



#1 Bestselling Author of  
THE GIVER OF STARS

Jojo Moyes

Night Music

*a novel*

"Moyes writes delicious plots, with characters [who] leap off the pages in **HIGH-DEFINITION PROSE.**"

—USA Today

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

## Praise for Jojo Moyes

### Praise for *The Giver of Stars*

"Moyes paints an engrossing picture of life in rural America, and it's easy to root for the enterprising librarians."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

"With characters so real they feel like dear friends and a compelling storyline, this is a beautiful, special novel. I loved it and didn't want it to end!"

—Liane Moriarty, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Big Little Lies*

"Epic in scope and fiercely feminist . . . an unforgettable story."

—POPSUGAR

"An epic journey of friendship, danger, and literacy . . . an ideal read."

—*theSkimm*

"[A] dramatic, sweeping story . . . As well as creating wonderful strong characters, Jojo Moyes has an incredible eye for historical detail—I really felt as though I was riding over those Kentucky mountains with those women."

—Sophie Kinsella for *Bustle*

### Praise for *Me Before You*

"A hilarious, heartbreaking, riveting novel . . . I will stake my reputation on this book."

—Anne Lamott, *People*

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“An unlikely love story . . . To be devoured like candy, between tears.”  
—*O, The Oprah Magazine*

“Funny and moving but never predictable.”  
—*USA Today* (four stars)

### Praise for *After You*

“Jojo Moyes has a hit with *After You*.”  
—*USA Today*

“The genius of Moyes . . . [is that she] peers deftly into class issues, social mores, and complicated relationships that raise as many questions as they answer. And yet there is always resolution. It’s not always easy, it’s not always perfect, it’s sometimes messy and not completely satisfying. But sometimes it is.”

—Bobbi Dumas, NPR.org

“Expect tears and belly laughs from *Me Before You’s* much-anticipated sequel.”

—*Cosmopolitan*

### Praise for *Still Me*

“Delightful.”  
—*People*

“*Still Me* offers a worthy, warm conclusion to the *Me Before You* trilogy . . . resulting in the best entry in the trilogy yet. . . . Moyes has crafted a clear-eyed tale of self-discovery and the sacrifice required to live a life honestly in pursuit of the things you love. [It will] keep you sighing with delight to the very last page.”

—*Entertainment Weekly*

“Jojo’s work never fails to bring a smile to my face with her honesty, humor, and empathy about what it is to be human—[*Still Me* is] a must read!”

—Emilia Clarke

“While the series may have started off as a romance, Jojo Moyes has turned Louisa Clark’s story into one about learning to be, and to love, yourself.”

—*Bustle*

PENGUIN BOOKS

NIGHT MUSIC

Jojo Moyes is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Giver of Stars*, *Still Me*, *Paris for One and Other Stories*, *After You*, *One Plus One*, *The Girl You Left Behind*, *Me Before You*, *The Last Letter from Your Lover*, *The Horse Dancer*, *Night Music*, *Silver Bay*, *The Ship of Brides*, and *The Peacock Emporium*. She lives with her husband and three children in Essex, England.

**ALSO BY JOJO MOYES**

*The Giver of Stars*

*Still Me*

*Paris for One and Other Stories*

*After You*

*One Plus One*

*The Girl You Left Behind*

*Me Before You*

*The Last Letter from Your Lover*

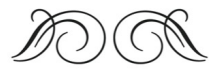
*The Horse Dancer*

*Silver Bay*

*The Ship of Brides*

*The Peacock Emporium*

# Night Music



Jojo Moyes



PENGUIN BOOKS

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*To Charles*

*And to anyone who has ever considered getting the builders in*

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*It is a dragon that has devoured us all: these obscene, scaly houses,  
this insatiable struggle and desire to possess, to possess always and  
in spite of everything, this need to be an owner, lest one be owned.*

**D. H. LAWRENCE**

*We never really belonged in the Spanish House. Technically, I suppose, we owned it, but ownership suggests some level of control and no one who knew us—or the house—could ever have suggested that we had any control over what happened there.*

*And despite what it said on those bits of paper, it never felt as if it truly belonged to us. It felt too crowded from the start. You could almost feel other people's dreams projected on it, sense the waves of envy, or distrust, or desire that permeated its walls. Its history was not our history. There was nothing—not even our dreams—binding us to it.*

*When I was little, I thought a house was just a house. A place in which we ate and played and argued and slept, four walls between which we got on with the business of living. I never gave it much thought.*

*Much later, I learned that a house could be so much more than that—that it could be the culmination of someone's desires, a reflection of how they saw themselves, how they wished to see themselves, that it could make people behave in ways that disgraced or shamed them. I learned that a house—just bricks, mortar, wood, perhaps a little patch of land—could be an obsession.*

*When I leave home I'm going to rent.*

# 1

Laura McCarthy closed her back door, stepped over the sleeping dog that was dribbling peacefully onto the gravel, and walked briskly across the garden to the back gate. Balancing the laden tray on one arm, she opened it, slid nimbly through the gap, and went into the woods and down to the stream, which, it being late summer, had dried up again.

It took two steps to cross the planks with which Matt had breached the ditch the previous year. Before long it would rain and they would be slippery and treacherous again. Several times, the previous year, she had skidded while crossing, and once the tray's entire contents had ended up in the water, a feast for some unseen creature. Then she was up the other side, the soil damp and sticking to the soles of her shoes, making her way toward the clearing.

Out of the shade the evening sun was still warm, bathing the valley in balmy, pollen-laden light. In the distance she could see a thrush, and hear the peculiar, abrasive chatter of starlings as they rose in a cloud and settled again on a distant copse. She straightened the lid of one of the dishes, inadvertently releasing a rich, tomatoey scent that made her quicken her pace toward the house.

It had not always been so decrepit, so unapologetically grim. Matt's father had told him tales of shooting parties gathered on the lawns, of summer evenings when music floated from white

marquees and elegantly dressed couples perched on the limestone walls and drank punch, their laughter muffled by the forest. Matt remembered a time when the stables had been filled with glossy horses, some kept purely for the benefit of weekend guests, and a boathouse on the edge of the lake for those who liked to row. Once, he had told her these stories often; it had been his way of equating it with her family home, of suggesting their future together would match what she had left behind. Perhaps it was a way to imagine what might lie ahead. She loved those stories. She knew exactly how the house would look if she had her way—there wasn't a window she hadn't mentally dressed, an inch of floor she hadn't re-covered. She knew how the lake looked from every east-facing room.

She stopped at the side door and, out of habit, reached into her pocket for a key. Once, it had been locked daily, but there was little point now: everyone around here knew there was nothing to steal. The house sagged, its paint peeled as if it could no longer be bothered even to reflect on its grand past. Downstairs, several missing panes had been covered with odd bits of wood. The gravel was sparse and overwhelmed by nettles, which brushed malevolently at her shins.

"Mr. Pottisworth, it's me . . . Laura."

She waited until she heard a grunt upstairs. It was wise to alert the old man to one's arrival—the lintel was still peppered with shot from the occasions when she had forgotten. Luckily, her husband had remarked, the old bugger had always had a poor eye.

"I've brought you your dinner."

She listened for the answering grunt, then went upstairs, the wood creaking under her feet.

She was fit, and barely needed to draw breath after several steep flights of stairs. But all the same she stood for a moment before she opened the door to the master bedroom. What might have been a sigh, or a flicker of resignation, passed through her before she placed her hand on the doorknob.

The window was partially open, but the smell of elderly, unwashed male hit her squarely and sourly, with its attendant, underlying odors of dust-filled soft furnishings, camphor, and stale beeswax. An old gun was propped beside the bed, and the color television they had bought him two years ago stood on a small table. Age and neglect could not disguise the room's elegant dimensions, the way the frames of the bay window neatly bisected the sky. But the visitor's attention was never allowed to linger long on its aesthetic qualities.

"You're late," said the figure in the old carved mahogany bed.

"Only a few minutes," she said, deliberately bright. She placed the tray on the table beside him and straightened. "I couldn't get away. I had my mother on the phone."

"What did she want? Didn't you tell her I was over here, *starving?*"

Laura's smile barely wavered. "Believe it or not, Mr. Pottisworth, you are not always my sole topic of conversation."

"I bet Matt is, though. What's he been up to now, then? She ring you up to tell you you'd married beneath you, did she?"

Laura turned to the tray. If there was a slight stiffening in her back, Mr. Pottisworth failed to see it. "I've been married eighteen years," she said. "I hardly think my choice of husband is breaking news."

There was a loud sniff. "What is it? I bet it's cold."

"Chicken casserole with a baked potato. And it's not remotely cold. It's had a lid on."

"I bet it's cold. Lunch was cold."

"Lunch was salad."

A mottled head, with a scattering of grey hair, emerged from beneath the quilt. Two snake-lidded eyes rested on her and narrowed. "What you want to wear your trousers so tight for? You trying to show everyone what you've got?"

"They're jeans. It's how everyone wears them."



"You're trying to get me overheated, that's what. Trying to get me all befuddled with lust so you can kill me with your treacherous feminine ways. Black widow, that's what they call women like you. I *know*."

She ignored him. "I've brought you up some brown sauce for the potato. Do you want it on the side of your plate?"

"I can see your nubbles."

"Or would you prefer grated cheese?"

"Through that top. I can clearly see your nubbles. Are you trying to tempt me?"

"Mr. Pottisworth, if you don't stop carrying on, I won't bring you your dinner anymore. So stop looking at my . . . my . . . nubbles. Right now."

"Shouldn't wear saucy little see-through brassieres like that, then. Back in my day a respectable woman wore a vest. A good cotton vest." He raised himself against his pillows, the gnarled hands twitching with remembrance. "You could still get a good feel, though."

Laura McCarthy counted to ten, making sure her back was to the old man. She looked down surreptitiously at her T-shirt, trying to work out how much of her brassiere he could actually see. Last week he had told her his eyesight was failing.

"You sent that boy of yours up with my lunch. Hardly says a word to me." The old man had begun to eat. A sound not unlike a blocked drain clearing filled the room.

"Yes, well, teenage boys don't have a lot to say for themselves."

"Rude, that's what he is. You should tell him."

"I will," she said. She moved around the room, clearing glasses and mugs and placing them on the empty tray.

"I get lonely in the day. I've only had Byron in since lunch, and all he wants to talk about is ruddy hedgerows and rabbits."

"I've told you, you could have someone in from social services. They'd tidy up a bit, have a chat. Every day, if you wanted."

“Social services.” He grimaced, a thin rivulet of gravy running down his chin. “I don’t need that lot sticking their noses into my business.”

“Suit yourself.”

“You don’t know how hard it is, when you’re all alone...” he began, and Laura’s attention drifted. She knew his litany of woes by heart: that no one understood how hard it was to have none of your family left, to be bedridden and helpless, at the mercy of strangers... She had heard all the variations on that theme so many times she could have recited it herself.

“...course I’ve only got you and Matt, a poor old man like me. Got no one to hand down my worldly goods to... You don’t know how it pains a man to be so alone.” His voice diminished, and he was almost tearful.

She softened. “I’ve told you you’re not alone. Not as long as we’re next door.”

“I’ll show you my gratitude when I’m gone. You know that, don’t you? That furniture in the barn—that’s yours after I’m gone.”

“You don’t have to talk like that, Mr. Pottisworth.”

“That won’t be all, I’m a man of my word. And I’m mindful of all you’ve done for me these years...” He peered at the tray. “That my rice pudding?”

“It’s a nice apple crumble.”

The old man put down his knife and fork. “But it’s Tuesday.”

“Well, I’ve made you apple crumble. I’d run out of pudding rice and I didn’t have a chance to get to the supermarket.”

“I don’t like apple crumble.”

“You do.”

“I bet you helped yourself to apples out of my orchard.”

Laura took a deep breath.

“I bet you’re not half as good as you make out. I bet you’d lie for something you really wanted.”

Her voice emerged through gritted teeth. "I bought the apples from the supermarket."

"You said you never had time to get to the supermarket."

"I bought them three days ago."

"Don't see why you couldn't have got a bit of pudding rice at the same time. Don't know what your old man must think of you. No doubt you have to keep him happy in other ways..." He grinned salaciously, his gums briefly visible under wet lips, then got stuck into the chicken casserole.



Laura had finished the washing-up when he came in, and was stooped over the ironing board furiously steaming and flattening the collars and cuffs of his shirts into compliance.

"All right, love?" Matt McCarthy bent to kiss her, noting the flushed cheeks, the steely set of her jaw.

"No, I'm not bloody all right. I've had it."

He removed his work jacket, pockets sagging with tape measures and tools, and threw it over the back of a chair. He was exhausted, and the thought of having to pacify Laura irritated him.

"Mr. P's been peeking at her bits," said Anthony with a smirk. Their son's feet were resting on the coffee table as he watched television and his father swept them off with one hand as he passed.

"He did what?" Matt's tone hardened. "I'll go and have a word with—"

She slammed the iron down. "Oh, sit down, for goodness' sake. You know what he's like. Anyway, it's not that, it's the way he has me running backwards and forwards like his personal servant. Every single day. I've had it this time. Really."

When she had realized the old man would not let up, she had returned home and brought him back tinned rice pudding, muttering

under her breath as she crossed the wood back to the big house, the bowl covered with a folded tea towel.

"It's cold," he had said, dipping in a finger.

"It's not. It was heated only ten minutes ago."

"It's cold."

"Well, Mr. Pottisworth, it's not easy getting food over from our house without it losing a little heat."

His mouth had turned down in a moue of disapproval. "Don't want it now. Lost my appetite."

His eyes flicked back to her, and perhaps he noticed the tic in her cheek. She was wondering, briefly, whether it was possible to kill someone with a kitchen tray and a dessert spoon. "Stick it down there. I might have it later." He folded thin arms across his chest. "When I'm desperate, like."

"Mum says she's calling social services," said Anthony. "She reckons they can deal with him."

Matt, about to settle on the sofa beside him, felt a stab of alarm. "Don't be daft. They'll put him in a home."

"So what? Someone else'll have to put up with him and check his nonexistent bedsores, wash his sheets, and take him two meals a day. Good!"

Suddenly energized, Matt stood up. "He's got no bloody money. They'll get him to sign over his house to pay for it, won't they? Use your loaf, woman."

She faced him. She was a handsome woman, lean and agile in her late thirties, but now her face, flushed and cross, was that of a recalcitrant child. "I don't care. I'm telling you, Matt, I've had enough."

He stepped forward swiftly and put his arms round her. "Come on, love. He's on his last legs."

"Nine years, Matt," she said stiffly into his chest. "Nine years I've been at his beck and call. When we moved in you said he wouldn't last the year."

“And think of all those lovely acres, the walled garden, the stableyard . . . Think of the beautiful dining room you’ve planned. Think of us, a happy family, standing in the doorway . . .” He let this vision float in front of her, reestablishing its roots in her imagination. “Look, the old fool’s bedridden. He’s falling apart at the seams. He’s not going to last much longer, is he? And who’s he got, apart from us?” He kissed the top of her head. “The loans are in place, and I’ve even got Sven to draw up the plans. I’ll show you them later, if you want.”

“There you are, Mum. Put like that, it doesn’t hurt to show him your nubbles every now and then, does it?” Anthony chuckled, then yelped as a laundered T-shirt shot out and caught him sharply on his ear.

“Just a bit longer,” said Matt, his voice low and intimate. “Come on, love. Hang on in there, eh?” He felt her soften and knew he had her.

He squeezed her waist, allowing his fingers to suggest some form of private compensation later that evening. He felt her answering squeeze and wished he had not made that diversion earlier to see the barmaid from the Long Whistle. You’d better die soon, you old bugger, he told Pottisworth silently. I don’t know how much longer I can keep this up.



A short distance across the valley, in the master bedroom at the big house, the old man chortled at a comedy program. As the credits rolled, he checked the time and tossed his newspaper to the end of the bed.

Outside an owl hooted and a distant fox barked, perhaps guarding its territory. Animals and humans were no different, he thought wryly, when it came to staking their claim. The fox, with his spraying and fighting, wasn’t too far from Laura McCarthy, with her twice-

daily dinners and her fussing with clean sheets and whatnot. All marking their patch somehow.

He fancied a bit of chocolate. With an agility that might have surprised his neighbors, he climbed out of bed and padded across the floor to the cupboard where he kept his little treats, the sweets and tasties he paid Byron to fetch when he went to town. He opened the door and ferreted behind books and files until he found the smooth plastic wrapping. His fingers closed round what felt like a KitKat and he pulled it out, anticipating the delight of melted chocolate in his mouth, and wondering whether it was worth putting his teeth back in.

First he closed the cupboard door. No point in Laura knowing anything, he thought. Best if she thought him helpless. Women like her had to feel needed. He grinned to himself, thinking of the way her ears had reddened when he'd mentioned the tightness of her jeans. It was easy to wind her up. High point of his day. He'd start on her about riding horses tomorrow, about how she must do it for the thrill—that always got her riled.

He was still smirking as he walked across the floor and heard the theme tune to another of his favorite shows. He glanced up. Lost in the music, he did not see the bowl of rice pudding on the floor, congealing where he had left it earlier. His bony old foot landed in it heel first and he slid smoothly across the boards.

At least, this was what the coroner pieced together when the final hours of Samuel Pottisworth's life were laid out painstakingly before the court. The thud his head made as it met the floor would have been loud enough to hear some two floors below. Still, as Matt McCarthy pointed out, so deep in the woods where all noise was deadened, things went unnoticed. It was a place where almost anything could happen.