

The Fifth Letter

William Morrow

By Nicola Moriarty

ISBN: 9780062413567

Introduction

Four friends...

Joni, Deb, Eden, and Trina have been best friends since high school, sharing a bond that has seen them through their teenage years and into adulthood. But now, time and circumstance is starting to pull them apart as careers, husbands, and babies get in the way. As their yearly vacation becomes less of a priority—at least for three of the women—how can Joni find a way to draw the four of them back together?

Four secrets...

During a laughter and wine-filled night, the women dare one another to write anonymous letters, spilling their deepest, darkest secrets. But the fun game turns devastating, exposing cracks in their lives and the friendship they share. Each letter is a dark confession revealing shocking information. A troubled marriage? A substance abuse problem? A secret pregnancy? A heartbreaking diagnosis?

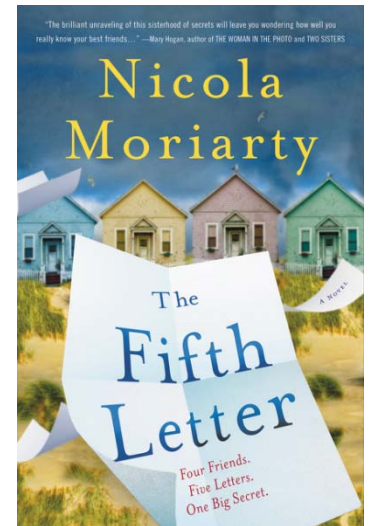
Five letters...

Late on one of their last nights together, after the other three have gone to bed, Joni notices something in the fireplace—a burnt, crumpled, nearly destroyed, sheet of paper that holds the most shattering revelation of all. It is a fifth letter—a hate-filled rant that exposes a vicious, deeply hidden grudge that has festered for decades. But who wrote it? Which one of them has seethed with resentment all these years? What should Joni do?

Best friends are supposed to keep your darkest secrets. But the revelations Joni, Deb, Eden and Trina have shared will ripple through their lives with unforeseen consequences... and things will never be the same.

Questions for Discussion

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.