

NEW YORK TIMES  
BESTSELLING  
AUTHOR

#1 Bestselling Author of  
ME BEFORE YOU

Jojo Moyes

*The Peacock*  
Emporium



a novel

## Praise for *Still Me*

“Delightful.”

—*People*

“Entertaining.”

—Associated Press

“*Still Me* offers a 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 . . . a must read!”

—Emilia Clark

“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*

“You sobbed through *Me Before You*. You sped through *After You*. And now, Lou is back in *Still Me*. . . . Don’t miss this funny, romantic third installment.”

—*HelloGiggles*

## Praise for *After You*

“Think Elizabeth Bennet after Darcy’s eventual death; Alice after Gertrude; Wilbur after Charlotte. The ‘aftermath’ is a subject most writers understandably avoid, but Moyes has tackled it and given readers an affecting, even entertaining female adventure tale about a broken heroine who ultimately rouses herself and falls in love again, this time with the possibilities in her own future.”

—Maureen Corrigan, NPR’s *Fresh Air*

“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*

“[A] heart-tugger.”  
—*Good Housekeeping*

### Praise for *Me Before You*

“A hilarious, heartbreaking, riveting novel. . . . I will stake my reputation on this book.”  
—Anne Lamott, *People*

“When I finished this novel, I didn’t want to review it; I wanted to reread it. . . . An affair to remember.”  
—*The New York Times Book Review*

“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 *The Girl You Left Behind*

“Vibrant and gripping.”  
—*People* (three stars)

“Jojo Moyes expertly weaves a bittersweet tale in this irresistible novel.”  
—*Entertainment Weekly*

“Moyes writes delicious plots, with characters so clearly imagined they leap off the pages in high-definition prose.”  
—*USA Today* (three and half stars)

“Moving and accomplished . . . strong, provocative, satisfying fiction.”  
—*The Washington Post*

“In this moving paean to daring, determination, and perspicacity, Moyes keeps the reader guessing down to the last hankie.”  
—*Los Angeles Times*

“In her latest heart tugger, Jojo Moyes deftly weaves the story of newlyweds in WWI France with that of a young widow in today’s London.”

—*Parade*

### Praise for *The Last Letter From Your Lover*

“Hopelessly and hopefully romantic.”

—*Chicago Tribune*

“Crafting a love story that feels not just compelling but true is a very difficult thing indeed—and yet, with *The Last Letter from Your Lover*, Jojo Moyes has done it twice. Moyes is a tremendously gifted storyteller, and I’m all admiration.”

—Paula McLain, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Paris Wife*

“A fabulous, emotional, and evocative book—perfect for anyone who loves *Mad Men*.”

—Sophie Kinsella, bestselling author of *I Owe You One*

“This story of passion and missed chances—with a twist that provides fresh perspective 40 years later—is entrancing.”

—*Parade* (Top Pick)

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THE PEACOCK EMPORIUM

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

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**ALSO BY JOJO MOYES**

*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



Jojo Moyes



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Version\_1

*To my mother and father, Lizzie Sanders and Jim Moyes.  
With love and thanks.*

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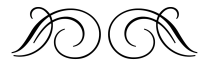
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# Part One



# 1

## *Buenos Aires, 2001: The Day I Delivered My First Baby*

**I**t was the third time in a week that the air-conditioning had gone out at the Hospital de Clinicas, and the heat was so heavy that the nurses had taken to holding battery-operated plastic fans over the intensive-care patients in an effort to keep them cool. Three hundred had come in a box, a present from a grateful stroke survivor in the import-export business, one of the few users of the state hospital who still felt dollar-rich enough to give things away.

The blue plastic fans, however, had turned out to be almost as reliable as his promises of further drugs and medical equipment. All over the hospital, as the air dripped with the noisy heat of a Buenos Aires summer, you could hear the sudden “*iHija di puta!*” of the nurses—even the normally devout ones—as they had to beat them back into life.

I didn’t notice the heat. I was trembling with my own cool fear, that of a newly qualified midwife who has just been told they will be delivering their first baby. Beatriz, the senior midwife who had overseen my training, announced this with a deceptively casual air and a hard slap on my shoulders as she went off to see whether she could steal any food from the geriatric ward to feed one of her new mothers. “They’re in Two,” she said, gesturing to the delivery room. “Multigravida, three children already, but this one doesn’t want to come out. Can’t say I blame it, can you?” She laughed humorlessly, and shoved me toward the door. “I’ll be back in a few minutes.” Then, as she saw me hovering by the door, hearing the muffled wails of pain inside, said, “Go on, Turco, there’s only one end it can come out, you know.”

I walked into the delivery room with the sound of the other midwives’ laughter still in my ears.

I had planned to introduce myself with some authority, to reassure myself as well as my patient, but the woman was kneeling on the floor

pushing at her husband's face with a white-knuckled hand, and mooing like a cow, so I thought a handshake inappropriate.

"She needs some drugs, please, Doctor," said the father, as best he could through the palm against his chin. His voice, I realized, held the deference with which I addressed my hospital superiors.

"Oh, sweet Jesus, why so long? Why so *long*?" She was crying to herself, rocking backward and forward on her haunches. Her T-shirt was drenched with sweat, and her hair, scraped back into a ponytail, was wet enough to reveal pale lines of scalp.

"Our last two came very quickly," he said, stroking her hair. "I don't understand why this one won't come."

I took the notes from the end of the bed. She had been in labor almost eighteen hours: a long time for a first baby, let alone a fourth. I fought the urge to shout for Beatriz. Instead I stared at the notes, attempting to look knowledgeable, and tried mentally to recite my way through medical checklists to the sound of the woman's keening. Downstairs, in the street, someone was playing loud music in their car: the insistent synthesized beat of *cumbia*. I thought about closing the windows, but the idea of that dark little room becoming even hotter was unbearable. "Can you help me get her on the bed?" I asked her husband when I could stare at the notes no longer.

When we had hoisted her up, I took her blood pressure and, as she grabbed at my hair, timed her contractions and felt her stomach. Her skin was feverish and slippery. The baby's head was fully engaged. I asked her husband about her previous history, and found no clues. I looked at the door and wished for Beatriz. "Nothing to worry about," I said, wiping my face, and hoped that there wasn't.

It was then that I saw the other couple, standing almost motionless in the corner of the room by the window. They did not look like the normal visitors to a state hospital: they would have been more suited, in their bright, expensive clothes, to the Swiss hospital on the other side of the plaza. The woman's hair, which was expensively colored, was pulled back into an elegant chignon, but her makeup had not survived the sweltering 104-degree heat, and had settled in lines and pools around her eyes, and was now sliding down her shining face. She held her husband's arm and stared intently at the scene in front of them. "Does she need drugs?" she said, turning to me. "Eric could get her drugs."

She looked too young to be the woman's mother, I thought absently. "We're too far along for drugs," I said, trying to sound confident.

They were all looking at me expectantly. There was no sign of Beatriz.

“I’ll just give her a quick examination,” I said. No one looked like they were going to stop me, so I was left with no option but to do one.

I placed the pregnant woman’s heels against her buttocks and let her knees drop. Then I waited until her next contraction and, as gently as I could, felt around the rim of the cervix. This could be painful in advanced labor, but she was so tired by then that she barely moaned. I stood there for a minute, trying to make sense of it. She was fully dilated, yet I couldn’t feel the baby’s head. Suddenly I felt a little leap of excitement. I gave them all a reassuring smile and moved to the instrument cupboard, hoping that what I was seeking had not yet been looted by another department. But there it was—like a small, steel crochet hook: my magic wand. I held it in my palm, feeling a kind of euphoria at what was about to happen—about what *I* was about to make happen.

The air was rent by another wail from the woman on the bed. I was a little afraid to do this unsupervised, but I knew it was not fair to wait any longer. And now that the fetal heartbeat monitor no longer worked, I had no way of knowing if the baby was in distress.

“Keep her still, please,” I said to the husband, and, timing carefully between contractions, reached in with the hook and nicked a tiny hole in the extra set of waters that I’d realized were blocking the baby’s progress. Even above the woman’s moans, and the traffic outside, I heard the beautiful tiny popping sound as the soft membrane conceded to me. Suddenly there was a gush of fluid and the woman was sitting up and saying, with some surprise and not a little urgency, “I need to push.”

After that I don’t remember much clearly. I remember seeing the soft, shocking thatch of dark hair, then grabbing the woman’s hand and placing it there so that she could be encouraged by it too. I remember instructing her to push, and that when the baby began to emerge I was shouting as loudly as I had when I went to football matches with my father, with relief and shock and joy. And I remember the sight of that beautiful girl as she slithered into my hands, the marbled blue of her skin turning a rapid pink, like a chameleon’s, before she let out a welcome lusty cry of outrage at her delayed entry into the world.

And, to my shame, I remember that I had to turn my head because, as I clipped the cord and laid her on her mother’s chest, I realized that I had begun to cry, and I did not want Beatriz to give the other midwives something else to laugh about.

Beatriz appeared at my shoulder, mopping at her brow, and gestured behind her. “When you’re done,” she said quietly, “I’m going to nip upstairs and see if I can find Dr. Cardenas. She has lost a lot of blood, and I don’t want her to move until he’s taken a look.” I hardly heard her,



and she knew it. She kicked my ankle. “Not bad, Ale,” she said, grinning. It was the first time she had called me by my real name. “Next time you might even remember to weigh the baby.”

I was about to respond in kind, but I became aware that the atmosphere in the room had changed. Beatriz did too, and halted in her tracks. Where normally there was the enraptured cooing of the new mother, the soft murmur of admiring relatives, there was only a quiet pleading: “Diego, no, no, Diego, please . . .”

The smartly dressed couple had moved beside the bed. The blond woman, I noticed, was trembling, a peculiar half-smile on her face, her hand reaching tentatively toward the baby.

The mother was clutching the child to her chest, her eyes closed, murmuring to her husband, “Diego, no, no, I cannot do this.”

Her husband was stroking her face. “Luisa, we agreed. You know we agreed. We cannot afford to feed our children, let alone another.”

She would not open her eyes, and her bony hands were wrapped around the overwashed hospital shawl. “Things will get better, Diego. You will get more work. Please, *amor*, please, no—”

Diego’s face crumpled. He reached over and began, slowly, to pry his wife’s fingers off the baby, one by one. She was wailing now: “No. No, Diego, *please!*”

The joy of the birth had evaporated, and I felt sick in the pit of my stomach as I realized what was happening. I made to intervene, but Beatriz, with an unusually grim expression on her face, stayed me with a tiny shake of her head. “Third one this year,” she muttered.

Diego had managed to take the baby. He held her tight to his chest without looking at her, and then, his own eyes closed, held her away from him. The blond woman had stepped forward. “We will love her so much,” she said, her reedy upper-class accent trembling with her own tears. “We have waited so long . . .”

The mother became wild now, tried to climb from the bed, and Beatriz leaped over and held her down. “She mustn’t move,” she said, her voice sharpened by her own unwilling complicity. “It’s very important that you don’t let her move until the consultant is here.”

Diego wrapped his arms around his wife. It was hard to tell whether he was comforting her or imprisoning her. “They will give her everything, Luisa, and the money will help us feed our children. You have to think of Paola, of Salvador . . . Think of how things have been—”

“My *baby!*” screamed the mother, unhearing, clawing at her husband’s face, impotent against Beatriz’s apologetic bulk. “You cannot take her.” Her fingernails left a bloodied welt, but I don’t think he noticed. I stood

by the sink as the couple backed toward the door, my ears filled with the raw sound of a pain I have never forgotten.

And to this day I cannot remember any beauty in the first baby I brought into this world. I remember only the cries of that mother, the expression of grief etched on her face, a grief I knew, even with my lack of experience, that would never be relieved. And I remember that blond woman, traumatized, yet determined as she crept away, saying quietly: “She will be loved.”

A hundred times she must have said it, although no one was listening. “She will be loved.”