



# Knit in Comfort

*Isabel Sharpe*

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## Knit in Comfort Isabel Sharpe

In this wonderful new novel of friendship and knitting, a woman discovers that secrets can't be kept forever.

Megan Morgan traded the constant mobility of her childhood for a quiet, stable life in Comfort, North Carolina, with a handsome husband, lively children, and a group of longtime friends who've formed a weekly knitting club, Purls Before Wine.

Desperate to escape big-city anonymity and pressure from her marriage-minded boyfriend, a stranger, Elizabeth Detlaff, arrives unexpectedly, certain that fate has guided her to the Carolina mountains. She seems to think that in sleepy, unremarkable Comfort she's found paradise.

Soon, Elizabeth has eagerly invaded Megan's life, living in the apartment over her garage, befriendng her mother-in-law and children, fawning over her husband, and joining the Purls. It's not long before Elizabeth brings to light legends of Megan's Shetland ancestors, leading her to stumble over a painful, long-buried secret.

Backed into a corner, Megan is forced to examine her choices and ultimately decide what kind of woman she wants to be.

## Knit in Comfort Details

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Author : Isabel Sharpe

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# From Reader Review Knit in Comfort for online ebook

## Mary says

I really enjoyed this book. Southern atmosphere, a knitting group of women in their 30s who've known each other most of their lives, and a stranger who stirs things up while searching for a few answers in her own life all make for a good story.

Change is in the humid, fragrant air and I felt like I was right there watching it all start to play out. Isabel Sharpe wrote wonderful dialogue for her characters. I loved the fable that she worked into the novel. It's a story Megan's mother told her when Megan was going through a rough time in her teens. Her life, in a way, is a bit like the story - but which character is she? Five years into her marriage Megan discovered a secret but because she so desired stability, she decided to keep the secret. She decided to act as if it didn't exist. Little by little that secret has taken something, her joy, from her life.

Elizabeth is the stranger who comes to Comfort after dreaming about her grandmother who told her to look for comfort. Elizabeth is looking for answers in her life so she grabs that dream and runs with it. She rents Megan's garage apartment which also includes dinner each evening with the family. Little by little she is drawn into Megan's life. One part of her life is the Purls - the knitting group comprised of Megan's high school friends. Elizabeth is accepted as a new member and, ready or not, she asks questions that they never would have asked - and they answer. She moves them out of their comfort zone. She learns from them as well. Yes, change is in the air.

At the end I was happy to find an informative Q&A with the author.

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## Bethany says

An enjoyable story. It took me a little while to get into it and remember who was who. Has a good heart!

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## Chromium Kitty says

I admit, being an avid knitter, the title was what drew me in initially. After having checked out the summery and reading a few pages, I decided that I would give this book a shot.

The characters are likeable enough, but have nothing that is unique about them. You have straight-laced Megan, who never wants to rock the boat or ruffle anybody's feathers, and then you have Elizabeth, who suffers a bit from foot-in-mouth syndrome. There are others as well, but again, nothing unique about them. They come together to give you the generic all-female cast many of us are familiar with already.

The story itself was decent. I enjoyed it, even though it felt a lot like a soap opera storyline than a novel. Megan is struggling with a deep, dark secret that has plagued her life for 15 years, and Elizabeth comes along to shake things up and show her how to stand up for herself and really LIVE. I always felt concern for the characters and hoped that everything would turn out well for them, but they were nothing special, and

neither was the story. Often I would wish I could be reading the story that Megan told of Shetland and of Fiona and Gillian. Even the brief bits of that story we're given seemed more interesting and engaging than the main plot.

Regardless, this is a pretty good book and worth reading at least once. Especially if you're a knitter.

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### **Sharon says**

Not what I expected but a pleasant read nonetheless. Megan lives in Comfort, NC with her three children, mother-in-law, and husband. Her husband, Stanley, travels two weeks a month as a salesman. To help with finances Megan decides to rent out the apartment above the garage. Elizabeth is a 30 year old New Yorker who has yet to find herself. She currently is living with a TV chef/restaurateur who wants to marry her but Elizabeth has hopes of having a career for herself. She starts seeing signs from her late Polish grandmother everywhere and ends up in Comfort renting the apartment while her boyfriend is on a truffle buying trip to France. Elizabeth finds herself enchanted by the picture perfect Mayberry-esque lifestyle she finds in Comfort and soon ingratiates herself into Megan and knitting circle friends' lives. In due course the reader finds all is not idyllic for any of these characters and Elizabeth uncovers the truth about Megan's life. Interspersed is the story of Megan's great grandmother Fiona, a lace knitter from the Shetlands. I really liked the story of Fiona, Callum, and Gillian and wished that had been a little more fleshed out. I also loved the ladies of the Purls knitting group and their friendship. I enjoyed reading about lace knitting. I thought the big secret storyline was a little odd and not overly realistic. I cared enough about Megan to see how she resolved her marriage with Stanley. I had a hard time warming up to Elizabeth as she was so impulsive and pushy and even at the end still flighty. The question and answer guide at the end with the author added interest. A good summer read of escapism.

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### **Pam says**

Women's lit. Megan's new renter Elizabeth believes that the small town of Comfort is Paradise. Her entry into Megan's knitting group changes the dynamics of the group and causes several members to examine their lives.

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### **Ciara says**

i had a really hard time getting into this book because it opens with a knitting circle (with the kind of witty name purls before wine), which introduces us to the main character, megan, & a whole bunch of other ladies all at once. i had a really hard time keeping all the characters straight. the characterization was not strong. it wasn't even apparent for a while that megan actually was the main character. i kind of wanted to put the book down & stop reading, & i would have if i was the kind of reader that can just give up like that.

so, i guess from the outside, megan looks like she has a great life. she has a loving husband who unfortunately isn't home much because he's a traveling salesman (that's still a real job)? she has three children, ages 15 through 9. she has a cute homey house in comfort, north carolina, a small idyllic town where megan finished her last year of high school. she's about 40 now, & she has her weekly knitting group. she isn't always stimulated by the level of conversation that takes place at these meetings--sometimes she

wishes they talked more about books, art, & culture. but she's a go along to get along kid of lady & not big on the complaints.

she has a garage apartment she's trying to rent out, & this is where elizabeth comes into the story. weirdly, elizabeth is kind of a manic pixie dream girl for megan, but not in a romantic way. elizabeth blows into town because her dead grandmother came to her in a dream & told her to "find comfort". her famous french chef boyfriend is pressuring her to marry him, & she is freaking out & needs to figure some shit out. she hears the words "comfort, north carolina" on the radio, & flies down. she finds the flyer about megan's garage apartment & comes to see it.

elizabeth immediately grated on my nerves. she babbles to megan about her dead grandmother's instructions, which would cause me to insist that the apartment had already been rented. megan offers supper with the family as part of the rental package, but elizabeth makes herself right at home at breakfast, winning over the kids & megan's uptight mother-in-law. she asks obnoxious invasive questions of everyone she meets & is just exactly the kind of person i'd hate to have hanging around. did someone say 'entitlement issues'? & yet, the way the book is written, i don't think the reader is supposed to hate elizabeth.

elizabeth is fucking dumbass who thinks everything in comfort is perfect & wonderful--especially megan & her perfect family. megan has all this hand-knitted lace all over her house, & elizabeth is all, "ooh, so pretty! teach me how to knit it!" but it turns out megan hasn't knitted the lace in fifteen years. she kind of gets bullied into teaching elizabeth how to make it, & it brings up all these shitty feelings about why she stopped.

apparently she stopped when she was pregnant with her oldest & was planning a vow renewal ceremony with her husband, stanley. that was when she found out that stanley secretly had a second family. what? who does that? & she just rolled with it. granted, she canceled the vow renewal ceremony, but she didn't leave him, because she was knocked up & didn't know how to support herself on her own. supposedly this is a contemporary book. megan is not from 1843, so i don't understand. my partner having a second family would probably be a dealbreaker even if i was pregnant with triplets.

blah blah blah. elizabeth somehow finds out about stanley's second family. that's right, she's in town for three weeks & she manages to figure out this secret megan has been keeping for fifteen years. for some reason, now megan finds the arrangement unbearable & kicks stanley out. then elizabeth encourages her to meet the other wife. megan does so & discovers that wife #2 is basically a clone of megan. it really pisses her off that this other woman isn't even all that special or beautiful or glamorous & she decides to divorce stanley. on the ride back to comfort, elizabeth finds a truffle farm & convinces her boyfriend to live part time in north carolina & harvest local truffles for his restaurant, & in exchange, she will marry him. huh?

there's some other crap in here, with a lace wedding shawl, & some kind of shetland supernatural mermaid thing, but whatever. this book is ridiculous. i don't know why i read it. it wasn't TERRIBLE...it was just kind of thin on making me give a fuck.

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## **Katherine Goodwin says**

This was such a good book, it definitely draws you in and is the sole reason I want to knit myself a wedding shawl now.

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## Jennifer says

From My Blog...[return][return]As a knitter I had high hopes for Knit In Comfort by Isabel Sharpe. The novel, and each subsequent chapter, begins with excerpts from Megan Morgan's great-grandmother Fiona, who lived in the Shetland Isles. The excerpts are brilliant and would make a wonderful book as Fiona's life interested me, as did her lace making. However Knit In Comfort is about Megan Morgan who is dreadfully unhappy and yet complacent in her unhappiness. Her husband Stanley travels a lot, she has three children to care for and her mother-in-law recently moved in. Megan has been attending the same knitting group, Purls Before Wine, for two decades and yet does not enjoy it. If that is not enough, the Morgans need money and are renting out their garage apartment. Enter Elizabeth Detlaff, a New Yorker who had a dream where her grandmother told her to find comfort, so she heads to Comfort, North Carolina while her boyfriend is in France for the month, he has handed her an ultimatum and she needs time and distance to think through her life. Sharpe expertly describes the characters and while I personally did not care for most of them, I did enjoy how she chose to have the characters progress with the storyline and at times I found myself pleasantly surprised at how a character I did not care for in the beginning became one I truly liked toward the end. Sharpe's writing style is comfortable and welcomes the reader into the story. The ending was worth the read and I did immensely enjoy learning about Fiona, her life, struggles, her friend Gillian, and lace making. Even though Knit In Comfort was not exactly my style, I do believe a lot of readers will enjoy the small town of Comfort and the secrets buried within, and I think I would have liked it better had I been discussing the novel with a group. Please read other reviews as well since mine is just one opinion amongst many.

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## WifeMomKnitter says

From the blurb on the back cover:

*"Megan has always longed for the comforts of home. But if her dream of a perfect life with her husband and children in Comfort, North Carolina, have sometimes come up short, she finds solace every time she -- along with other women of the town -- takes up her knitting needles. From her hands comes beautiful creations, made out of the emotions she feels in her heart, and Megan feels like she really belongs. But then change comes to close knit Comfort when Megan takes on a new tenant, Elizabeth. She's brash, she's bold, and she's about to unravel everything."*

As a knitter, I was excited to read this book, especially because I had just started knitting lace, which the character, Megan is proficient.

While the story was good and her family's secret was a complete surprise, I thought the book could have been better. I liked how each chapter started with the story of Megan's great-grandmother, which seemed to parallel with what was going on in Megan's life. I kept wishing that the author had fleshed out the secondary characters a bit more. There were two characters mentioned in the beginning of the book that we, as the reader, never even met.

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## Barbara says

Really 3.5 stars. Easy chick lit read. I enjoyed some of the twists and turns in the story

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## Libraryscat says

Let me begin this review with thanks to LibraryThing and Avon Publishers for providing me with the opportunity to read this book. *Knit in Comfort: A Novel* by Isabel Sharpe is one of many books published recently which are centered on a group of women who share knitting as a common hobby. I wanted to love this book, and while I found it engaging enough, I only liked it.[return][return]The story revolves around two women. Megan Morgan lives a settled life in Comfort, North Carolina with her husband, children, and mother-in-law. She belongs to the knitting club, Purls before Wine which meets weekly. Even though this is the life Megan wanted, she never really seems content. Needing to supplement the family income, Megan rents out the small garage apartment behind the house to Elizabeth Detlaff. Elizabeth lived in New York City with her boyfriend. In a dream, Elizabeth heard her grandmother tell her to go find comfort and she believes that is what she has done! She views Megan's life as blissfully happy until she sees beneath the surface and realized things may not be the way they seem. And isn't that true of everyone's life?[return][return]The part that made this story a little more interesting was the introduction of Megan's stories about her ancestors from the Shetland Islands in Scotland. Fiona, Megan's great-grandmother, knitted beautiful lace that seemed to tell her story. In the beginning, I was more focused on this story until I could figure out who was who. The two stories, Megan's and Fiona's, seem to flow together over the course of the book just as Megan and Elizabeth's stories do.

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## Lorrie says

As I began to first read (I confess I picked up this used paperback simply because it was about knitting), I was a little depressed because I was afraid this book just wasn't going to live up to my expectations. The cover was sort of sappy and the characters were all running in together. I couldn't figure out what was going on. I'm sure glad I kept reading. Elizabeth, a NY transplant renting from Megan & trying to find herself, travels to the town of Comfort, North Carolina, after dreaming about her grandmother and her message of "seeking comfort". Elizabeth rents from Megan who is about as stony faced and closed off as a concrete wall. Megan has three children and a disgustingly fake husband, Stanley, a pushy, sugary-sweet salesman. Stanley's mother, Vera, lives with them. Elizabeth rents the garage apartment. Megan rents to help out with the finances.

So, the stage is set and at this point I wondered why I kept reading because it just sounds so nauseating, doesn't it? Megan knits with a group "The Purls" and the lives of these fellow knitters is also encountered. Megan's neighbor, David, is usually drinking and one wonders why he is even part of the picture. Elizabeth thinks Megan's household and life are just perfect. She strives for this type of life herself, and is certain now why she couldn't continue to live in NY City with her boyfriend, Dominique, and his lifestyle. Dominique is on a food cooking TV show and travels all over the world (mainly France from where he originates) to explore his craft. He really wants to marry Elizabeth and take care of her. She wouldn't need to even work, just be there to raise his children. This doesn't entice Elizabeth. She wants instead to find herself. What is it that she wants to do with her life? And, so, the story evolves. I will say no more because at this point I became hooked and loved the book.

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## CS says

As a knitter, I am a sucker for books that feature knitting, so I swooped this one up.

However, while knitting does play a part in the story, this book is more about life in a small town where appearances are highly deceiving.

Unfortunately, the book is neither soap opera enough to make it a good guilty pleasure, nor are the characters original or well-drawn enough for the book to qualify as decent women's fiction.

The heroine, Megan, lives one of Thoreau's "lives of quiet desperation." A stay-at-home mom of three who is also saddled with a live-in mother-in-law, Megan gardens, knits and cooks supper. Her only "alive" time is the hour before her household wakes up, and the occasional conversations with her next-door neighbor and former boyfriend David. But David is going through his own dark valley of the soul as the soon-to-be-ex-husband of a famous feminist theory author, who was just exposed as a plagiarist.

Megan's husband Stanley is home only two weeks out of four. Although Stanley is the picture of a devoted husband and father, his sales job barely brings in enough money to keep the household going. So Megan decides to rent out her guest apartment.

If Megan is all quiet resignation and passive aggressiveness, Elizabeth is loud in your face aggressive aggressiveness. Somewhere in her twenties, but with the emotional restraint of a thirteen-year-old, Elizabeth is fleeing her famous French chef boyfriend and their designer-decorated Manhattan condo (it's okay, the doorman is feeding the koi) because her boyfriend gave her an ultimatum: Marry me after years of asking you, or say good-bye. A series of dreams, omens and portents leads Elizabeth to one conclusion: she must move to Comfort, North Carolina. Where, of course, she rents Megan's apartment.

Let the clash of temperaments begin. While Megan at first resents her tenant's bomb-sniffing dog-like ability to immediately locate the nearest emotional landmine (and detonate it), of course Elizabeth's "you go, girl" attitude helps free Megan from the prison that is her marriage. And free David, and their friend Ella, and their friend Sally, etc. All of which would be fine if a) Elizabeth weren't so annoying and b) Elizabeth weren't so unbelievable. Elizabeth rolled into Comfort expecting to find Mayberry RFD - but has she never heard of Twin Peaks? Blue Velvet? Heck, even Desperate Housewives? Her naivete about small town life quickly became hard-to-swallow, especially for a character whose earlier life should have made her far more street smart.

Megan is also an enigma. Stanley, is, of course, far from perfect husband. In fact, he'd fit in perfectly with the guys on HBO's Big Love, except that Megan had no idea she was a sister-wife until, as she claimed, it was too hard to leave her bigamist husband.

I know women, every day, stay in horrible relationships. I know it is hard to change your life. But this is fiction, darn it. I want my heroines to be smarter, more capable than me. And if they aren't, then I want to empathize with the choices they make. But Megan's decision to stay with Stanley - and to have two more kids with him, plus take care of his complaining mother - didn't ring true to me. I never got a sense of why Megan loved him, or why she stayed, other than Stanley is a good kisser. I mean, the guy even took her favorite coffee maker to give to his other wife! In my world, coffee is serious business and this would mean



war. Megan just continues to sip the weak stuff.

The author tries to explain Megan's passiveness by giving her a peripatetic childhood, thus underscoring Megan's desire to stay in one place and raise a family in a stable community - but the author does such a good job with the calm, collected mask Megan presents to the world that the character remains at a remove from the reader.

There are some great moments in the book. I loved it when the characters are asked where they would insert a "lifeline" (a device that allows knitters to rip out mistakes without destroying the entire work) in their own lives - if they could rewind to any spot and start over, where would it be? Same when Elizabeth challenged the knitting group to tell one secret the other members don't know. At these points, the characters came alive and turned into real people. But the rest of the time, they remained as flat as the paper they were printed on (or the screen they were read on? Hmmm. Must work on my metaphors in the digital age.)

There's a framing story about Megan's Shetland forebears and selkies that is meant to add some magical realism to the novel. But again, the magic wasn't pushed far enough to put the novel into that category, either.

I really wanted to like *KNIT IN COMFORT*, but like its heroine Megan, it stays overlong in the comfortable, passive zone. If the emotion, or the soap opera drama, or the magical realism had been pushed further, then the novel might have really touched and moved me, or at least entertained. As it is - the Goodwill pile just got a bit higher.

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## **Penny Gumbel says**

Quaint little book. The characters' lives are filled with love, friendships, wine and lace. Though, things are not are not always as perfect as they seem.

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## **Meg says**

Isabel Sharpe's *Knit In Comfort*, the latest in a string of knitting-centered novels, is a slower-than-molasses look at the disintegration of a marriage, the forging of new friendships, the creation of something beautiful — and I wanted it to work. Really, truly, I did, but something was missing.

What went wrong, really? It's hard for me to pinpoint what I disliked so much about these people, though that powerful dislike was strong and true. Elizabeth comes across as flighty, disconnected, a young woman with no real goals or dreams of her own — and that grated on me. She grows in the story, sure, but not that much. Not enough to redeem her. In my eyes, she was nosy — a busybody. Though Megan clearly needed help getting out of a deep, deep rut, I didn't know why Elizabeth, a bossy out-of-towner, had to be the one to do it.

And Megan. Dear, sweet, ridiculous Megan. We have the same name, see, so I'm having a hard time ripping on her, but I truly wanted to reach into the novel and give her a good slap. Not a little punch on the arm, you know, or a gentle shake. A *slap*. The woman is nuts. For putting up with what she's put up with, for keeping

silent about things she should never have kept silent about, for *living with her pesky mother-in-law*. She needed a slap. And who wants to spend 300 pages wanting to hit a character more than anything you've wanted to do in recent memory?

But I'm not here to bash someone's hard work. No, *Knit In Comfort* wasn't terrible — and that's the hard part. Sharpe's writing was clear and struck a good balance between showing-and-telling, leaving bits of the plot to the imagination and divulging pieces of a mystery at a good pace. I loved the stories of Megan's ancestors and their difficult lives made easier by their passion for lace and knitting, a skill Megan continues. Each chapter opens with stories of Fiona, Megan's ancestor, and the love she had for Calum — before he was enchanted by Gillian, a mysterious woman who arrives in their small town. I'm pretty sure I would have rather read an entire novel about them than this broken crew.

Still, the stories of lace-making — and the friendships here — redeemed the novel for me, and I was pleased with the book's ending. Most of it seems fanciful, unbelievable, but I liked the peripheral characters who helped flesh out *Knit In Comfort*. For fans of women's fiction seeking a strong narrative centering around knitting, I would still return to that old standard: Kate Jacobs' *The Friday Night Knitting Club*.

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