

Closer Than You Think

Mara Purl

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For a small town, Milford-Haven, California, seems to have an awful lot of secrets. Local environmental activist Samantha Hugo is searching for a child she gave up long ago, and her ex-husband, businessman Jack Sawyer, never even knew she was pregnant. Jack has other worries, too, keeping his affair with Sally O'Mally quiet while battling Samantha's latest attempts to sabotage his building project with environmental legal action. Jack's son Zackery is torn between his shallow, sexy girlfriend Cynthia and the charming wildlife artist Miranda. And then there's the issue of the missing news anchor Chris Christiansen, who hasn't been heard from in a week.

Mara Purl continues her soapy serial in *Closer Than You Think*, her follow-up to *What the Heart Knows*. Part small-town confidential, part mystery, part romance, the story is cozy in the best sense of the word. Steeped in California charm, the setting plays host to a wide variety of characters from across the social spectrum. High society rubs shoulders with artists and diner cooks, providing a snap shot of an up-scale village.

Despite the town's air of quaint charm, the people are refreshingly realistic. Flawed, full of secrets and conflicts, nobody here is necessarily what they seem to be. In fact, Milford-Haven is full of schemers—business fixes, romance machinations, even a possible murder provide grit to the pastel image. You'll need a scorecard to keep the characters and relationships straight. Fortunately, Purl includes a cast of characters to help the reader remember who was last seen with whom.

In the Milford-Haven series, Purl adheres to the time-honored serial-novel formula. Threads weave from book to book, and *Closer Than You Think* is more like a chapter than a completed novel. Readers will do well to start with *What the Heart Knows* to get a proper introduction to the cast of characters. As in all good serials, the author leaves the reader hanging, begging for resolution. *Closer Than You Think* is a fun and engaging excursion to Milford-Haven; you're sure to enjoy the visit.

Mara Purl's first novel *What the Heart Knows* won a Silver Benjamin Franklin Award, and her short story *Christmas Angels* won a CIPA Merit Book Award. Purl is the creator of *Milford-Haven U.S.A.*, the first American radio drama broadcast by the BBC, where it reaches an audience of 4.5 million listeners throughout the U.K. and won the New York Festivals Finalist Award. She is a former cast member of *Days of Our Lives*.

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