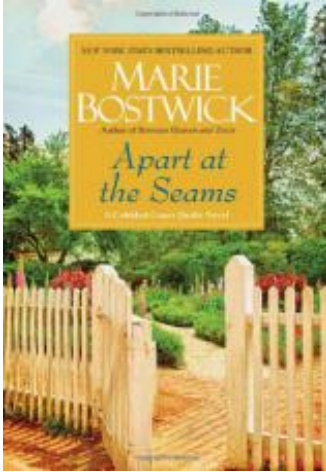

Apart at the Seams: A Cobbled Court Quilts Novel

by Marie Bostwick



About the Book

New York Times bestselling author Marie Bostwick welcomes readers back to picturesque New Bern, Connecticut --- a perfect place for a woman whose marriage is in turmoil to discover a new pattern for living.

Twice in her life, college counselor Gayla Oliver fell in love at first sight. The first time was with Brian --- a lean, longhaired, British bass player. Marriage followed quickly, then twins, and gradually their bohemian lifestyle gave way to busy careers in New York. Gayla's second love affair is with New Bern, Connecticut. Like Brian, the laid back town is charming without trying too hard. It's the ideal place to buy a second home and reignite the spark in their 26-year marriage. Not that Gayla is worried. At least, not until she finds a discarded memo in which Brian admits to a past affair and suggests an amicable divorce.

Devastated, Gayla flees to New Bern. Though Brian insists he's since recommitted to his family, Gayla's feelings of betrayal may go too deep for forgiveness. Besides, her solo sabbatical is a chance to explore the creative impulses she sidelined long ago --- quilting, gardening, and striking up new friendships with the women of the Cobbled Court circle --- particularly Ivy, a single mother confronting fresh starts and past hurts of her own. With all of their support, Gayla just might find the courage to look ahead, decide which fragments of her old life she wants to keep, which are beyond repair --- and how to knot the fraying ends until a bold new design reveals itself.

Discussion Guide

1. When Gayla Oliver learns that her husband, Brian, has had an affair, she points out that when the gossip mills start churning in the wake of marital infidelity, someone always says, 'Well, she must have known. Down deep, she had to have at least suspected.' Do you agree with that statement? Do you believe people with cheating spouses actually know

what is going on at some level but choose to look the other way? Or do you think, as Gayla does, this is something that people say to make themselves feel more secure in their own relationships? Or does the truth lie somewhere in between?

2. Gayla learns about Brian's affair and unhappiness in their marriage when she stumbles upon a memo he wrote to her but failed to send. Why do you think he did that? If he changed his mind about divorce and never intended for her to see the memo, why do you think he never deleted it? And why, if he was so unhappy, didn't he simply speak to her about their problems? Was the memo his way of sorting out his thoughts and desires? Or avoiding them?

3. Ivy Peterman is distressed when she learns that, according to the law, her abusive ex-husband, Hodge, who is soon to be released from prison, has a right to be reunited with his children. What do you think of these types of laws? Should parents with records of abuse be allowed contact with their children? Never? Sometimes? Only in certain circumstances? In these instances, should children have a right to refuse to see their parents? If so, at what age and under what circumstances?

4. In spite of an understandable wariness about entering into a new relationship, Ivy, after spending so many years alone, decides to give speed dating a try. If you've been married or in an exclusive relationship for a very long time, how do you think you'd feel about dating again? Do you think the process of meeting new romantic partners is something that would be fun? Anxiety producing? Something that you'd never do in a million years? If you're on the dating scene now or have been in the past couple of years, what do you think is the best way to meet new people? And for everyone, can you recall the best date you've ever been on? The worst?

5. Looking for a way to explain her sudden appearance in New Bern without giving away too much about her personal life, Gayla tells Tessa and the other women of the Cobbled Court Quilt Circle that she is taking a "sabbatical" and using the time to try things she's always wanted to do but has never found the time for. What about you? If you could take a sabbatical from everyday life, what things would you want to try? Would you take up a new hobby or sport? Take an exotic vacation? Go back to school?

6. Think about the list you created in response to the previous question. Obviously, there may be financial, vocational or lifestyle factors that would keep you from taking up some of those activities now, but can you also identify items on the list that you could try now or in the near future? What obstacles are standing in your way? Can you think of ways to overcome those obstacles? Are you ready to do so?

7. In the story, Gayla has to wrestle with a very fundamental question: Is it possible for a marriage to survive in the aftermath of infidelity? Gayla's friend Lanie says no, asserting that a man who cheats once will cheat again. Brian, Gayla's husband, says yes, believing that they can work through their problems and give the marriage a second chance. Gayla isn't so sure. What do you think? In cases of infidelity, is divorce the best or only option? Why? Or do you believe that couples should stay together no matter what, even if one of them has been unfaithful? Or do you believe that, when somebody cheats, the couple should stay together only under certain conditions? What are they?

8. Overwhelmed by emotions she seems unable to control, Gayla stumbles upon an unusual but effective method for dealing with her anger --- smashing dishes against a stone wall. What do you do when you're angry or frustrated? How is that working for you? Do you think there could be a more constructive way of handling your emotions?

9. Gayla and Brian originally bought the cottage in New Bern because they hoped it would give them a means of staying

connected as a couple during a challenging season in their careers. While it didn't work out the way they'd hoped, at least not at first, it wasn't necessarily a bad idea. What about you? Do you and your spouse or partner have a special place you like to go together? Someplace that helps you clear your heads and reconnect romantically?

10. When Brian suggests dating as a means of healing their broken relationship, Gayla is skeptical but grudgingly decides to go along with his plan, quickly realizing that she doesn't know her husband as well as she thought she did. If you've been married or in a relationship for a long time, what suggestions do you have for keeping the interest and romance alive for the long haul?

11. Gayla knows that if she hopes to repair her broken marriage, she has to find a way to forgive Brian, but it isn't easy. When someone we love hurts us deeply, it can be very hard to move past the hurt and truly forgive. Some people, like Lanie, would say it's impossible, even foolish, and that people who do so are just setting themselves up to be hurt again. On the other hand, Philippa believes forgiving is the only way to free ourselves from the worry and anxiety of past hurts, telling Gayla that, "every debt we choose to hold on to actually has a hold on us." What do you think? Do you agree with Lanie? Or with Philippa? This may not be an answer you wish to share with the group, but did reading the story remind you of any half-healed hurts in your own life? Is there someone you need to forgive? What difference would it make in your life if you were able to do that? Or perhaps you've realized that there is someone of whom you need to ask forgiveness. Are you ready to do so?

Author Bio

Marie Bostwick is a *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of insightful, uplifting fiction for women. Marie lives in Oregon with her husband. When not writing books, she enjoys quilting, hiking, cooking and creating posts on her lifestyle blog, *Fiercely Marie*. Marie travels extensively, speaking at libraries, bookstores, quilt guilds and conferences.

Critical Praise

"Readers won't be able to resist and will want to join the quilt circle."

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