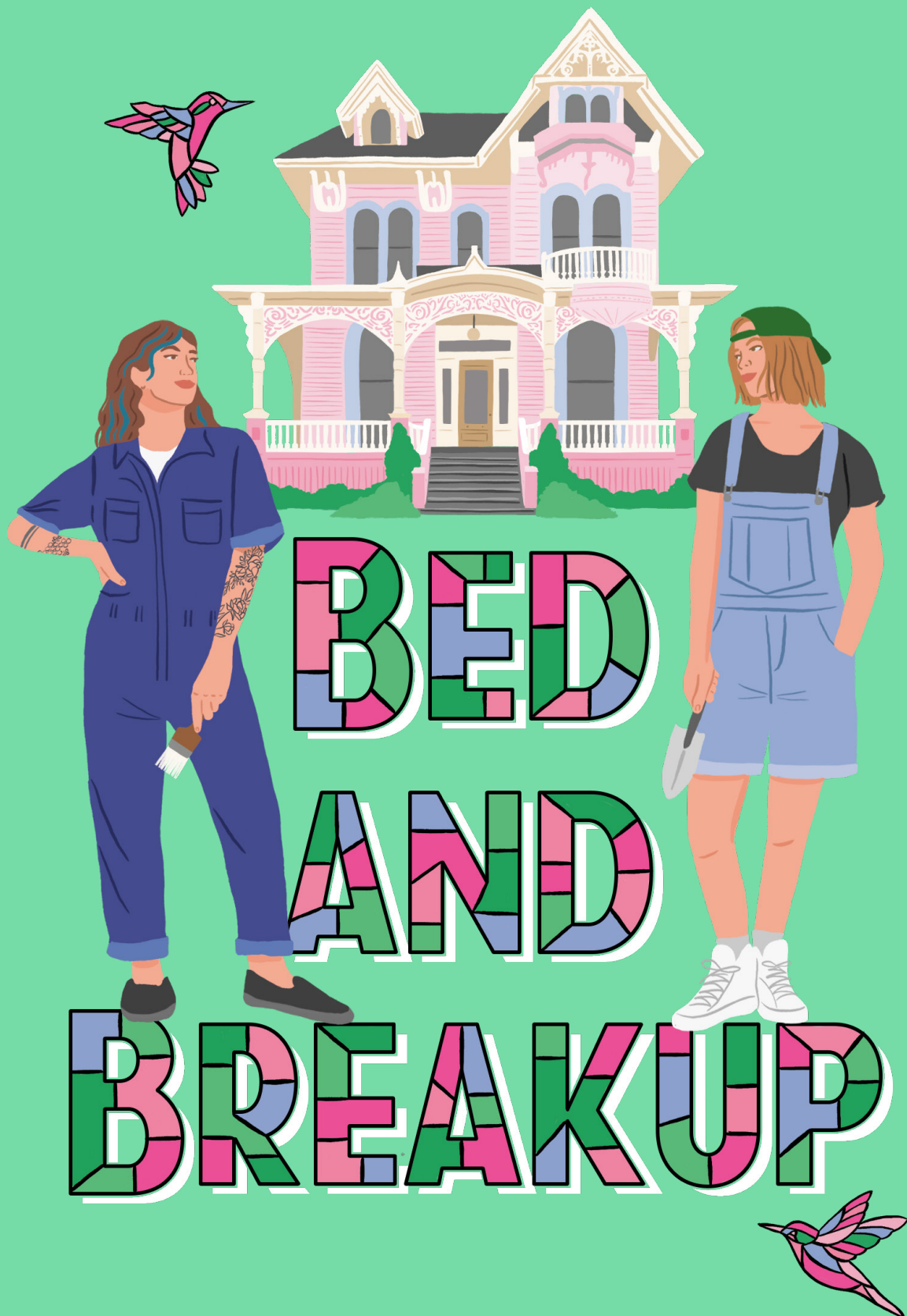


SUSIE DUMOND



BOOK CLUB KIT

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do the interactions between Molly and Robin evolve throughout the story? What key moments signify changes in their relationship?
2. How do Molly and Robin each handle change, especially in the context of their past decisions about the Hummingbird and their careers? What does this say about their personalities?
3. Eureka Springs plays a significant role in the story. How does the setting influence the events and the characters' decisions, such as Molly's nostalgia when visiting Drizzled Donuts and her memories of Robin?
4. Discuss a major conflict in the book, such as the tension between Molly and Robin regarding their future and past decisions. How was this conflict resolved, and do you think the resolution was realistic and satisfying?
5. How do characters like Keyana and Jesse contribute to the main narrative? What roles do they play in Molly and Robin's journey, particularly in scenes like the one where Keyana and Molly go on a hike or when Robin and Jesse experiment with new recipes?
6. What is a challenge you've faced when trying to balance personal ambitions with relationships? How did you overcome it?
7. How important is communication in maintaining healthy relationships? Can you share examples from your own experiences or other stories?
8. What role does nostalgia play in our lives? How can it both help and hinder personal growth?
9. Which scene or moment in the book had the most emotional impact on you? Why did it resonate with you?
10. What do Molly and Robin gain through their crafts, stained glass and culinary arts? Do you have a hobby or creative project that helps you focus and express yourself?
11. Which romance/rom-com tropes did you notice in *Bed and Breakup*? Which did you like the most? Which will you seek out in other books in the future?
12. If you were making a movie or TV version of this novel, who would you cast as the main characters?



A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR ON EUREKA SPRINGS

Eureka Springs taught me to believe in magic.

Yes, my dear reader, Eureka Springs is a real place, even if it sounds like something I dreamed up. My earliest memories of Eureka do have a dreamlike quality to them, though. Natural springs trickling down decorated limestone formations, cotton-candy-colored Victorian houses towering over me, street performers plucking at dulcimers, pillowy pink taffy spinning in shop windows, peculiar grown-ups in flowy caftans peddling magic crystals and tarot readings. It's a place that never failed to spark my imagination.


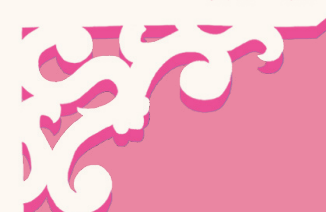
I was only six months old the first time my parents brought me to Eureka Springs. It was a fairly easy and affordable destination for them, only a three-hour drive along winding mountain roads, but vastly different from our home in Little Rock. My dad, a pharmacist, and mom, an oncology nurse, saw the quiet, lost-in-time town as a perfect escape from the high-stress environment of the hospital where they both worked. Eureka Springs became a familiar haunt for our family, somewhere we returned at least once a year, my dad drawn to the various food and wine festivals, my mother and I happy for any excuse to wander around, visiting the natural springs and browsing the giftshops.

We'd often bring along my paternal grandmother, who I called Guy. A skillful quilter, Guy lived for her sojourns to Eureka Springs' fabric and quilt shops, where she would buy enough supplies to last her until our next trip. Guy was a somewhat reserved and serious woman, born during the Great Depression in rural Arkansas farming country. Eureka brought out a rare sense of whimsy in her. She'd even agree to pose in silly costumes at the old-timey portrait studios, donning frilly dresses far from her usual jeans and sensible button-down shirts. (As you might have guessed, Guy was a big influence for me in writing Molly's Gran.)

Our adventures in Eureka Springs became less frequent as I grew older, my schedule packed with theater rehearsals, dance classes, and school clubs. By the time I finished college in Oklahoma, Eureka Springs had become a fond memory. The winter after graduation, my partner and I were browsing low-cost destinations for a weekend trip to celebrate our two-year anniversary when we came upon a deal for a historic hotel in the heart of Eureka Springs, one where my parents and I had stayed many years before. It seemed like the perfect opportunity to show my new beloved the town that had always so delighted me.

I was pleased to find Eureka was spellbinding in all the ways I remembered. But I also noticed some things about the town that I hadn't had the context to understand before. Eureka Springs, in short, is queer as hell. Rainbow flags hung from every other doorway. There were not one but two LGBTQ+ bars. I now recognized the shop owners of





my favorite boutiques and galleries to be queer elders. Same-sex couples walked down the street hand in hand, something my partner and I hadn't often risked in Oklahoma, but now were delighted to do in the safety of this strange little town.

I began to wonder if some part of me had always recognized Eureka as a queer oasis, even as a kid. If that's why I felt more myself there than anywhere else in my home state. I still have some of the rainbow jewelry I begged my mom to buy me on our trips in the '90s. But at the age of twenty-two, I'd come to terms with my own sexuality, been embraced by a queer community, and fallen deeply in love with my partner. Eureka became not just a place I enjoyed as a child, but a portal to strange world where I could be myself and love who I loved out in the crisp mountain air, a freedom I'd yet to find anywhere else in Arkansas.

My first two books feature cities I love that have shaped me in some way: Tulsa in *Queerly Beloved* and New Orleans in *Looking for a Sign*. So when I started thinking about the story I'd like to tell next, it was only natural that I consider Arkansas. But I must confess to a complicated relationship with my home state. Although Little Rock is a city I treasure in many ways, it's also a place where I struggled to feel comfortable or picture a future for myself. Even in fiction, I couldn't imagine a happily ever after for a queer couple in Arkansas.

But then I thought of Eureka Springs. From infancy to adulthood, I'd always felt myself come alive there. It was a place that felt full of possibilities, where the old mingled happily with the new, where eschewing traditional expectations was celebrated. Once I decided on Eureka Springs as the setting of my next novel, everything fell into place as if by magic.

With *Bed and Breakup*, I wanted to tell a story about what it means to love someone over years, how it feels to grow into adulthood alongside a partner and grapple with the choices you make together and apart. I wanted to dig into the messiness of building a life with someone and the beauty that blooms from those challenges. Historic bed and breakfasts—one of Eureka's biggest attractions—were a perfect thematic fit for this second-chance romance. And while exploring these themes of loving someone, something, someplace for both its virtues and its faults, I saw Arkansas in a new light.

While working on this book, I had the wonderful opportunity to spend a week in Eureka Springs at the Writers' Colony at Dairy Hollow, a place that offers authors the "write time, write place" to focus on their craft. I'm extremely grateful to the good folks at WCDH, as well as the many Eureka Springs residents who enthusiastically shared their experiences living in the town and showing me some of its hidden gems. I hope that I did them justice; any misrepresentations of Eureka Springs are solely mine.





If this book inspired you to make a trip to the Ozarks to see Eureka Springs for yourself, here are a few recommendations:

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- **Cliff Cottage Bed & Breakfast:** I stayed here while working on this book for historic B&B inspiration. It's a delight, and an easy walk from downtown.
 - **Basin Park Hotel:** I stayed at this historic hotel as a kid and later with my partner. It's got a metric ton of Eureka charm.
 - **Crescent Hotel:** Historic hotel known for its ghost legends and hauntings.
 - **Beaver Lake/Hogscald Hollow/Lover's Leap:** A real place, and even more beautiful than I described it! A hidden gem worth a short trip outside town.
 - **Eureka Live:** This queer-centric club offers epic drag shows and a light-up rainbow dancefloor.
 - **Missy's White Rabbit Lounge:** This location was previously a gay bar that I deeply loved and inspired One More Round. While it's no longer a queer-specific bar, it's still a great place to hang out and very queer-friendly.
 - **Gravel Bar at Wanderoo Lodge:** Not to spoil the locals' best-kept secret, but this queer-owned bar is where the true Eureka lifers hang out, and it's got excellent live music.
 - **BREWS:** I love this spot for the coffee, beer, music, and vibes. (It's also a great place to edit a book for a few hours.)
 - **Mud Street Café:** I truly can't visit Eureka Springs without getting a fancy latté and slice of quiche from Mud Street. My favorite breakfast in town.
 - **Local Flavor Café:** An eclectic and artsy café that serves up bold, fresh dishes.
 - **MoJo's Records/B-Side Café:** An excellent queer-owned record shop with lots of niche finds, plus delicious food and a patio with a gorgeous mountain view.
 - **Crystal Waters:** Mystical crystal shop located on the iconic rainbow staircase.
 - **Oracle & Sage:** A great place to get a tarot, astrology, or aura reading.
 - **GameMakers:** My favorite boardgame shop in the world, which inspired Wild Card in Bed and Breakup. Buy literally anything the owner recommends to you.
 - **East by West:** Quirky gift shop with a friendly "working bunny" who will help you check out. Yes, a real bunny!



ROBIN'S ANNIVERSARY CAKE

Earl Grey, Lemon & Honey-Flavored Cake



INGREDIENTS:

FOR EARL GREY SYRUP:

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar
- 2 sachets or 2 tbsp. looseleaf Earl Grey tea

FOR CAKE:

- $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup ($1\frac{1}{2}$ sticks) unsalted butter at room temperature
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups granulated sugar
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- Zest of one lemon
- 1 tbsp. honey
- 1 cup Earl Grey milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Earl Grey syrup

FOR BUTTERCREAM FROSTING:

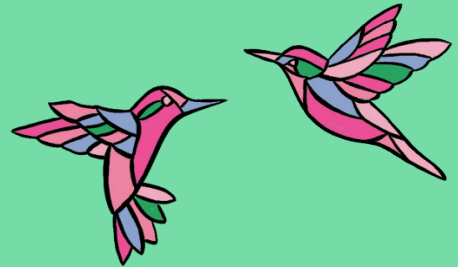
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup ($1\frac{1}{2}$ sticks) unsalted butter at room temperature
- 24 oz. powdered sugar
- Juice of one lemon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. vanilla extract
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt
- 2 tbsp. Earl Grey milk
- 1 tsp. Earl Grey syrup
- 2 tsp. honey



ROBIN'S ANNIVERSARY CAKE

Earl Grey, Lemon & Honey-Flavored Cake

INSTRUCTIONS:



FOR EARL GREY SYRUP:

- In a small saucepan, bring sugar and water to a gentle boil. Pour into a glass jar over Earl Grey tea. Steep for ten minutes, then remove tea bags, or remove looseleaf tea by straining through a fine mesh sieve. Set aside.

FOR EARL GREY MILK:

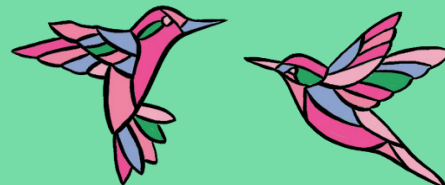
- Place milk and tea in the same small saucepan and bring to a simmer, stirring frequently to avoid scalding. Once milk is steamy and beginning to bubble, remove from heat and seep for ten minutes. Remove tea bags, or remove looseleaf tea by straining through a fine mesh sieve. Allow milk to cool to room temperature.

• FOR CAKE:

- Preheat the oven to 350°F. Mix together flour, baking powder, and salt in a small bowl. Prep three 6-inch cake pans (or two 9-inch cake pans) using your preferred method. (I rub them with cold butter and dust with flour. Parchment paper or nonstick spray are also fine.)
- Using a stand mixer with a paddle attachment, cream the butter on medium until light and fluffy. Add sugar and cream until combined (about 2 min.). Add the eggs one at a time, blending between each addition. Add vanilla, lemon zest, and honey and blend on medium until fully incorporated.
- Add half of the flour mixture to the butter mixture and mix on low until almost incorporated. Add 1 cup of Earl Grey milk and stir until almost incorporated. Add remaining flour mixture and blend until just combined, being careful not to over-mix.

ROBIN'S ANNIVERSARY CAKE

Earl Grey, Lemon & Honey-Flavored Cake



INSTRUCTIONS:

- Divide the batter equally into the cake pans and bake for 30–40 minutes until it's golden brown and bounces back when lightly pressed. Let cool for 5 minutes on a wire rack.
- Loosen edges with a knife and remove cakes from pans. Brush the smooth bottoms of the cakes with Early Grey Syrup (approx. 1 tbsp each). Let cool to room temperature.

FOR FROSTING:

- Using a stand mixer with a paddle attachment, cream butter until light and fluffy. Gradually incorporate roughly half of powdered sugar until thoroughly combined (about 3 min.). Add lemon juice, vanilla, salt, Earl Grey milk, Earl Grey syrup, and honey, and blend until combined. Add powdered sugar in small batches until desired texture is reached. (You might not need the full amount. If it gets too thick, add extra Earl Grey milk.)

TO ASSEMBLE:

- Slice off domed tops of cakes to make them even and flat. Place a small dab of frosting on the center of a cake plate and place your first cake on it. (This prevents sliding while you frost.) Spread roughly half a cup of frosting on first cake, then add second layer of cake and repeat, ending with the final cake on top. Frost with remaining buttercream. Top with fresh blackberries and a drizzle of honey.