

A  
N  
O  
V  
E  
L

I HAVE  
SOME  
QUESTIONS  
FOR YOU

AUTHOR OF THE PULITZER PRIZE FINALIST  
THE GREAT BELIEVERS

REBECCA  
MAKKAI

ALSO BY REBECCA MAKKAI

*The Great Believers*  
*Music for Wartime*  
*The Hundred-Year House*  
*The Borrower*

**I HAVE  
SOME  
QUESTIONS  
FOR YOU**

*Rebecca Makkai*

VIKING

VIKING  
An imprint of Penguin Random House LLC  
[penguinrandomhouse.com](https://penguinrandomhouse.com)

Copyright © 2023 by Rebecca Makkai Freeman  
Penguin Random House supports copyright. Copyright fuels creativity, encourages diverse voices, promotes free speech, and creates a vibrant culture. Thank you for buying an authorized edition of this book and for complying with copyright laws by not reproducing, scanning, or distributing any part of it in any form without permission. You are supporting writers and allowing Penguin Random House to continue to publish books for every reader.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Names: Makkai, Rebecca, author.  
Title: I have some questions for you / Rebecca Makkai.  
Description: [New York] : Viking, [2023]  
Identifiers: LCCN 2022032713 (print) | LCCN 2022032714 (ebook) | ISBN 9780593490143 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780593654729 (international edition) | ISBN 9780593490150 (ebook)  
Subjects: LCGFT: Novels.  
Classification: LCC PS3613.A36 I33 2023 (print) | LCC PS3613.A36 (ebook) | DDC 813/.6—dc23/eng/20220711

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022032713>  
LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2022032714>

Cover design: Elizabeth Yaffe

BOOK DESIGN BY LUCIA BERNARD, ADAPTED FOR EBOOK BY CORA WIGEN

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

pid\_prh\_6.0\_142492537\_c0\_r0

# CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Also by Rebecca Makkai](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Dedication](#)

## [Part I](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Chapter 11](#)

[Chapter 12](#)

[Chapter 13](#)

[Chapter 14](#)

[Chapter 15](#)

[#1: Omar Evans](#)

[Chapter 16](#)

[Chapter 17](#)

[Chapter 18](#)

[Chapter 19](#)

[#2: Thalia](#)

[Chapter 20](#)

[Chapter 21](#)

[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[#3: Robbie Serenho](#)

[Chapter 28](#)

[Chapter 29](#)

[Chapter 30](#)

[Chapter 31](#)

[Chapter 32](#)

[Chapter 33](#)

[Chapter 34](#)

[Chapter 35](#)

[Chapter 36](#)

[#4: Puja Sharma](#)

[Chapter 37](#)

[Chapter 38](#)

[Chapter 39](#)

[Chapter 40](#)

[Chapter 41](#)

[Chapter 42](#)

[Chapter 43](#)

[#5: Me](#)

[Chapter 44](#)

[Chapter 45](#)

[Chapter 46](#)

[Chapter 47](#)

[Chapter 48](#)

[Chapter 49](#)

[#6: Ari Hutson](#)

[Chapter 50](#)

[Chapter 51](#)  
[Chapter 52](#)  
[Chapter 53](#)  
[Chapter 54](#)  
[Chapter 55](#)  
[Chapter 56](#)  
[Chapter 57](#)  
[#7: Your Wife](#)  
[Chapter 58](#)  
[#8: You](#)  
[Chapter 59](#)  
[Chapter 60](#)

## [Part II](#)

[Chapter 1](#)  
[Chapter 2](#)  
[Chapter 3](#)  
[Chapter 4](#)  
[Chapter 5](#)  
[Chapter 6](#)  
[Chapter 7](#)  
[Chapter 8](#)  
[Chapter 9](#)  
[Chapter 10](#)  
[Chapter 11](#)  
[Chapter 12](#)  
[Chapter 13](#)  
[Chapter 14](#)  
[Chapter 15](#)  
[Chapter 16](#)  
[Chapter 17](#)  
[Chapter 18](#)  
[Chapter 19](#)  
[Chapter 20](#)  
[Chapter 21](#)  
[Chapter 22](#)

[Chapter 23](#)

[Chapter 24](#)

[Chapter 25](#)

[Chapter 26](#)

[Chapter 27](#)

[Chapter 28](#)

[Chapter 29](#)

[Chapter 30](#)

[#9: Robbie Serenho](#)

[Chapter 31](#)

[Chapter 32](#)

[Chapter 33](#)

[Chapter 34](#)

[Chapter 35](#)

[Chapter 36](#)

[Chapter 37](#)

[Chapter 38](#)

[Chapter 39](#)

[Chapter 40](#)

[Chapter 41](#)

[\*Acknowledgments\*](#)

[\*About the Author\*](#)

\_142492537\_



*for CGG  
in joyful memory*

“You’ve heard of her,” I say—a challenge, an assurance. To the woman on the neighboring hotel barstool who’s made the mistake of striking up a conversation, to the dentist who runs out of questions about my kids and asks what I’ve been up to myself.

Sometimes they know her right away. Sometimes they ask, “Wasn’t that the one where the guy kept her in the basement?”

No! No. It was not.

Wasn’t it the one where she was stabbed in—no. The one where she got in a cab with—different girl. The one where she went to the frat party, the one where he used a stick, the one where he used a hammer, the one where she picked him up from rehab and he—no. The one where he’d been watching her jog every day? The one where she made the mistake of telling him her period was late? The one with the uncle? Wait, the other one with the uncle?

No: It was the one with the swimming pool. The one with the alcohol in the—with her hair around—with the guy who confessed to—right. Yes.

They nod, comforted. By what?

My barstool neighbor pulls the celery from her Bloody Mary, crunches down. My dentist asks me to rinse. They work her name in their mouths, their memories. “I definitely know that one,” they say.

“That one,” because what is she now but a story, a story to know or not know, a story with a limited set of details, a story to master by memorizing maps and timelines.

“The one from the boarding school!” they say. “I remember, the one from the video. You *knew* her?”

She’s the one whose photo pops up if you search *New Hampshire murder*, alongside mug shots from the meth-addled tragedies of more recent years. One photo—her laughing with her mouth but not her eyes, suggesting some deep unhappiness—tends to feature in clickbait. It’s just a cropped shot of the tennis team from the yearbook; if you knew Thalia it’s

easy to see she wasn't actually upset, was simply smiling for the camera when she didn't feel like it.

It was the story that got told and retold.

It was the one where she was young enough and white enough and pretty enough and rich enough that people paid attention.

It was the one where we were all young enough to think someone smarter had the answers.

Maybe it was the one we got wrong.

Maybe it was the one we all, collectively, each bearing only the weight of a feather, got wrong.

# *Part I*

# 1

I first watched the video in 2016. I was in bed on my laptop, with headphones, worried Jerome would wake up and I'd have to explain. Down the hall, my children slept. I could have gone and checked on them, felt their warm cheeks and hot breath. I could have smelled my daughter's hair—and maybe the scent of damp lavender and a toddler's scalp would have been enough to send me to sleep.

But a friend I hadn't seen in twenty years had just sent me the link, and so I clicked.

Lerner and Loewe's *Camelot*. I was both stage manager and tech director. One fixed camera, too close to the orchestra, too far from the unmiked adolescent singers, 1995 VHS quality, some member of the AV club behind the lens. And my God, we knew we weren't great, but we weren't even as good as we thought we were. Whoever uploaded it two decades later, whoever added the notes below with the exact time markers for when Thalia Keith shows up, had also posted the list of cast and crew. Beth Docherty as a petite Guinevere, Sakina John glowing as Morgan le Fay with a crown of gold spikes atop her cornrows, Mike Stiles beautiful and embarrassed as King Arthur. My name is misspelled, but it's there, too.

The curtain call is the last shot where you clearly see Thalia, her dark curls distinguishing her from the washed-out mass. Then most everyone stays onstage to sing "Happy Birthday" to Mrs. Ross, our director, to pull her up from the front row where she sat every night jotting notes. She's so young, something I hadn't registered then.

A few kids exit, return in confusion. Orchestra members hop onstage to sing, Mrs. Ross's husband springs from the audience with flowers, the crew comes on in black shirts and black jeans. I don't appear; I assume I stayed up in the box. It would have been like me to sit it out.

Including the regrouping and singing, the birthday business lasts fifty-two seconds, during which you never see Thalia clearly. In the comments, someone had zoomed in on a bit of green dress at one side of the frame, posted side-by-side photos of that smear of color and the dress Thalia wore—first covered in gauze as Nimue, the enchantress, the Lady of the Lake, and then ungauzed, with a simple headdress, as Lady Anne. But there were several green dresses. My friend Carlotta’s was one. There’s a chance that, by then, Thalia was gone.

Most of the discussion below the video focused on timing. The show was set to begin at 7:00, but we likely started our mercifully abridged version five minutes late. Maybe more. The tape omitted intermission, and there was speculation on how long the intermission of a high school musical would last. Depending on what you believe about these two variables, the show ended sometime between 8:45 and 9:15. I should have known. Once, there would have been a binder with my meticulous notes. But no one ever asked for it.

The window the medical examiner allowed for Thalia’s time of death was 8:00 p.m. to midnight, with the beginning of the slot curtailed by the musical—the reason the show’s exact end time had become the subject of infinite fascination online.

*I came here from YouTube*, one commenter had written in 2015, linking to a separate video. *Watch this. It PROVES they bungled the case. The timeline makes no sense.*

Someone else wrote: *Wrong guy in prison bc of racist cops in schools pocket.*

And below that: *Welcome to Tinfoil Hat Central! Focus your energies on an ACTUAL UNSOLVED CASE.*

Watching the video twenty-one years after the fact, the memory that dislodged from my brain’s dark corners was looking up *lusty* in the library dictionary with my friend Fran, who was in the chorus. To quiet our giggling about “The Lusty Month of May,” Mrs. Ross had announced that “*lusty* simply means *vibrant*. You’re welcome to look it up.” But what did Mrs. Ross know about lust? Lust was for the young, not married drama teachers. But (“Holy apeshit,” as Fran would have said, might have said), look, according to Webster, *lusty* indeed meant *healthy and strong; full of*

*vigor*. One of the examples was *a lusty beef stew*. We fled the library laughing, Fran singing, “Oh, a lusty stew of beef!”

Where had I kept that memory, all those years?

The first time through the video I skipped around, really only watching the end; I had no desire to listen at length to teenage voices, poorly tuned string instruments. But then I went back—the same night, two a.m., my melatonin tablet failing—and watched all the parts with Thalia. Act I, Scene 2 was her only scene as Nimue. She appeared upstage in a dry ice fog, singing hypnotically behind Merlin. Something bothered me about how she kept glancing away from him as she sang, looking offstage right, as if she needed prompting. She couldn’t have; all she needed to do was sing her one repetitive song.

I climbed carefully over Jerome to get his iPad from his nightstand and brought the video up there, this time zooming in on her face, making it larger if not clearer. It’s subtle, but she looks irritated.

And then, as Merlin gives his farewell speech, bidding goodbye to Arthur and Camelot, she looks away again, nearly over her shoulder. She mouths something; it’s not my imagination. Her lips start to close and then part, a formation that makes a W sound when I replicate it. She’s saying, I’m almost sure, the word *what*. Maybe just to a stagehand, one of my crew holding up a forgotten prop. But what could have been so important in that moment, right before she exited?

As of 2016, no one in the comments section had fixated on this. They only cared about the timing of the curtain call, whether she was indeed onstage for that last minute. (That and how pretty she was.) Fifty-two seconds, their reasoning went, was enough for Thalia Keith to meet someone waiting backstage, to leave with that person before anyone saw.

At the very end of the tape: Our illustrious orchestra conductor—slash—music director, bow-tied, baton still in hand, begins an announcement no one’s listening to: “Thank you all! As you leave—” But the video cedes to a buzz of gray lines. Presumably something about dorm check-in, or taking your trash with you.

*Check out Guinevere the last two seconds*, one comment reads. *Is that a flask? I wanna be friends with Guinevere!* I froze the video and yes, it’s a silver flask Beth’s holding aloft, maybe confident her friends will

recognize it but any teachers in the audience will be too distracted to notice. Or maybe Beth was already too buzzed to care.

Another comment asks if anyone can identify the audience members passing the camera as they leave.

Another reads, *If you watch the 2005 Dateline special, don't listen to anything they say. SO many errors. Also, it's THA- like the beginning of "thatch" or "thanks" and Lester Holt keeps saying THAY-lia.*

Someone replies: *I thought it was TAHL-ia.*

*Nope, nope, nope*, the original poster writes. *I knew her sister.*

Another comment: *This whole thing makes me so sad.* Followed by three crying emojis and a blue heart.

I dreamed for weeks afterward not about Thalia's head turn, her mouthed question, but about Beth Docherty's flask. In my dreams, I had to find it in order to hide it again. I held my giant binder. My notes were no help.

The theater crowd had begged for that show—had brought it up constantly the year before, whenever Mrs. Ross had dorm duty. There'd been a Broadway revival in '93, and even those of us who hadn't seen it had heard the soundtrack, understood it entailed medieval cleavage, onstage kissing, fabulous solos. For me, it meant castle backgrounds, thrones, trees on casters—nothing tricky, no flesh-eating houseplant, no Ford Deluxe convertible to roll onstage. For the journalists of the future, it would mean endless easy metaphors. Boarding school as kingdom in the woods, Thalia as enchantress, Thalia as princess, Thalia as martyr. What could be more romantic? What's as perfect as a girl stopped dead, midformation? Girl as blank slate. Girl as reflection of your desires, unmarred by her own. Girl as sacrifice to the idea of *girl*. Girl as a series of childhood photographs, all marked with the aura of *girl who will die young*, as if even the third grade portrait photographer should have seen it written on her face, that this was a girl who would only ever be a girl.

The bystander, the voyeur, even the perpetrator—they're all off the hook when the girl was born dead.

On the internet and on TV, they love that.

And you, Mr. Bloch: I suppose it's been convenient for you, too.



## 2

Against all odds, in January of 2018, I found myself hurtling back toward campus in one of those good old Blue Cabs that had picked me up so many times, so long ago, from the Manchester airport. My driver said he'd been making runs to Granby all day.

"They all went on vacation somewhere," he said.

I said, "They were home for holiday break."

He snorted, as if I'd confirmed his rotten suspicions.

He asked if I taught at Granby. I was startled, for a moment, that he hadn't taken me for a student. But here was my reflection in his rearview: a put-together adult with lines around her eyes. I said no, not really, I was just visiting to teach a two-week course. I didn't explain that I'd gone to Granby, that I knew the route we were traveling like an old song. It felt like too much information to lay on him in casual conversation. I didn't explain the concept of mini-mester, either, because it would sound twee, the exact kind of thing he'd imagine these spoiled kids getting up to.

It was Fran's idea to bring me back. Fran herself had barely left; after a few years away for college, grad school, time abroad, she returned to teach history at Granby. Her wife works in Admissions, and they live on campus with their sons.

My driver's name was Lee, and he told me he'd "been driving these Granby kids since their granddaddies went there." He explained that Granby was the kind of school you could only get into through family connections. I wanted to tell him this was dead wrong, but my window for correcting his assumption that I was an outsider had long passed. He told me that "these kids get up to trouble you wouldn't believe" and asked if I'd read the article "a few years back" in *Rolling Stone*. That article ("Live Free or Die: Drink, Drugs, and Drowning at an Elite New Hampshire Boarding School") came out in 1996, and yes, we'd all read it. We emailed

each other about it from our college dorms, livid over its errors and assumptions—much as we would all text each other nine years later when *Dateline* dragged everything up again.

Lee said, “They don’t supervise those kids a bit. Only thing I’m happy about, they have a rule against Uber.”

I said, “That’s funny, I’ve heard the opposite. About the supervision.”

“Yeah, well, they’re lying. They want you to come teach, they’ll say whatever.”

I’d only been back to Granby three times in the nearly twenty-three years since graduation. There was one early reunion when I lived in New York; I stayed an hour. I returned for Fran and Anne’s wedding in Old Chapel in 2008. In July of 2013, I was in Vermont for a few days and came to see Fran, to meet her first baby. That was it. I’d avoided our tenth and fifteenth and twentieth, ignored the LA alumni meetups. It wasn’t till that *Camelot* video surfaced and Fran looped me in on a subsequent group text, which devolved into theater memories, that I grew genuinely nostalgic for the place. I thought I’d wait for 2020, a reunion my classmates would show for—our twenty-fifth as well as the school’s bicentennial. But then, this invitation.

It was convenient, too, that Yahav, the man I’d been having a dragged-out, desperate, long-distance affair with, was just two hours away, teaching for the year at BU Law. Yahav had an Israeli accent and was tall and brilliant and neurotic. Our relationship wasn’t such that I could simply fly out to see him. But I could find myself in the neighborhood.

Plus I wanted to see if I could do it—if, despite my nerves, my almost adolescent panic, I was ready to measure myself against the girl who’d slouched her way through Granby. In LA I knew in theory that I was accomplished—a sometime college professor with a lauded podcast, a woman who could make a meal from farmers’ market ingredients and get her kids to school reasonably dressed—but I didn’t particularly feel, on a daily basis, the distance I’d come. At Granby, I knew it would hit me hard.

So there was the money, and the guy, and my ego, and—below it all, a note too low to hear—there was Thalia, there was the way that ever since I’d watched that video, I’d felt just slightly misaligned.

In any case: They asked, I said yes, and here I was, buckled into the backseat letting Lee drive me to campus at ten miles over the speed limit.

He said, “What are you gonna teach them, some Shakespeare?”

I explained that I was teaching two classes: one on podcasting, another on film studies.

“Film studies!” he said. “They watching movies, or making them?”

I felt there was no answer that wouldn’t make Lee think worse of both me and the school. I said, “The history of film,” which was both correct and incomplete. I added that until recently I’d taught film studies at UCLA, which had the desired effect—I’ve used this trick before—of getting him straight onto Bruins football. I could make noises of agreement while he monologued. We only had twenty minutes left in the drive, and the odds were low now that he’d either ask me about podcasts or mansplain Quentin Tarantino.

The school had invited me specifically to teach the film class, and I’d volunteered to double up because it would mean twice the money—but also because I’ve never known how to sit still, and if I was leaving my kids and heading to the woods for two weeks, I didn’t want to just sit around. The need to keep busy is both a symptom of high-functioning anxiety and the key to my success.

My podcast at the time was *Starlet Fever*, a serial history of women in film—the ways the industry chewed them up and spat them out. It was going as well as a podcast reasonably could, occasionally hitting top slots in various download metrics. There was a bit of money in it, and sometimes, thrillingly, a celebrity would mention us in an interview. My cohost, Lance, had been able to quit his landscaping gig, I’d been able to turn down the adjuncting crumbs UCLA threw my way, and we had a couple of literary agents offering representation if we wanted to cowrite a book. We were knee-deep in prep for our upcoming season, centered on Rita Hayworth, but it was research I could do from anywhere.

We followed another Blue Cab down Route 9, one with two kids in the back. Lee said, “See, there’s some of your students, I bet. None of these kids are from around here. They’re from other countries, even. This morning I drove some girls coming back from China, and they didn’t say a word. How can they do classes when they don’t speak English?”

I pretended to take a call then, before the racism turned more overt.

“Gary!” I said to the no one in my phone, and then I spaced out a series of *uh-huhs* and *okays* for ten minutes as the frozen woods blurred past. Without Lee’s distractions, though, I was unfortunately free to feel the nerves I’d been ignoring, free to feel the woods swallowing me toward Granby. Here was the little white union church I always took as the sign that I’d be there soon. Here was the turnoff to the narrower road, a turn I felt deep in my muscle memory.

As if the turn had brought it up, I remembered the too-long jean shorts and striped tank top I wore on my first drive to Granby in 1991. I remembered wondering if New Hampshire kids had accents, not understanding how few of my classmates would be from New Hampshire. I restrained myself from telling this to Lee, or saying it into my phone.

The Robesons, the family I lived with, had driven me most of the way from Indiana in one day, and the next morning we woke with just an hour to go. The backseat windows down, I sat with my face in the rushing air watching the scroll of calendar-pretty farmland and woods you couldn’t see into, just walls of green. Everything smelled like manure, which I was used to, and then, suddenly, like pine. I said, “It smells like air freshener out there!” The Robesons reacted as if I were a small child who’d said something delightful. “Like air freshener!” Severn Robeson repeated, and gleefully slapped the steering wheel.

On campus that first day, I couldn’t believe the density of woods, the way the ground was somehow the woods, too—rocks and logs and pine needles and moss. You always had to watch your feet. The only woods I’d known in Indiana stood between rows of houses or out back of gas stations—woods you could walk through to the other side. There were cigarette butts, soda cans. When I’d heard fairy tales as a child, those were the woods I pictured. But now the stories of primeval forests, lost children, hidden lairs, made sense. *This* was a forest.

Outside Lee’s cab: the Granby Post Office, and what used to be the video store. The Circle K was unchanged, but it was hard to get nostalgic over a gas station. Here was the campus road, and here was a wave of adrenaline. I ended my fake phone call, wishing Gary a great day.