



The Starter Marriage

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Tess Leonard thought her marriage vows to Barney were for life. But when he leaves her for a busty young secretary, Tess realizes that she needs to rethink her idea of happily-ever-after.

Tess is falling apart-until she sees a life raft on the horizon. It's called the Divorce Survival Class-something like boot camp for the broken-hearted. As Tess gets to know her classmates-and their Machiavelian tutor, William-she sees that life will always continue to move forward. As William leads them through bizarre yet effective methods for healing their broken spirits, the entire group begins to believe again in the one thing they all long for-love.

The Starter Marriage Details

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From Reader Review The Starter Marriage for online ebook

Mikaela says

While I enjoyed the growth and change of the character in this book there were a few other aspects of the story that didn't sit so well with me.

For one, the absolute pathetic desperation Tess felt when her husband left. I understand that it was part of her character and that after seventeen years, sure, she's going to be hurt and depressed but HE cheated on HER. I just don't get how she could pine for him after he was such a... lets just say horrible person... to her. For another thing, the mother getting back with her father after he cheated on her on FOUR SEPERATE OCCASIONS! I'm sorry. I'm all for making the marriage work and for trying forgiveness... but FOUR TIMES? Even with children to think about that's a bit much.

Of course, I realise I've never been in this situation and could never actually know how I would react. It just... didn't really make sense to me.

LindyLouMac says

So much better than her previous novel 'Old School Ties' Journal entry one outlines the story of this bitter sweet read. I hope neither of my daughters ever have to go through what the heroine Tess has to! I have to say that I do not like the title of this book at all. Call me old fashioned but I find the phrase Starter Marriage in its self distasteful. A different title may well have made the book seem more appealing?

<http://www.bookcrossing.com/journal/3...>

Babs says

The book charts the life of Tess (aka "Tip Top Tess") from her initial reaction to discovering her husband of 17 years is abandoning her for a curvier, younger model, through to the completion of the "Divorce Survival Class" she was forced into attending by a well meaning friend. The book is scattered with interesting characters, from Tess' own friends through to her work colleagues and fellow "Divorce Survivors".

If I had any criticism to make it would be that the love interest was a little contrived. However, I guess that is the pitfall of this kind of chick-lit book, and overall the book is an engrossing read.

Throughout the book I got the feeling that this would make a fabulous "made for TV" 2-part bank holiday special. The characters in the divorce group may need a little more depth, but the book examines a enough interesting themes dealing with the practicalities of divorce, with laughter and love as well, that I'm sure it would make great television.

The only question is who would play Tess?

Amanda Wells says

I always feel strange rating a book like this with a 4, after I've just read a really 'heavy' book with a 4 as well - but I do believe in judging books within their genre, and this one was really pretty good.

It's chick lit! It was predictable and enjoyable precisely because of it. If someone was to ask me for a book recommendation, I probably wouldn't go here first. But if they wanted something of this genre - sure! Go for it! Nothing too offensive, the characters are consistent, the dialogue isn't unbelievable, and you feel good at the end. Exactly what I wanted out of a book today!

bookczuk says

Read this in a day while up at our cabin in the mountains of Georgia. I thought it was well told and thoughtful in the writing. I certainly don't know how I'd do if shoved out into the world of single-dom again. Harrison has given depth to her characters, letting them evolve and grow. Glimpses of all the different marriages that touched the story only made me more grateful for the wonderful relationship I am in. No doubt about it-- marriage is work but it is definitely worth it (IMHO).

One of the things I particularly liked about this book was the glimpse of Birmingham-- a city I've not yet been to in actuality in England, though my spirit has soared there over the years to join my BookCrossing friends at some of the UnConventions held there. It was great to read about Hudsons, which I know as a BC hot spot. And it made me wonder...was Kate Harrison one of the authors who has done workshops at previous UnCons?

Chana says

I think this came to me via a Little Free Library.

After 17 years together Tess's husband leaves her for a younger woman who works in his office. Tess is devastated and non-functional for a few months. A friend suggests a divorce survival course. The course proves helpful and by the time her husband realizes his mistake and wants her back she has realized that she doesn't want him back. She makes a lot of new friends and finds a new love interest.

Samantha says

While this was an easy book to read, I did have some reservations about the main character. Her husband leaves her after several years of marriage and she falls apart understandably. She finds help with a support group for divorcees, a workshop if you like. Her character develops well, but in the last third of the book, she meets another man and by the end planning on moving her life to his part of the country. Ok nothing wrong with that, except I felt that this was rather rushed, we don't see how their relationship develops it is only hinted at. Why did this have to happen anyway, she could have easily have developed into an independent

woman and moved on that way, if you had to bring another character in, then at least develop it in the story itself.

Apart from this, as I said earlier it was an interesting read, just disappointing at times.

Holly says

To be honest, I can't say that this was as good as it looked when I bought it...

While I enjoyed it whenever I picked it up, it wasn't really one I couldn't put down. It took me ages to read, because I read it while I had nothing else to do - on the bus, on a break at work, etc, rather reading for an hour before bed, or choosing to read it over watching a film or something.

If you contemplate taking this on holiday, then I say do it, cos by a pool, you'll have finished in a couple of days and it is a "nice" story, but if you're looking for something abit juicer, or with more of a plot, I'd recommend picking up something else.

Julia says

Goodreads didn't include the version of the paperback book that I read, and that's a shame. The version of The Starter Marriage shown would have never swayed me to pick it up impulsively with the lame, wispy flowers arranged to form an outlined, cloying heart on a dull, ecru background.

I picked my book impulsively from a Half Price Books bookstore because of it's compelling cover art. My version features the 90's ubiquitous magnetic poetry segments chunkily spelling out the title of the book and the author's name on a stainless steel refrigerator door. Continuing with the magnet theme, there's a photo magnet of a typical, quaint bride-and-groom wedding cake topper and two more photo magnets of a dog and some roses combining to make a cool, filled in rose-heart shape. Put that together with the enticingly-titled The Starter Marriage, and you're on your way to an impulse purchase.

I've never watched a Lifetime Movie*, but I'm pretty sure it would be exactly like the experience of reading this book. I liked that The Starter Marriage knew exactly what kind of book it was going to be and never tried to become anything else. The first sentence of the book tells about how Tess's husband was leaving Tess for his secretary. The whole story continues from that point on.

Tess eventually goes to Divorce Survival Class, and most of the characters and the story's unfolding emerge from her class experiences. The Starter Marriage was a simple story that never tried to become The Funniest, Wittiest, Smartest, Most-Insightful Book You've Ever Written a la The Corrections and Sweet and Low...blah, blah, blah. I never finished Sweet and Low because it got so tiresome, and I liked that The Starter Marriage just stayed true to its light, escapist, chick-lit roots.

*all the way through...

Hsiau Wei says

This book tells the story of Tess who struggle to overcome and accept the separation and betrayal from her husband found her lifeline when she attended a divorce survival class. The plot mainly focused on the members of the class; i.e. William , the organiser, Carol Ann, Jo, Natalie, Rani, Aaron, Tim and Malcolm where the author narrate their story. Each of this characters have their own story which i find it interesting. However, it is worth noting that the plot was rather slow and at times, it bored me and hence, i do admit that i actually skipped some pages to move it to the other part of the story.

innae says

I read this enjoyable little story while on vacation. It was an okay romance/chick-lit type book, nothing that was spectacular, but still an enjoyable read.

Kim says

I really enjoyed this one. Like another reviewer- I enjoyed the references to places around Birmingham.

Miki says

This review was first published on my blog Lecture Toute une Aventure

Kate Harrison seems the best author of chick lit for me so far. I love her writing style so fresh and moving with some funny moments and characters so interesting.

It's, by far, my favourite chick lit book at the moment ; though I concede that after only 3 I still don't have a lot of experience but at least this time I was completely in it and I wanted to finish the book

Tess in a wonderful character: teacher in her mid thirties, she is in her opinion living the perfect marriage with the perfect husband/best friend. Together they have nearly a perfect relationship: liking the same things, same passion etc. But scratch this surface a bit and we discover a woman that forgot herself while trying to keep the pretences that everything is perfect, for who the appearances were more important. A bit maniac, in a way, wanting everything to be just like she wants them in her logical mind. Tess doesn't have conscience of those facts until she is confronted to her divorce, suddenly her perfect husband is leaving her without much of a notice and then to add salt on the injury his girlfriend is pregnant, proof that he didn't wait their separation to go to another.

For Tess all her life and dreams are shattering. After becoming quite depressive, and isolated herself, she is put in front of the facts by her friend Mel and asks her to go to search help in a support group.

The step to ask for help is harder for her than her friends could have though but she manages it and enters the group for 8weeks. A group to learn to accept the reality, to grieve the shattered dreams without too much anger or guilt and to discover what she really wants. It a slow process but I really enjoyed to see her evolve progressively with her ups and down.

The characters, members of the group, all have a different background and aspiration and while the main story is centred on Tess we also discover the others with their life and aspirations. Kate Garrison doesn't forget them or has put less quality in their story far from it. All of them are really well constructed and introduced to the readers so that we can enjoy them as much as Tess. The group is transforming its member by their shared experience. Friendships are forming and sometimes more.

William who directs the group is a good mediator but I enjoyed getting his impression on the members however I even enjoyed more to see his own struggle to accept past and future and how he had a crush without acting on it. The author really made us see those hesitations, regret and moment when the illumination appears and the characters see the reality, clear for once, for the first time.

The ending is really perfect, I loved to see the evolution between Tess and Barney, and have all the stories coming to a new start giving us hope.

Really a wonderful book, more than easy to read, captivating for readers even new to chick lit. To recommend

Ringthebells says

I really enjoyed this book! The main problem with it was that I got so sucked into the story that I neglected sleep and work in order to finish it more quickly.

Tess was an appealing main character, with whom I empathized strongly. Barney was not a one-dimensional villain, and I could see how Tess could have loved him for 17 years and also how the falling-out-of-love had happened. The supporting characters were well-drawn, each of them an interesting and authentic-seeming individual in their own right. Also, to Canadian me, the Birmingham setting was fun and exotic.

Oh and hey, happy ending for the win! A satisfying read.

Mhairi Simpson says

I loved this book. What fascinated me as a writer was the use of POV: 1st person present for one character, and 3rd person past for another. As a reader I loved how a large cast of characters was well developed through two different characters' points of view, and the variety of personal circumstances displayed through the cast was wonderfully detailed. I laughed out loud more or less once every two or three pages and I'm looking at the book now with a silly grin on my face. A great novel.

