



A Fitting Place

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In the wake of her husband's desertion, Lindsey Chandler finds solace in a new relationship that offers an intimacy Lindsey has never known.

Before long, she finds herself ensnared by the same destructive inter-personal dynamics that plagued her marriage. Because her new love is a woman, she is unable to blame her dilemma on traditional gender role. Lindsey is forced to look in the mirror as she seeks to define what she wants from this—or any—relationship.

Freed from the straightjacket of societal notions of friend, wife, and mother, Lindsey calls on inner resources she never knew she had, as she sets out to build a new life for herself and her teenage daughter.

The premise of this debut novel is that opportunities for personal growth are greatest when you step outside your comfort zone.

A Fitting Place is an uplifting story of the human potential we all have.

A Fitting Place Details

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From Reader Review A Fitting Place for online ebook

Diane says

If it's one thing that can be said about life, it's: don't get too comfortable. Everything can change in an instant.

Take Lindsay, who has a family and a successful career. She's a social worker with problems: her husband has deserted her (thus freeing her from a marriage plagued with problems), leaving her with a teenage daughter and a host of self-destructive patterns that have not served Lindsay well in the past, and which influence every choice she makes.

But compared to clients she sees daily, who struggle with debilitating mental conditions and ongoing abuse, she deems many of her own problems insignificant. And the techniques she's honed to survive life are down to a fine art, even if they do allow her to coast through life without changing her psyche: "Ever the introvert, she found idle conversation with strangers exhausting. By accident as much as design, she'd chosen a profession that allowed her to watch and listen while others talked."

What can shake a placid, contented life perspective that's newly resettled into comfortable old habits after a husband's infidelity?

The combination of an undiagnosed physical ailment, a mythology class, and the prospect of a new, different relationship awaken unshakeable forces of change in Lindsay's life. That those forces include a hitherto-unthinkable relationship with a woman is only part of *A Fitting Place*'s wider-ranging exploration of how real transformation is achieved.

Readers follow Lindsay through this entire process, from her shock at her husband's revelation of his double life to their separation, its impact on their daughter, and Lindsay's growing affection for a classmate. In the course of this growth she examines not only her own psyche but her perceptions of social convention, love, and commitment: "As Lindsey crossed the front hall, she came face to face with the mirrored image of a red-eyed, middle-aged woman in a bathrobe. The woman Ted had said he would love forever, but no longer did. Why? Had she misjudged his capacity to love ... or was she not worthy of being loved forever? What did it mean to love someone forever?"

But, don't get too comfortable, yet. Plenty of novels chronicle the changes wrought by separation and divorce; and many also include explorations of alternative love options.

But *A Fitting Place* goes a step further in exploring not only new opportunities (...that approach has been used many, many other times) but the patterns of dependency which Lindsay honed to a fine art in her first marriage, that threaten any new relationship unless she can first change herself.

From her close friendship with a female confidante to her blossoming new love and sometimes-stormy relationship with a hurt, confused teen daughter, *A Fitting Place* isn't just about fitting in; it's about recognizing and enacting the kinds of personal transformations that truly lead to different outcomes.

This is the meat of *A Fitting Place* - and the heartbeat of a vivid read that explores the process of one woman's life as she moves away from familiar comfort zones and into unexplored territory.

But, don't get too comfortable. It's a wild ride with some unexpected turns along the way. If it's an

emotionally-charged story of change that's desired, prepare to be delighted.

A Fitting Place

Sharon Lippincott says

In the interest transparency, let me begin by disclosing that I read a preview copy of Mary Gottschalk's novel, *A Fitting Place*, provided to me in return for a promised review. I'm always a bit nervous in this situation. What if I don't love the book? I always warn authors I'll be honest in any event, but I cringe at the thought of being rough with literary babies.

That concern quickly vanished. Lindsey, the main character, was caught up in a whirlwind career as a social worker, with a husband and daughter. I immediately got the sense things were not as they seemed and that something momentous was about to happen. I expect books to begin that way, but I don't always care enough to find out what does happen. In Lindsey's case I did. Really. Not because of my promise. Lindsey and other characters quickly emerged as clearly defined individuals I cared deeply about — the hallmark of a successful novel.

This fascination and sense of things not being as they seemed held to the end. Gottschalk's flawless crafting of plot and characters pulled me into the story and kept me absorbed in Lindsey's adventures that led to ever-deepening insights into her relationships and culturally conditioned responses. In my opinion, Gottschalk's decision to set these epiphanies within the context of same-sex love was brilliant. Lindsey's growing awareness that she was repeating patterns with Joan that pervaded her relationship with Ted would not have been as poignant if Joan had been John.

By focusing on relationships as foreground, the non-traditional love affair became simple context, emphasizing that relationship patterns are determined by personality variables beyond gender. These insights speak to all of us in any sort of relationship. As Lindsey's awareness grew, she began making different choices, shining a light on paths anyone could take.

If the story has a weakness, it could be the unflagging support Lindsey received when key people like her best friend and mother-in-law learned the full extent of her relationship with Joan. Although understanding and acceptance has soared in recent years, Lindsey expected more censure, and her reticence about "coming out" was instructive. That support became crucial with the chilling twists the relationship took.

This book is powerful food for thought and something for everyone. Whether you are looking for insightful diversion or sociological perspective, you'll find both in this book.

Penelope says

In "A Fitting Place," Mary Gottschalk addresses social mores, gender stereotypes and barriers, sexual fluidity, and explores the subject of leaving a comfort zone as a way to self-understanding. This book is reminiscent of Jodi Picault in the manner which the author tackles difficult relationship issues such as the

aftermath of a failed marriage and same sex romance.

Lindsey Chandler is a perfect example of how an outwardly successful woman may hide a less confident interior that enables others, specifically her husband, to take advantage of/ undermine her. After he leaves her for another woman, she goes through the wringer of emotions, with feelings of inadequacy, loss of self-worth, and vulnerability. She tries but fails to communicate with her teenage daughter Zoey, who takes out her own hurt at what she perceives as her father's rejection on her mother.

When she enters into a rebound romance with a woman, Lindsey steps out of her comfort zone. Even in this post-feminist world, she is influenced by social norms about gender rules, which make this relationship more difficult for her to accept. Added to this is her daughter's growing animosity toward Joan, as the new friend who takes up too much of her mother's time, which spirals into an "either me or her" demand. This mother/daughter conflict underlines the effect of parental separation on the children when kids spurn their parents' new friend/partner/interest, and use emotional blackmail, insults, or hurtful statements to guilt out their parent(s), or try to force a choice. Lindsey has to find a way to assert herself and take control of the situation with Zoey rather than the other way around.

The author skillfully handles such topics as marital abandonment, same sex rebound relationship, and how Lindsey falls into her old habit of subjugating her own personality to her partner's (Joan's) stronger one. Some vivid writing illustrates her conflicting thoughts: "But as she stared at the phone, she had an image of putting calamine on poison ivy ... it relieved the itch, but didn't fix the underlying ailment." Readers who have struggled with a lack of self-confidence or been forced into a secondary role by a more assured partner will identify with Lindsey's journey to self-confidence and applaud her decision to act and speak up.

Kathleen Pooler says

I have been a fan of Mary Gottschalk's writing since reading her memoir, *Sailing Down the Moonbeam*; a real-life adventure about stepping out of your comfort zone to grow in new ways. Therefore, I was looking forward to reading her novel, *A Fitting Place* and, after reading it, found she did not disappoint.

There are many parallels between both stories in that the heroines are forced to step out of their comfort zones and find new ways of coping. For Lindsey Chandler, a wife, mother and social worker, she finds herself thrust from the safety of her secure life into a new world of being single again after her husband Ted announces he is leaving the marriage. When she learns he is having an affair with a younger woman, she begins to examine her life and the role she has played. In her grief and confusion, she falls in love with another woman whom she feels provides her with the emotional support and nurturing she needs. She eventually realizes that she has perpetrated the same cycle of dependency on a woman that she did with her husband. At that point she begins to take responsibility for her own happiness.

With masterful character development, dramatic tension and clarity, Mary weaves in a multilayered narrative that addresses a wide range of issues- divorce, single parenting, same sex relationships, rebound relationships, societal pressures and norms, the bonds of female friendships. Her writing is engaging and evocative, and her characters are believable in a multidimensional way. I found myself identifying with Lindsey's self-defeating behaviors then rooting for her as she finds her way through the complexities she has created for herself.

Though a main thread in the story is same-sex relationships, Mary elevates the message to the dynamics of human relationships –regardless of gender—and the challenges and rewards inherent in stepping out of our comfort zones.

A Fitting Place is not only a fascinating, relevant story but it is an in-depth look at relationship issues and societal perspectives.

Johannah K. says

As the book's cover suggests, life is a puzzle. When Lindsey Chandler finds her marriage unexpectedly coming to an end, she begins to fear what we each fear at one time or another: we got the puzzle with the one missing piece.

Mid-life crises, marital betrayal and troubled (and troubling) teens aren't new themes, but Mary Gottschalk's treatment of these familiar life passages includes the edgy topics of sexual fluidity and the lure of toxic relationships.

The characters of The Fitting Place are refreshingly human. Their flaws are undeniable but it's their willingness to follow self-examination with revelation and eventually evolution that makes them likeable. (This reviewer received an advance copy of the book from the author with no return promise to provide a review.)

P.C. Zick says

Mary Gottschalk's first novel A Fitting Place wraps the reader in a familiar blanket in the opening pages. A lovely surprise awaited me as I began reading a story told a hundred different ways of a marriage breaking up when a husband falls for someone younger. Lindsey Chandler and her story of growth leaves the typical and takes the reader on her journey to find out just what her "fitting place" is in the world.

Lindsey's world crumbles and her teenage daughter Zoey crumbles right along with her. Gottschalk doesn't shy away from the issues as Zoey crashes into a full-blown case of bulimia, and Lindsey realizes the perfect world of her marriage and family never really existed except in the pages of a fantasy created after her own troubled childhood. As a result, Lindsey explores different avenues on her journey, including an affair with another woman.

I loved the juxtaposition of Lindsey's two female friends in the book. Dee is the friend we all have, born from their husbands' friendship. But the friendship with Dee is based on certain presumptions, one of which is that Lindsey and Ted are happily married. When it becomes evident that isn't true, neither Dee nor Lindsey know exactly what to do, but they keep trying. Lindsey realizes she's never been honest with Dee about her feelings, while at the same time realizing she's never been truthful to herself. Joan represents the "friend" whose friendship is based on something other than mutual respect. Soon enough Lindsey realizes that Joan needs Lindsey to be a certain way, just as Ted did during their marriage. Lindsey explores a sexual relationship with Joan and enjoys the results; however, she also realizes that she prefers the intimacy of men.

While it may seem this book is an examination of sexual preferences, I didn't feel that was the main theme. It's just an interesting side plot.

This book is about love—all kinds of love. There is the love we have for a partner; there is the love we have for our children; there is the love we have for our dearest friends; and there is the love we develop over time with people who are thrust into our lives without having chosen them. That type of love is portrayed by Gottschalk in the guise of Lindsey's mother-in-law. Through this relationship, the reader sees how we can often misinterpret others and make judgements without taking the time to talk to another person.

A Fitting Place works on many levels. I found myself pushing for certain outcomes of the book (no spoilers here), but then sat back and enjoyed the writing of Gottschalk. She's just as meticulous in her prose in this book as she was in her memoir *Sailing Down the Moonbeam*.

I recommend A Fitting Place if you love to enter vicariously into the world of a character as she searches for a better self, which includes love in all its choices and incarnations.

Disclosure: I received an Advanced Review Copy of this book in exchanged for an honest review.

Betsy Fasbinder says

What I loved most about this book was that, while at its core, there is a same-sex relationship, the story wasn't really about that. The genders of the lovers in this story (some heterosexual, some same-sex) are not "the issue". It's really about love, passion, dependency, trust, and knowing one's self.

The lead character's marriage falls apart and she finds herself infatuated with a woman. What she ultimately grows to understand is that she played a part in creating the same dysfunctional dynamics of both her marriage and with a new lover. I also like that this story blurs the lines of sexual preference. While the main character is straight, she finds herself attracted to a woman. She's not just experimenting with a same-sex experience as a lark and this isn't a "coming out" story in the classic sense. Rather, she finds herself unexpectedly attracted to a woman whom she cares about. The lust is born first of the emotional attraction.

This story is touching glimpse of the unpredictable landscape of love.

A touching glimpse of the unpredictable landscape of love.

University of Chicago Magazine says

Mary Gottschalk, AB'66
Author

From the author: "In the wake of her husband's desertion, Lindsey Chandler is caught up in a rebound romance that reprises the same destructive inter-personal dynamics that plagued her marriage. Because her new love is a woman, the relationship challenges Lindsey's long-held assumptions about gender roles. For example, she had consistently subordinated her needs to her husband's in the belief that her role required her to be agreeable and supportive. But when she finds herself in a subordinate role in a same sex relationship, she is forced to look in the mirror, to examine her own responsibility for her situation. Freed from the straightjacket of societal notions of friend, wife, and mother, Lindsey calls on inner resources she

never knew she had, as she sets out to build a new life for herself and her teenage daughter."

Sherrey says

Life has taught me that trial and tumult usually makes you a stronger, better person through lessons learned. So goes the story of Lindsay, a wife, mom, social worker and protagonist in Mary Gottschalk's novel, *A Fitting Place*.

Like other women, Lindsay's world is turned upside down when she learns her husband is having an affair with another woman. She learns that her best friend knew of the affair but kept it to herself. Additionally, the forces at odds begin to pull and tug at the heartstrings of young Zoe, their adolescent daughter, making Lindsey's relationship with her daughter tenuous. Separation and potential divorce add stress to everyone's life.

What Lindsay didn't expect was to have someone enter her life during the transition her husband's dalliance caused for Zoe and her. Someone she really feels she could care for and enter into a relationship with. Someone of the same sex. A relationship that tested her cultural and traditional attitudes and mores.

Gottschalk masterfully balances these myriad relationships cleverly. Her characters are drawn in realistic and clear definition lending just enough background to keep the reader wanting to know more as the story unfolds. Gottschalk has experience in stepping outside the box or comfort zone as she so craftily revealed in her memoir, *Sailing Down the Moonbeam*. Here, she casts Lindsey in the role of the comfort zone tester. Using Lindsey's hastily and newfound interest, Gottschalk also opens the door for us to test our own comfort zones about sexuality and our own feelings and beliefs.

Gottschalk's novel is well thought out, thorough, and real. An easy read, I believe readers will find it not only entertaining but thought provoking on several social levels.

Katherine Sartori says

A FITTING PLACE, an intense story, focuses on the complex emotional relationships between people. Sometimes relationships are messy, difficult and very surprising, yet worthwhile and wonderful too. Sometimes relationships are ephemeral, sometimes life-long. Gottschalk's book examines all of these complicated aspects of love.

Besides the death of a loved one, divorce is probably highest on the list of personal traumas, affecting, not only a husband and wife, but their children and close friends. Mary Gottschalk effectively traces the emotional devastation divorce wreaks in the heart of Lindsey, who is suddenly abandoned by her husband Ted. Betrayal, not only from her husband but possibly her close friend Dee, who knew Ted was having an affair, leaves Lindsey shocked and bereft of any perceived support. Her teenage daughter Zoey is alternately enraged, demanding, and completely overcome by this loss as well. Lindsey can hardly handle her own emotions but nonetheless continuously reaches out to Zoey to assuage her sorrow. Enter Joan, a classmate of Lindsey's, who soon becomes her confidante, giving advice and sympathy to Lindsey many times a day. Lindsey feels she has no one else to turn to now. Joan's constant caring and advice soon expands to expressions of love and Lindsey unexpectedly falls into her arms, feeling love too.

Then the secrecy begins, which at first Lindsey doesn't even think about. But soon it drives a wedge between her and her daughter and eventually creates havoc with her ex husband. Custody arrangements are at stake and by then Joan's annoying personality traits are starting to seem a lot like Ted's.

What Gottschalk masterfully portrays in this forceful drama is Lindsey's continual efforts to examine her own life and her relationships despite the multiple complications they are creating. Rebounds are not unusual after a breakup. This time Lindsey's new love relationship involves gender issues, but nonetheless, it has all the elements of a relapse attraction, causing Lindsey to often respond to herself and Joan as she did when she was married. Gradually, we see Lindsey courageously come to grips with the personal traits she has clung to which have caused many of her problems in the first place. By the book's end, Lindsey has scrutinized not only her husband's and Joan's personal weaknesses, but her own, so readers feel certain she'll be able to navigate her life and her daughter's through many of life's future challenges.

Sherry Haynes says

I won an autographed copy of this book. I am a reader of all types of books and genres but was not expecting what I found when I started reading this story. This has nothing to do with the book but about me misinterpreting a review I read prior to starting the book.

A Fitting Place is about discovering yourself after realizing your life hasn't been what you thought it was. In that process the main character allows herself to let go of preconceived viewpoints on relationships and in the process realizes who she really is. Don't go into this thinking it is about a same sex relationship. Go in knowing that you are going to be reading about real-life experience and the reality of today's times. It is about life in general. Allow yourself to just read and understand.

Joan Rough says

In, A Fitting Place, wife, mother and social worker, Lindsey Chandler, finds herself abandoned by her husband for another woman. As she begins her journey into a new life, Lindsey is left with little understanding of why her marriage collapsed and how to navigate through the wide-open door that stands before her, while remaining a caring mother to her teenage daughter, Zoey.

Lonely and looking for the love and support that an adult relationship can provide, Lindsey rebounds into a sexual relationship with her new friend, Joan. As their bond strengthens, Zoey feels her mother is growing away from her and is unable to understand why nice, but extremely controlling, Joan, is always hanging around.

While Lindsey keeps the extent her relationship with Joan a secret, she tries to satisfy her own needs, her daughter's needs, and the ever-increasing needs of her new lover. In this story of lost love, newfound love, and self-discovery, Lindsey begins to see similarities in her relationships with Joan and her former husband.

A Fitting Place is an engaging story of how women too often depend on their relationships for love, security,

and purpose. It's about the tearing down and rebuilding of boundaries and connections. It's about one woman's journey of discovering who she is amidst the chaos and intensity of change and the possibility of living an authentic life.

I found this thought-provoking book hard to put down. The characters are beautifully drawn and the story is gripping. Don't miss it.

Cookie says

Lindsey is a woman who lost herself during her marriage and then found herself after her divorce from her husband. It is a sensitive, poignant story about relationships. While I was sympathetic and empathetic towards the characters of Lindsey and Zoey, I found Lindsey's character a bit exhausting; and I had trouble with the author's narrative. I would have preferred the words came from Lindsey, the main character. Life happens, but Joan's family story was not believable. True, these are real situations, but the way Joan's was told, it was not believable to me. Joan turns out to be as controlling as Lindsey's husband but, that was not mentioned in her relationship with her own husband and family. With them, she felt she was being taken for granted- even from her wonderful, doting and loving husband? However, it is a page turner. Lessons learned here. I won this book through Goodreads.

Toni Urban says

It is always exciting to find a book that is an easy read and will keep you engrossed until the end. *A FITTING PLACE* is just that book. Let the various emotions throughout the book keep you on edge until the very upbeat end!

Carol says

It is when life throws us challenges that we stand to learn the most about ourselves. So it is for Lindsey Chandler, social worker, mom, wife, in Mary Gottschalk's contemporary novel "A Fitting Place."

When Lindsey arrives home from work one day to find her husband has left her for another woman, everything she thought she knew about her life and herself falls apart. As she struggles to understand what happened to her marriage, her life continues to disassemble. Her best friend betrays her. The close relationship she had with her daughter deteriorates. A co-worker's verbal attack leaves her questioning her professional competence.

Scrambling to find solid ground, Lindsey finds comfort and a new sense of self in the arms of a woman. But is that really where she fits?

Author Mary Gottschalk explored what happened when she left her own comfort zone in a memoir, "Sailing Down the Moonbeam." She continues to explore the theme of leaving your comfort zone with new breadth and depth in "A Fitting Place." The main character's rebound romance gives Gottschalk a platform to explore sexual fluidity and how circumstances can lead a person to a relationship they'd never have

considered possible and in the process arrive at a deeper, better understanding of herself and others. Gottschalk's approach is thoughtful, thorough, and real.

"A Fitting Place" will challenge readers to think about their own relationships and their perceptions of sexuality in new ways. Well worth the read.
