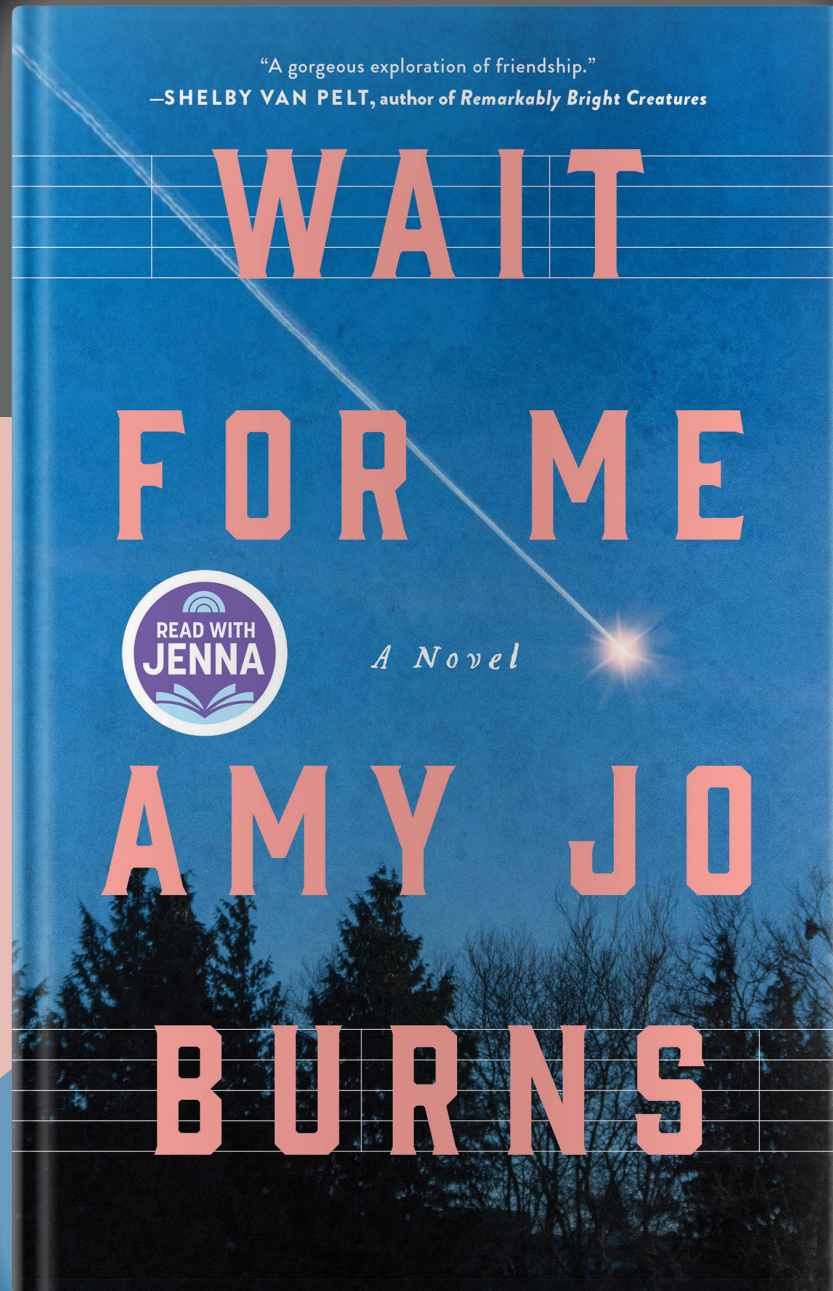


BOOK CLUB KIT



"Your book club may run out of time given all that there is to discuss in this one!"

—MICHELLE BROSNAN, BOUND BY BOOKS (GARDEN CITY, NY)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Wait for Me is filled with dynamic characters. Who was your favorite, and why?

How does the setting of the Pennsylvania woods and the West Virginia mountains function in the novel? Is “home” a place of safety or a trap for Elle? For Marijohn?

The novel begins with a meteor strike that unearths the past. Besides being a plot device, what do you think the meteor represents for the characters in the book?

Discuss Marijohn and Lazarus’s friendship. Do you think Lazarus knew how Marijohn felt about him? Did he make the right decision to leave home? What do you think of his brush with fame? Do you view it as an act of betrayal?

How familiar were you with the Nashville music scene before reading the novel? Did the characters remind you of any country music stars, especially when you think of a meteoric rise to fame or the friendship and rivalry between Elle and Josie?

Music plays a different role in each character’s life. Discuss the thread of music and musical instruments throughout the novel, from the Appalachian hills to Nashville to the town of Lenora. How did the author’s inclusion of lyrics throughout the book affect your reading experience?

The mandolin is broken, repaired, stolen, and returned. What does this instrument symbolize? Does the fact that it was broken make the music it produces more valuable? Does Elle’s experience losing Merry make her music better? Do you agree that great art requires suffering?

Merry is a healer who doesn’t speak, yet she has a profound impact on Elle. How does the novel explore the power of silence versus the power of voice?

One of the book’s central lyrics is “Try to heal everything, and you’ll heal nothing at all.” Discuss what happened at Josie’s family home when Elle tried to heal Jaclyn. Why do you think Josie’s family reacted the way they did? What emotions did you feel as this scene unfolded?

In a dream, Merry tells Elle: “There are some things we never get over.” Is the novel ultimately about healing from the past or learning to live alongside the damage?



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Wait for Me explores a number of female friendships. Discuss the diversity of these friendships and why some of them became strong while others soured. Why do you think the author chose to focus on the female friendships, compared to the romantic relationships in the novel?

Weston claims he took the mandolin to fix it for Elle, but his actions led to heartbreak. Do you believe his intentions were pure? Can you forgive him for his role in the deception involving Josie?

Discuss Arlo's role in the story. He is both a protector and an exploiter of Elle. He keeps her secrets and pays her royalties, but he also manipulates her career and life. Is he well-meaning or a necessary evil?

Elle disappears from the public eye for nearly two decades. What is the real reason she left Nashville, do you believe? Is there more than one reason? Do you interpret her disappearance as an act of cowardice, self-preservation, or something else?

Josie steals Elle's songs to launch her career. Do you view Josie as a villain, or is she a victim of a predatory industry and her own desperation? Did your opinion of her change as you read? Do you feel she received the ending she deserved, or was her fate too harsh?

Discuss the mystery of where Marijohn came from. Were you surprised by the truth about where she came from?

Lazarus calls Marijohn the bravest person he knows, but she disagrees. Do you stand by the choices that Marijohn makes? Was it brave to stay in Lenora or brave to leave it? How does the book define bravery?

By the end of the book, Marijohn is carving out her own path in music. Do you think she will be able to succeed where Elle and Josie struggled, or is she beginning the same dangerous cycle?



AN INTERVIEW

with Amy Jo Burns

AMY JO BURNS is the author of the memoir *Cinderland* and the novel *Shiner*, which was a Barnes & Noble Discover Pick and an NPR Best Book of the Year. Her novel *Mercury* was a Barnes & Noble Book Club Pick, a Book of the Month selection, a *People* Book of the Week, and a *New York Times* Editor's Choice. A western Pennsylvania native, she lives in New Jersey with her family.



Fans of *Daisy Jones & The Six* will find a new music star to root for in Elle Harlow, a 1970s country music sensation and self-taught mountain-born songwriter. How did you go about creating this unforgettable character?

Elle might be my favorite character I've ever created. She was so much fun right from the start. I first met her through her song lyrics — most of the music that appears in the book was written before any of the story was. I heard her words in my head and wrote them all down in my notebook, unsure what they were until I had so many that I realized I'd created a songwriter.

After that, I got a subscription to *American Songwriter* so I could learn all the nuances and challenges of making music. I also inhaled so many memoirs, biographies, and documentaries about extraordinary musicians like Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, Linda Ronstadt, Brandi Carlile, Stevie Nicks, Emmylou Harris, Joan Baez, Sara Carter, and Bonnie Raitt. I loved getting to research these incredible women that helped give Elle some contour as a Nashville starlet.

But perhaps the most important thing about Elle is her ferociously loyal heart. For a long time, Elle believes she doesn't even have a heart — but truthfully, she's the kind of person who loves the chosen few in her life with everything she's got. Once I understood that about her, I was able to see the road she could travel to discover that she's always been worthy of the caliber of love she so freely gives away but doesn't think she deserves.

What I love most about Elle is how she learns to love herself — all of herself. Her shortcomings, her regrets, and her power. That's the strength she's given to me, too.

Female friendships are pivotal to this story, possibly even more so than in your previous novels, *Shiner* and *Mercury*. Why is it important for you to explore these necessary — if sometimes fraught — relationships in your work?

I love challenging the notion that romantic relationships are the most important ones we can build. Life is so much richer and more complex than that! I've received a mountain of love, mercy, support, and truth from the women in my life, and I can't help but write about them. I really believe the deep connection between women is where everyday magic resides. We

hold mirrors up for each other, and sometimes a misshapen mirror can judge and compare and tear down. But a true and beloved friend is one who holds up a mirror for you, just as Marijohn does for Elle, and it reminds you who you were meant to be.

***Wait for Me* is an epic, multigenerational novel of love and friendship, betrayal, and redemption set between rural Appalachia and Nashville's country music scene. What inspired this remarkable book?**

This novel was inspired by one of the best women I have ever met.

Her name was Louise, and she was 39 years older than me. She was also my teacher, mentor, and friend when I started to write my first book almost 15 years ago. At our first lunch together, she said, "You know what I like about you, Amy? You like to eat. I can already tell you're going to get dessert."

And I did.

That was the first of many lunches we had together until her death in 2018. She was funny, and frank, and had so much faith in me that I started to find it in myself, too. I loved and cherished each second of her company. After she died, I was crushed. I also realized I had an unfinished manuscript of hers on my laptop, and it tortured me for weeks as I tried to decide what to do with it. Should I edit it? Finish it? Find a publisher?

I finally talked to Louise's wonderful husband about it, and I'll always remember his response.

"Honey," he said. "That manuscript isn't even one-eighteenth of the things she left behind."

He meant the writing she'd left on her desk, but he also meant that the most important gifts she'd given would never be found on paper, they'd be found in the people she loved.

Louise had never wanted me to mimic her voice. She'd always wanted me to use my own.

So I decided to write a book about the miracle of having a meteoric woman like that walk into your life. I'd also been wanting to write a novel inspired by a 1938 meteor strike in western Pennsylvania, and when I paired these two ideas together, I saw a young woman playing a broken mandolin from her attic window — and the rest came tumbling after.

Over time, the book found its depth not only in what I learned from Louise but what I've learned from myself: What success can give, and what it threatens to take away. What it's like to be a woman in an entertainment-focused industry. What comes out of making art from pain. What it takes to love well after you've been hurt.

Of course I can't put everything Louise taught me into one book. But I gave it a joyful, full-hearted try, and I loved every minute of it.

If you decide to adopt *Wait for Me* for your book club, we would love to hear about it! Please let us know by emailing us at reader@celadonbooks.com or post on social media using the hashtag #CeladonBookClub.

BOOK CLUB BITES

METEOR CAKE is a lava cake made with passion fruit and white chocolate, developed by professional baker Nicole Margenau and inspired by *Wait for Me* by Amy Jo Burns

INGREDIENTS

Yield = four 4-oz ramekins

- 5 Tbsp white chocolate
- 4 Tbsp + 1 Tsp butter
- 2 eggs
- 2 egg yolks
- 2 Tbsp + 1/2 Tsp sugar
- 2 Tbsp + 2 Tsp passion fruit curd (if not making curd from scratch)
- 1/4 cup all purpose flour
- Garnish: blue pop rocks (optional)

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. Grease four ramekins with butter.
3. Melt the white chocolate chips and butter over medium heat. Set aside while gathering the other ingredients.
4. Mix the eggs, egg yolks, and sugar in a bowl.
5. Add the passion fruit curd and mix well.
6. Add the white chocolate-butter mixture and mix.
7. Add the flour. Mix carefully as to not overmix.
8. Measure out 4 1/2 tablespoons of the mixture into each ramekin.
9. Bake for 10 minutes. You want a slight jiggle in the center but the outsides to be set.
10. Immediately after taking them out of the oven, run a knife around the rim of the ramekins. Let rest for 4-5 minutes.
11. Remove from mold onto plates and garnish with pop rocks if desired.
12. Cut open and enjoy!

Optional: Create your own passion fruit curd from scratch!

INGREDIENTS

- 2 egg yolks
- 3 Tbsp + 1 Tsp sugar
- 3 Tbsp passion fruit pulp
- Pinch of salt
- 2 Tbsp butter

1. Combine the egg yolks, sugar, passionfruit, and salt in a bowl. Place over a double boiler.
2. Whisk constantly until mixture thickens and reaches at least 165 degrees but no higher than 180 degrees.
3. Remove from heat and whisk in the butter.
4. Pour into a separate bowl. Cover with plastic wrap. Make sure the plastic makes contact with the surface of the curd.
5. Refrigerate until ready to use.

