

'A joy to read, with its complex emotional depths, and daring beauty.' **HELEN GARNER**

# IN MOONLAND



**BOOK  
CLUB  
NOTES**

SCRIBE

# MILES ALLINSON

'A story of our hearts, all broken, full, mystifying. Sublime prose.' **TARA JUNE WINCH**



**Dear Book Clubbers,**

Thanks for reading *In Moonland*. It's a weird honour to think of anyone spending time in this world, which has been for so many years, intimately and intensely mine alone.

Some of this book was written at the State Library of Victoria, some of it was written in India, at the university of Madras, and some of it was written in the car outside my daughter's kindergarten, because she made me promise that I wouldn't go home. All the little kids waved to me on their way to the park. The rest was written in my bedroom or in the backyard. My daughter was born just before I began work on it and she's nearly seven now.

After four years I thought I had finished. I gave it to my editor, to my mum, and to a good friend who is also a writer. They all said the same thing: it doesn't work. I felt an overwhelming sense of shame. I felt that I had failed them all and that I had wasted so much good will, so much time, and so much money — so to speak. Over the next two years, I substantially rewrote it.

In some ways, you could say the book began with three images — or with one image and two mysteries. Three glimmers. The first was a memory, which I've come to think of as my first memory, from around the age of five: a small house in the darkness beside a highway, orange light inside the house. This was my father's friend's house. He was a Rajneeshee — a follower of the Indian Guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. A beautiful friend, who looked after me when I was young. The second glimmer occurred not long before my father died, in 2007. He had a falling out with another old friend. But what had happened? There was some sense of unforgivable betrayal. My father died before it could be resolved. The third glimmer was something my dad told me a few days before he died. He told me he'd been married to someone else before he met my mother. Somehow, he'd forgotten to tell me.

When my own daughter was born, I came to understand something, in a way I had never understood it before — like an idiot in other words — namely that my father had been young once, too, and that the world of his youth had begun to disappear when I was born. Or that's how it seemed to me, anyway. I decided to visit my dad's old friends. I travelled round the country and interviewed old hippies. I was impressed by what they had experienced: coups, cults, a sense of genuine revolutionary possibility. There was something untamed about the 70s in Australia. Almost all of them mentioned India as a place of incredible importance in their lives. I was also saddened, I guess, by the accumulated sense of disappointment: personal, political, spiritual. I became very interested in the conflict between the promise that is held out by the spiritual experience and the obdurate reality of the ordinary, material world.

**Miles Allinson**

**Some questions**

1. The book is divided into four sections, with four different narrative perspectives, that shuffle time. Why do you think the author chose to do this? What is its effect?
2. What do you think the title refers to?
3. There are repeated references to science-fiction films. What is the purpose and the effect of this do you think?
4. What do you think of Joe's decision to travel to and to remain in India? Can you think of a time when you were impelled to do something that didn't make logical sense?
5. Before reading the book, were you aware of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh or Osho as he's more commonly known now? How did these preconceptions (or lack of them) influence your reading?
6. The book describes a variety of "spiritual experiences". Have you ever had a "spiritual experience" that you still regard as important? How long ago was that experience? Does it still inform your life in any way? How do you relate to the person you were then?
7. What do you think happened to Vincent and why?
8. We are often encouraged to believe that life will get better and better. How do you feel about this claim?
9. Part Three is largely unpunctuated. Why do you think the author chose to write it like this? What is Abhi's state of mind? Who do you think he is addressing?
10. In Part Four, why do you think Sylvie travels to see Joe? What does she want from him and does she get it?
11. The last section of the book portrays a world twenty-five years in the future. What did you think of this world? What are its features? Is it a plausible reality? How do you think the future might be different to this one?
12. As the book finishes, we are not told what Sylvie has chosen to do, if anything. How did you feel about this ending? What do you imagine her state of mind to be? Do you feel it is important to imagine what her decision will be?



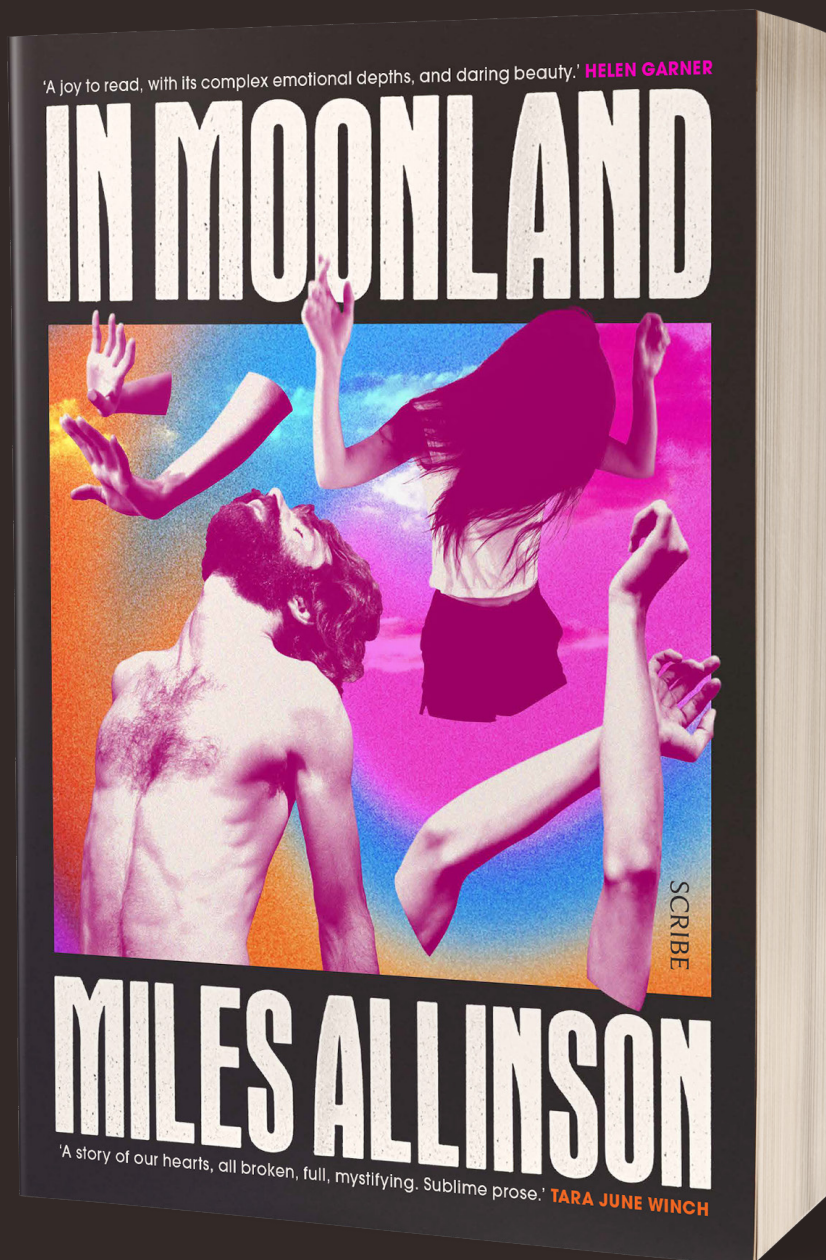




## IN MOONLAND

## BOOK CLUB NOTES

**Miles Allinson** is a writer and an artist, and the author of the multi award-winning novel *Fever of Animals*. He lives in Melbourne. *In Moonland* is his second novel.



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Seriously good books.  
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