

*A*  
*NOVEL*

Jojo  
Moyes

Still  
Me



*From the #1 New York Times  
bestselling author of  
Me Before You and After You*

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Still Me



# Jojo Moyes

PAMELA DORMAN BOOKS / VIKING

VIKING

An imprint of Penguin Random House LLC

375 Hudson Street

New York, New York 10014

[penguin.com](http://penguin.com)

A Pamela Dorman Book/Viking

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ISBN 9780399562457 (hardcover)

ISBN 9780399562471 (e-book)

ISBN 9780525559030 (export)

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Version\_1

*To darling Saskia: wear your own stripy tights with pride.*

Know, first, who you are; and then adorn yourself accordingly.

—Epictetus

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*ABOUT THE AUTHOR*

1

It was the mustache that reminded me I was no longer in England: a solid, gray millipede firmly obscuring the man's upper lip; a Village People mustache, a cowboy mustache, the miniature head of a broom that meant business. You just didn't get that kind of mustache at home. I couldn't tear my eyes from it.

“Ma'am?”

The only person I had ever seen with a mustache like that at home was Mr. Naylor, our maths teacher, and he collected Digestive crumbs in his—  
we used to count them during algebra.

“Ma’am?”

“Oh. Sorry.”

The man in the uniform motioned me forward with a flick of his stubby finger. He did not look up from his screen. I waited at the booth, long-haul sweat drying gently into my dress. He held up his hand, wagging four fat fingers. This, I grasped after several seconds, was a demand for my passport.

“Name.”

“It’s there,” I said.

“Your name, ma’am.”

“Louisa Elizabeth Clark.” I peered over the counter. “Though I never use the Elizabeth bit. Because my mum realized after they named me that that would make me Lou Lizzy. And if you say that really fast it sounds like lunacy. Though my dad says that’s kind of fitting. Not that I’m a lunatic. I mean, you wouldn’t want lunatics in your country. Hah!” My voice bounced nervously off the Plexiglas screen.

The man looked at me for the first time. He had solid shoulders and a gaze that could pin you like a Tazer. He did not smile. He waited until my  
own faded.

“Sorry,” I said. “People in uniform make me nervous.”

I glanced behind me at the immigration hall, at the snaking queue that had doubled back on itself so many times it had become an impenetrable, restless sea of people. “I think I’m feeling a bit odd from standing in that

queue. That is honestly the longest queue I've ever stood in. I'd begun to wonder whether to start my Christmas list."

"Put your hand on the scanner."

"Is it always that size?"

"The scanner?" He frowned.

"The queue."

But he was no longer listening. He was studying something on his screen. I put my fingers on the little pad. And then my phone dinged.

Mum: **Have you landed?**

I went to tap an answer with my free hand but he turned sharply toward me. "Ma'am, you are not permitted to use cell phones in this area."

"It's just my mum. She wants to know if I'm here." I surreptitiously tried to press the thumbs-up emoji as I slid the phone out of view.

"Reason for travel?"

**What is that?** came Mum's immediate reply. She had taken to texting like a duck to water and could now do it faster than she could speak.

Which was basically warp speed.

**—You know my phone doesn't do the little**

**pictures. Is that an SOS? Louisa tell me**

**you're okay.**

"Reasons for travel, ma'am?" The mustache twitched with irritation. He added, slowly: "What are you doing here in the United States?"

"I have a new job."



“Which is?”

“I’m going to work for a family in New York. Central Park.”

Just briefly, the man’s eyebrows might have raised a millimeter. He checked the address on my form, confirming it. “What kind of job?”

“It’s a bit complicated. But I’m sort of a paid companion.”

“*A paid companion.*”

“It’s like this. I used to work for this man. I was his companion, but I would also give him his meds and take him out and feed him. That’s not as weird as it sounds, by the way—he had no use of his hands. It wasn’t like something pervy. Actually my last job ended up as more than that, because it’s hard not to get close to people you look after and Will—the man—was amazing and we . . . Well, we fell in love.” Too late, I felt the familiar welling of tears. I wiped at my eyes briskly. “So I think it’ll be sort of like that. Except for the love bit. And the feeding.”

The immigration officer was staring at me. I tried to smile. “Actually, I don’t normally cry talking about jobs. I’m not like an actual lunatic, despite my name. Hah! But I loved him. And he loved me. And then he . . . Well, he chose to end his life. So this is sort of my attempt to start over.” The tears were now leaking relentlessly, embarrassingly, from the corners of my eyes. I couldn’t seem to stop them. I couldn’t seem to stop anything. “Sorry.

Must be the jet lag. It’s something like two o’clock in the morning in normal time, right? Plus I don’t really talk about him anymore. I mean, I have a new boyfriend. And he’s great! He’s a paramedic! And hot! That’s like winning the boyfriend lottery, right? A hot paramedic?”

I scabbled around in my handbag for a tissue. When I looked up the man was holding out a box. I took one. “Thank you. So, anyway, my friend Nathan—he’s from New Zealand—works here and he helped me get this job and I don’t really know what it involves yet, apart from looking after this rich man’s wife who gets depressed. But I’ve decided this time I’m

going to live up to what Will wanted for me, because before I didn't get it right. I just ended up working in an airport."

I froze. "Not—uh—that there's anything wrong with working at an airport! I'm sure immigration is a very important job. *Really* important. But I have a plan. I'm going to do something new every week that I'm here and I'm going to say yes."

"Say yes?"

"To new things. Will always said I shut myself off from new experiences. So this is my plan."

The officer studied my paperwork. "You didn't fill the address section out properly. I need a zip code."

He pushed the form toward me. I checked the number on the sheet that I had printed out and filled it in with trembling fingers. I glanced to my left, where the queue at my section was growing restive. At the front of the next queue a Chinese family was being questioned by two officials. As the woman protested, they were led into a side room. I felt suddenly very alone.

The immigration officer peered at the people waiting. And then, abruptly, he stamped my passport. "Good luck, Louisa Clark," he said.

I stared at him. "That's it?"

"That's it."

I smiled. "Oh, thank you! That's really kind. I mean, it's quite weird being on the other side of the world by yourself for the first time, and now I feel a bit like I just met my first nice new person and—"

"You need to move along now, ma'am."

"Of course. Sorry."

I gathered up my belongings and pushed a sweaty frond of hair from my face.