily on one side. Oh, calamity. That was almost certainly the moment the story began. With the ungainly flap of an ankle.

3. Jane pulled up at a red light behind a big shiny SUV with its hazard lights blinking and watched a dark-haired woman hurry along the side of the road back to it. She wore a floaty, blue summer dress and high strappy heels, and she waved apologetically, charmingly at Jane. The morning sun caught one of the woman's earrings, and it shone as if she'd been touched by something celestial. A glittery girl. Older than Jane but definitely still glittery. All her life Jane had watched girls like that with scientific interest. Maybe a little awe. Maybe a little envy. They weren't necessarily the prettiest, but they decorated themselves so

affectionately, like Christmas trees, with dangling earrings, jangling bangles and delicate, pointless scarves. They touched your arm a lot when they spoke. Jane's best friend at school had been a glittery girl. Jane had a weakness for them. Then the woman fell, as if something had been pulled out from underneath her. Ouch,

said Jane, and she looked away fast to save the woman's dignity. Did you hurt yourself, Mummy? asked Ziggy from the back-seat. He was always very worried about her hurting herself. No, said Jane. That lady over there hurt herself. She tripped. She waited for the woman to get up and get back in her car, but she was still on the ground. She'd tipped back her head to the sky, and her face had that compressed look of someone in great pain. The traffic light turned green, and a little blue Mitsubishi that had been in front of the SUV zoomed off with a squeal of tires. Jane put her signal on to drive around the car. They were on their way to Ziggy's orientation day at the new school, and she had no idea where she was going. She and Ziggy were both nervous and pretending not to be. She wanted to get there in plenty of time. Is the lady OK? said

Ziggy. Jane felt that strange lurch she sometimes experienced when she got distracted by her life, and then something (it was often Ziggy) made her remember just in time the appropriate way for a nice, ordinary, well-mannered grown-up to behave. If it weren't for Ziggy she would have driven off. She would have been so focused on her goal of getting him to his kindergarten orientation that she would have left a woman sitting on the road, writhing in pain. I'll just check on her, said Jane, as if that were her intention all along. She flicked on her own hazard lights and opened the car door, aware as she did of a selfish sense of resistance.

You are an inconvenience, glittery lady! Are you all right? she called. Im fine! The woman tried to sit up straighter and whimpered, her hand on her ankle. Ow. Shit. Ive rolled my ankle, thats all. Im such an idiot. I got out of the car to go tell the girl in front of me to stop texting. Serves me right for behaving like a school prefect. Jane crouched down next to her. The woman had shoulder-length, well-cut dark hair and the faintest sprinkle of freckles across her nose. There was something aesthetically pleasing about those freckles, like a childhood memory of summer, and they were very nicely complemented by the fine lines around her eyes and the absurd swinging earrings. Janes resistance vanished entirely. She liked this woman. She wanted to help her. (Although, what did that say? If the woman had been a tooth- less, warty-nosed crone she would have continued to feel resentful? The injustice of it. The cruelty of it. She was going to be nicer to this woman because she liked her freckles.) The womans dress had an intricately embroidered cutout pattern of flowers all along the neckline. Jane could see tanned freckly skin through the petals. We need to get some ice on it straightaway, said Jane. She knew about ankle injuries from her netball days and she could see this womans ankle was already beginning to swell. And keep it elevated. She chewed her lip and looked about hopefully for someone else. She had no idea how to handle the logistics of making this actually happen. Its my birthday, said the woman sadly. My fortieth. Happy birthday, said Jane. It was sort of cute that a woman of forty would even bother to mention that it was her birthday. She looked at the womans strappy shoes. Her toenails were painted a lustrous turquoise. The stiletto heels were as thin as toothpicks and perilously high. No wonder you did your ankle, said Jane. No one could walk in those shoes! I know, but arent they gorgeous? The woman turned her foot at an angle to admire them. Ouch! Fuck, that hurts. Sorry. Excuse my language. Mummy! A little girl with dark curly hair, wearing a sparkling tiara, stuck her head out the window of the car. What are you doing? Get up! Well be late! Glittery mother. Glittery daughter. Thanks for the sympathy, darling! said the woman. She smiled ruefully at Jane. Were on our way to her kindergarten orientation. Shes very excited. At Pirriwee Public? said Jane. She was astonished. But thats where Im going. My son, Ziggy, is starting school next year. Were moving here in December. It didnt seem possible that she and this woman could have anything in common, or that their lives could intersect in any way. Ziggy! Like Ziggy Stardust? What a great name! said the woman. Im Madeline, by the way. Madeline Martha Mackenzie. I always mention the Martha for some reason. Dont ask me why. She held out her hand. Jane, said Jane. Jane no-middle-name Chapman. Gabrielle: The school ended up split in two. It was, like, I dont know, a civil war. You were either on Team Madeline or Team Renata. Bonnie: No, no, thats awful. That never happened. There were no sides. Were a very close-knit community. There was too much alcohol. Also, it was a full moon. Everyone goes a little crazy when its a full moon. Im serious. Its an actual verifiable phenomenon. Samantha: Was it a full moon? It was pouring rain, I know that. My hair was all boofy. Mrs. Lipmann: Thats ridiculous and highly defamatory. I have no further comment. Carol: I know I keep harping on about the Erotic Book Club, but Im sure something happened at one of their little quote-unquote meetings. Harper: Listen, I cried when we learned Emily was gifted. I thought, Here we go again! Id been through it all before with Sophia, so I knew what I was in for! Renata was in the same boat. Two gifted children. Nobody understands the stress. Renata was worried about how Amabella would settle in at school, whether shed get enough stimulation and so on. So when that child with the ridiculous name, that Ziggy, did what he did, and it was only the orientation morning! Well, she was understandably very distressed. Thats what started it all. 4. Jane had brought along a book to read in the car while Ziggy was doing his kindergarten orientation, but instead she accompanied Madeline Martha Mackenzie (it sounded like the name of a feisty little girl in a childrens book) to a beachside caf called Blue Blues. The caf was a funny little misshapen building, almost like a cave, right on the boardwalk next to Pirriwee Beach. Madeline hobbled along in bare feet, leaning heavily and unselfconsciously on Janes shoulder as if they were old friends. It felt intimate. She could smell Madelines perfume, something citrusy and delicious. Jane hadnt been touched much by other grown-ups in the last five years. As soon as they opened the door of the caf, a youngish man came out from behind the counter, his arms outstretched. He was dressed all in black, with curly blond surfer hair and a stud in the side of his nose. Madeline! Whats happened to you? I am gravely injured, Tom, said Madeline. And its my birthday. Oh, calamity, said Tom. He winked at Jane. While Tom settled Madeline in a corner booth, bringing her ice wrapped in a tea towel and propping her leg up on a chair with a cushion, Jane took in the caf. It was completely charming, as her mother would have said. The bright blue uneven walls were lined with rickety shelves filled with secondhand books. The timber floorboards shone gold in the morning light, and Jane breathed in a heady mix of coffee, baking, the sea and old books. The front of the caf was all open glass, and the seating was arranged so that wherever you sat you faced the beach, as if you

were there to watch the sea perform a show. As Jane looked around her, she felt that dissatisfied feeling she often experienced when she was some- where new and lovely. She couldnt quite articulate it except with the words If only I were here. This little beachside caf was so exquisite, she longed to really be thereexcept, of course, she was there, so it didnt make sense.Jane? What can I get you? said Madeline. Im buying you coffee and treats to thank you for everything! She turned to the fussing barista. Tom! This is Jane! Shes my knight in shining armor. My knightess.Jane had driven Madeline and her daughter to the school, after first nervously parking Madelines massive car in a side street. Shed taken a spare booster seat from the back of Madelines car for Chloe and put it in the back of her own little Honda, next to Ziggy.It had been a project. A tiny crisis overcome.It was a sad indictment of Janes mundane life that shed found the whole incident just a little bit thrilling.Ziggy too had been wide-eyed and self-conscious at the novelty of having another child in the backseat with him, especially one as effervescent and charismatic as Chloe. The little girl had chatted nonstop the whole way, explaining everything Ziggy needed to know about the school, and who the teachers would be, and how they had to wash their hands before they went into the classroom, with just one paper towel, and where they sat to have their lunch, and how you werent allowed peanut butter, because some people had allergies and could die, and she already had her lunch box, and it had Dora the Explorer on it, and what did Ziggys lunch box have on it?Buzz Lightyear, Ziggy had answered promptly, politely, and completely untruthfully, as Jane hadnt bought his lunch box yet, and they hadnt even discussed the need for a lunch box. He was in day care three days a week at the moment, and meals were provided. Packing a lunch box was going to be new for Jane.When they got to the school, Madeline had stayed in the car while Jane took the children in. Actually, Chloe had taken them in, marching along in front of them, tiara gleaming in the sunlight. At one point Ziggy and Jane had exchanged looks as if to say, Who are these marvelous people?Jane had been mildly nervous about Ziggys orientation morning and conscious of the fact that she would need to hide her nerves from Ziggy, because he was prone to anxiety. It had felt like she was starting a new job: her job as a primary school mother. There would be rules and paperwork and procedures to learn.However, walking into school with Chloe was like arriving with a golden ticket. Two other mothers immediately accosted them, Chloe! Wheres your mum? Then they introduced them- selves to Jane, and Jane had a story to tell about Madelines ankle, and next thing, the kindergarten teacher, Miss Barnes, wanted to hear, and Jane found herself the center of attention, which was quite pleasant, to be honest.The school itself was beautiful, perched at the end of the head- land, so that the blue of the distant ocean seemed to be constantly sparkling in Janes peripheral vision. The classrooms were in long, low sandstone buildings and the leafy-treed playground seemed to be full of enchanting secret spots to encourage the imagination: cubbyholes in between trees, sheltered pathways, even a tiny, child- sized maze.When shed left, Ziggy had been walking into a classroom hand in hand with Chloe, his little face flushed and happy, and Jane had walked outside to her car, feeling flushed and happy herself, and there was Madeline in the passenger seat, waving and smiling delightedly, as if Jane were her great friend, and Jane had felt a lessening of something, a loosening.Now she sat next to Madeline in Blue Blues and waited for her coffee to arrive, watching the water and feeling the sunshine on her face.Maybe moving here was going to be the beginning of something, or the end, which would be even better.My friend Celeste will be here soon, said Madeline. You might have seen her at the school, dropping off her boys. Two little blond ruffians. Shes tall, blond, beautiful and f lustered.I dont think so, said Jane. Whats she got to be f lustered about if shes tall, blond and beautiful?Exactly, said Madeline, as if that answered the question. Shes got this equally gorgeous, rich husband too. They still hold hands. And hes nice. He buys me presents. Honestly, I have no idea why I stay friends with her. She looked at her watch. Oh, shes hopeless. Always late! Anyway, Ill interrogate you while we wait. She leaned forward and gave her full attention to Jane. Are you new to the peninsula? I dont know your face at all. With kids the same age youd think we would have run into each other at GymbaROO or story hour or whatever.Were moving here in December, said Jane. We live in Newtown at the moment, but I decided it might be nice to live near the beach for a while. It was just on a whim, I guess.The phrase on a whim came to her out of nowhere, and both pleased and embarrassed her.She tried to make it a whimsical story, as if she were indeed a whimsical girl. She told Madeline that one day a few months back shed taken Ziggy for a trip to the beach, seen the rental sign out- side a block of apartments and thought, Why not live near the beach?It wasnt a lie, after all. Not exactly.A day at the beach, shed kept telling herself, over and over, as she drove down that long swooping road, as if someone were listening in on her thoughts, questioning her motives.Pirriwee Beach was one of the top ten most beautiful beaches in the world! Shed seen that somewhere. Her son deserved to see one of the top ten most beautiful beaches in the world. Her

beautiful, extraordinary son. She kept looking at him in the rearview mirror, her heart aching. She didn't tell Madeline that, as they'd walked hand in hand back to the car, sandy and sticky, the word help screamed silently in her head, as if she were begging for something: a solution, a cure, a reprieve. A reprieve from what? A cure for what? A solution for what? Her breathing had become shallow. She'd felt beads of sweat at her hairline. Then she'd seen the sign. Their lease at their Newtown apartment was up. The two-bedroom unit was in an ugly, soulless, redbrick block of apartments, but it was only a five-minute walk to the beach. What if we moved right here? she'd said to Ziggy, and his eyes had lit up, and all at once it had seemed like the apartment was exactly the solution to whatever was wrong with her. A sea change, people called it. Why shouldn't she and Ziggy have a sea change? She didn't tell Madeline that she'd been taking six-month leases in different rental apartments across Sydney ever since Ziggy was a baby, trying to find a life that worked. She didn't tell her that, maybe the whole time, she'd been circling closer and closer to Pirriwee Beach. And she didn't tell Madeline that, when she'd walked out of the real estate office after signing the lease, she'd noticed for the first time the sort of people who lived on the peninsula—golden-skinned and beach-haired, the sort of people who surfed before breakfast, who took pride in their bodies and she'd thought of her own pasty white legs beneath her jeans, and then she'd thought of how her parents would feel so nervous driving along that winding peninsula road, her dad's knuckles white on the steering wheel, except they'd still do it, without complaint, and all at once Jane had been convinced that she'd just made a truly reprehensible mistake. But it was too late. So here I am, she finished lamely. You're going to love it here, Madeline enthused. She adjusted the ice on her ankle and winced. Ow. Do you surf? What about your husband? Or your partner, I should say. Or boyfriend? Girl-friend? I am open to all possibilities. No husband, Jane said. No partner. It's just me. I'm a single mum. Are you? said Madeline, as if Jane had just announced something rather daring and wonderful. I am. Jane smiled foolishly. Well, you know, people always like to forget this, but I was a single mother, said Madeline. She lifted her chin, as if she were addressing a crowd of people who disagreed with her. My ex-husband walked out on me when my older daughter, Abigail, was a baby. She's fourteen. I was quite young too, like you. Only twenty-six. Although I thought I was over the hill. It was hard. Being a single mother is hard. Well, I have my mum and Oh, sure, sure. I'm not saying I didn't have support. I had my parents to help me too. But my God, there were some nights, when Abigail was sick, or when I got sick, or worse, when we both got sick, and . . . Anyway. Madeline stopped and shrugged. My ex is remarried now to someone else. They have a little girl about the same age as Chloe, and Nathan has become father of the year. Men often do when they get a second chance. Abigail thinks her dad is wonderful. I'm the only one left holding a grudge. They say it's good to let your grudges go, but I don't know, I'm quite fond of my grudge. I tend to like a little pet. I'm not really into forgiveness either, said Jane. Madeline grinned and pointed her teaspoon at her. Good for you. Never forgive. Never forget. That's my motto. Jane couldn't tell how much she was joking. So what about Ziggy's dad? continued Madeline. Is he in the picture at all? Jane didn't flinch. She'd had five years to get good at it. She felt herself becoming very still. No. We weren't actually together. She delivered her line perfectly. I didn't even know his name. It was a . . . Stop. Pause. Look away as if unable to make eye contact. Sort of a . . . one-off. You mean a one-night stand? said Madeline immediately, sympathetically, and Jane almost laughed out loud with the surprise of it. Most people, especially of Madeline's age, reacted with a delicate, slightly distasteful expression that said, I get it and I'm cool with it, but I now place you in a different category of person. Jane was never offended by their distaste. She found it distasteful too. She just wanted that particular topic of conversation closed off for good, and most of the time that's exactly what happened. Ziggy was Ziggy. There was no dad. Move right along. Why don't you just say you split up with the father? her mother had asked in the early days. Lies get complicated, Mum, said Jane. Her mother had no experience with lies. This way we just close the conversation down. I remember one-night stands, said Madeline wistfully. The things I did in the nineties. Lordy me. I hope Chloe never finds out. Oh, calamity. Was yours fun? It took Jane a second to comprehend the question. She was asking if her one-night stand was fun. For a moment Jane was back in that glass bubble of an elevator as it slid silently up the center of the hotel. His hand around the neck of the champagne bottle. The other hand on her lower back, pulling her forward. They were both laughing so hard. Deep creases around his eyes. She was weak with laughter and desire. Expensive smells. Jane cleared her throat. I guess it was fun, she said. Sorry, said Madeline. I was being frivolous. It was because I was thinking of my own frivolous youth. Or maybe because you're so young and I'm so old, and I'm trying to be cool. How old are you? Do you mind my asking? Twenty-four, said Jane. Twenty-four, breathed Madeline. I'm forty today. I told you that already, didn't I? You probably think you'll never be forty, right? Well, I hope I'll be forty, said Jane. She'd noticed before how middle-aged women

were obsessed with the topic of age, always laughing about it, moaning about it, going on and on about it, as if the process of aging were a tricky puzzle they were trying to solve. Why were they so mystified by it? Janes mothers friends seemed to literally have no other topic of conversation, or they didnt when they spoke to Jane. Oh, youre so young and beautiful, Jane. (When she clearly wasnt; it was like they thought one followed the other: If you were young, you were automatically beautiful!) Oh, youre so young, Jane, youll be able to fix my phone/computer/camera. (When in fact a lot of her mothers friends were more technologically savvy than Jane.) Oh, youre so young, Jane, you have so much energy. (When she was so tired, so very, very tired.) And listen, how do you support yourself? said Madeline worriedly, sitting up straight, as if this were a problem she needed to solve right this minute. Do you work? Jane nodded at her. I work for myself as a freelance book- keeper. Ive got a good client base now, lots of small businesses. Im fast. So I turn the work over fast. It pays the rent. Clever girl, said Madeline approvingly. I supported myself too when Abigail was little. For the most part anyway. Every now and then Nathan would rouse himself to send a check. It was hard, but it was also sort of satisfying, in a fuck-you kind of way. You know what I mean. Sure, said Jane. Janes life as a single mother wasnt making a fuck-you point to anyone. Or at least not in the way that Made- line meant. Youll definitely be one of the younger kindergarten mums, mused Madeline. She took a sip of her coffee and grinned wickedly. Youre even younger than my ex-husbands delightful new wife. Promise me you wont make friends with her, will you? I got you first. Im sure I wont even meet her, said Jane, confused. Oh, you will, grimaced Madeline. Her daughter is starting kindergarten at the same time as Chloe. Can you imagine? Jane couldnt imagine. The kindy mums will all have coffee, and there will be my ex-husbands wife sitting across the table, sipping her herbal tea. Dont worry, there wont be any punch-ups. Unfortunately, its all very boring and amicable and terribly grown-up. Bonnie even kisses me hello. Shes into yoga and chakras and all that shit. You know how youre meant to hate your wicked stepmother? My daughter adores her. Bonnie is so calm, you see. The opposite of me. She speaks in one of those soft . . . low . . . melodious voices that make you want to punch a wall. Jane laughed at Madelines imitation of a low, melodious voice. You probably will make friends with Bonnie, said Made- line. Shes impossible to hate. Im very good at hating people, and even I find it difficult. I really have to put my heart and soul into it. She shifted the ice again on her ankle. When Bonnie hears Ive hurt my ankle, shell bring me a meal. She just loves any excuse to bring me a home-cooked meal. Probably because Nathan told her Im a terrible cook, so she wants to make a point. Although the worst thing about Bonnie is that shes probably not actually making a point. Shes just freakishly nice. Id love to throw her meals straight in the bin, but theyre too damned delicious. My husband and children would kill me. Madelines expression changed. She beamed and waved. Oh! Shes here at last! Celeste! Over here! Come and see what Ive done! Jane looked up and her heart sank. It shouldnt matter. She knew it shouldnt matter. But the fact was that some people were so unacceptably, hurtfully beautiful, it made you feel ashamed. Your inferiority was right there on display for the world to see. This was what a woman was meant to look like. Exactly this. She was right, and Jane was wrong. Youre a very fat, ugly little girl, a voice said insistently in her ear with hot, fetid breath. She shuddered and tried to smile at the horribly beautiful woman walking toward them. Thea: I assume youve heard by now that Bonnie is married to Madelines ex-husband, Nathan? So that was complicated. You might want to explore that. Im not telling you how to do your job, of course. Bonnie: That had absolutely nothing to do with anything. Our relationship was completely amicable. Just this morning I left a vegetarian lasagna on their doorstep for her poor husband. Gabrielle: I was new to the school. I didnt know a soul. Oh, were such a caring school, the principal told me. Blah, blah, blah. Let me tell you, the first thing I thought when I walked into that playground on that kindergarten orientation day was cliquey. Cliquey, cliquey, cliquey. Im not surprised someone ended up dead. Oh, all right. I guess thats overstating it. I was a little surprised. Revue de presse Praise for Big Little Lies If youre looking for a novel that will turn you into a compulsive book-finisher look no further. Moriarty has produced another gripping, satirical hit...Its cant-put-downability comes from its darker subplots...A book that will make you appreciate the long days of summer. Oprah.com "The secrets burrowed in this seemingly placid small town...are so suburban noir they would make David Lynch clap with glee...[Moriarty] is a fantastically nimble writer, so sure-footed that the book leaps between dark and light seamlessly; even the big reveal in the final pages feels earned and genuinely shocking. Entertainment Weekly Reading one [of Liane Moriarty's novels] is a bit like drinking a pink cosmo laced with arsenic...a fun, engaging and sometimes disturbing read Moriarty is back in fine form. USA Today A hell of a good book. Funny and scary. Stephen King Ms. Moriartys long-parched fans have something new to dig into...Big Little Lies [may have] even more staying power than The Husbands

Secret. The New York Times Big Little Lies tolls a warning bell about the big little lies we tell in order to survive. It takes a powerful stand against domestic violence even as it makes us laugh at the adults whose silly costume party seems more reminiscent of a middle-school dance. The Washington Post Irresistible Moriarty's sly humor and razor-sharp insights will keep you turning pages. People Funny and thrilling, page-turning but with emotional depth, Big Little Lies is a terrific follow-up to The Husband's Secret. Booklist (starred review) Moriarty demonstrates an excellent talent for exposing the dark, seedy side of the otherwise perfect family unit... Highly recommended. Library Journal (starred review)