

Miss You: A Novel

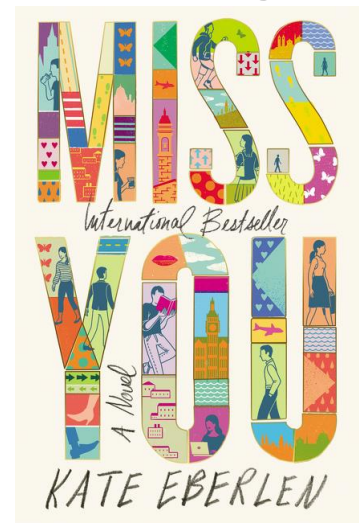
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By Kate Eberlen

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Introduction

A wryly romantic debut novel with echoes of *One Day* that asks, what if you just walked by the love of your life, but didn't even know it?



"TODAY IS THE FIRST DAY OF THE REST OF YOUR LIFE." Tess can't get the motto from her mother's kitchen knickknack out of her head, even though she's in Florence on an idyllic vacation before starting university in London.

Gus is also visiting Florence, on a holiday with his parents seven months after tragedy shattered their lives. Headed to medical school in London, he's trying to be a dutiful son but longs to escape and discover who he really is.

A chance meeting brings these eighteen-year-olds together for a brief moment—the first of many times their paths will crisscross as time passes and their lives diverge from those they'd envisioned. Over the course of the next sixteen years, Tess and Gus will face very different challenges and choices. Separated by distance and circumstance, the possibility of these two connecting once more seems slight.

But while fate can separate two people, it can also bring them back together again. . . .

Questions for Discussion

1. What's valuable about Tess' first trip to Italy, with Doll? What, if anything, does it share with her eventual return trip?
2. During his first trip to Italy, Gus realizes that in a city such as Florence he "could be a person with no history." Why is this idea valuable to him? What's a proper balance between being influenced by our early experiences and growing and changing?
3. Beyond the challenges, what's special and valuable about Hope? In what ways is the diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome helpful? What might Tess mean when she wonders if, perhaps, we aren't all "on the spectrum"?

4. Gus considers how it might just be chance that actually determines who we choose as friends. What does he mean? To what extent might it be true? What role does an individual play in the choice of friends and partners?
5. What's the difference between chance and fate? To what extent does either affect one's life? How does that work?
6. Many of the romantic relationships and marriages in the novel come to an end. What are the various reasons? What does it take to make a relationship last?
7. Tess believes a lifelong partner must be someone "who understands who you are." What does she mean? What other qualities seem essential to a successful relationship?
8. After Gus' infidelity, Lucy suggests that lying about his brother made it easier to lie about other things. In what ways is this true or not? Is it always disrespectful to lie? Are there good lies?
9. At one point Tess believes that "real love [is] terrifying and precipitous...moments of agonizing ecstasy." In what ways is this true or not? How does her definition change over time?
10. When Gus concludes that he and Charlotte weren't "meant to be," she questions whether such an idea rids individuals of any personal responsibility. To what extent is this true or not?
11. Tess comes to see her decision to have preventative surgery as "embracing life." What does she mean? What brought her to make such a courageous decision?
12. What's the significance of the image of the white butterfly?
13. Tess' mother always believed the saying, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." What does this mean? In what times is it particularly valuable to Tess? How might it be a valuable philosophy for life?