

Black Rose Study Guide

Black Rose by Nora Roberts

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Plot Summary

Black Rose by Nora Roberts is the second book in the In the Garden trilogy. The book continues where Blue Dahlia left off. Stella and Logan are preparing for their wedding. Roz Harper's business continues to grow and thrive. Amelia, the Harper Bride, continues to make appearances and her story begins to unfold, revealing deep dark secrets of the Harper family and of Roz's true heritage.

The story opens in Memphis Tennessee in 1892. Amelia Connor stands in front of a mirror. She notices that she has grown pale and sallow. Her body is no longer a body of youth. Motherhood and neglect have taken their toll. Amelia tries to figure out how to regain the affections of her lover, Reginald Harper. Reginald is a wealthy and powerful man with whom she had been involved for some time. Since the birth of their child, Reginald has been absent. No amount of begging or pleading could make Reginald appear at Amelia's door. One night Reginald arrives. Amelia begs for Reginald to resume their relationship. Reginald talks about their stillborn baby. Amelia knows it is a lie. She had given birth to a healthy baby boy. The baby had been stolen by Reginald to be raised by Reginald and his wife. Reginald is scornful toward Amelia. Amelia continues to beg for Reginald's love. Reginald tells Amelia that her only purpose had been to give him an heir. She had been well paid for her services. Amelia is on the verge of madness.

Amelia hangs herself in Harper House and cannot rest until she has been avenged. Amelia has appeared to small children over the years, singing lullabies. It is not until Black Rose that Amelia begins to act out in anger over the treatment from her lover.

The story focuses mostly on the life of Roz Harper, the mistress of Harper House. Roz runs In the Garden, a successful nursery, with her son Harper and several "adopted" family members. Roz has had some difficulties in the past, particularly her second husband Bryce, who continues to plague her with all types of fraud, mischief, vandalism, and lies.

Roz hires Dr. Mitch Carnegie to delve into the Harper family history and to finally identify the Harper Bride. Mitch will write a book about the history when he is finished. During Mitch's work at Harper House, he and Roz become lovers which enrages Amelia.

The reader gets to take an inside look into Memphis society through the eyes of Roz, who only participates because of duty. Roz is much more interested in her family and life as a businesswoman. Amelia causes Roz to take a closer look at her involvement with men, including Bryce and Mitch, and to accept that she deserves love in her life.

The story stops after Stella and Logan's wedding and Roz's final confrontation with Bryce. The story of Amelia is left to be solved in the next book.



Prologue; 1-2

Prologue; 1-2 Summary

Prologue:

The story opens in Memphis Tennessee in 1892. Amelia Connor stands in front of a mirror. She notices that she has grown pale and sallow. Her body is no longer a body of youth. Motherhood and neglect have taken their toll. Amelia tries to figure out how to regain the affections of her lover, Reginald Harper. Reginald is a wealthy and powerful man with whom she had been involved for some time. Since the birth of their child, Reginald has been absent. No amount of begging or pleading could make Reginald appear at Amelia's door. One night Reginald arrives. Amelia begs for Reginald to resume their relationship. Reginald talks about their stillborn baby. Amelia knows it is a lie. She had given birth to a healthy baby boy. The baby had been stolen by Reginald to be raised by Reginald and his wife. Reginald is scornful toward Amelia. Amelia continues to beg for Reginald's love. Reginald tells Amelia that her only purpose had been to give him an heir. She had been well paid for her services. Amelia is on the verge of madness.

"At this, for the first time since he'd arrived, he looked amused. 'You're pathetic. Whores generally are. Be assured of this, if you come near me or mine, Amelia, I will have you arrested, and put in an asylum for the criminally insane.' He gestured for the servant to bring his hat and stick. 'You wouldn't find it to your taste'" (Prologue, p. 7).

Chapter 1:

The story comes to the present day, December 2004. Roz Harper Ashby is out for a morning run. Roz, age 67, has no husband or lover but has an image to uphold. Roz is determined to look as good as she can. As Roz runs up the driveway toward Harper House, she admires its elegance and beauty. The house had been in the Harper family for generations and had been passed down to Roz Harper Ashby. When it was time, Roz would pass the house on to one of her three sons.

Roz is particularly proud of Harper House. It is a combination of Greek Revival and Gothic styles. The house is yellow stone with white trim. The gardens are a source of pride for Roz since she had created much of the atmosphere with her gift of gardening. The grounds are covered with towering magnolias, floods of pansies, delicate dogwoods, and ornamental shrubs.

A large double staircase leads to the second floor balcony which wraps around the second story. The balcony also serves as a crown for the grand entrance. Roz loves the lacy woodwork of the third floor rail and the tall windows that allow light to pour inside the house. The house itself is vast and contains many rooms, formal and informal. One of the crowning jewels of Harper House is its grand ballroom on the third floor.



Roz enters the house to find David in the kitchen making French toast. Roz says that she has been working hard to stay fit and now he makes a decadent breakfast. David compliments Roz and tells her to eat. David talks about his date the previous evening. Roz thinks about David having spent time at the house as a young boy and now he is more or less the house manager. Roz adores David.

One by one, everyone in the house comes down to breakfast. Roz coos over Hayley's baby Lily. Stella and Roz discuss business. As the manager of the Harper nursery, Roz and Stella talk about plans for creating a private label potting soil. Stella asks for permission to work in the propagation house and promises not to get in Roz's way.

Stella's young sons talk about how they got to help decorate the Christmas tree. Roz thinks it is nice to have children in the house again. Roz leaves to prepare for the festivities.

Chapter 2:

Roz goes holiday shopping. She is determined to finish the chore. In the store, she runs into Mitch Carnegie, the genealogist she had hired to learn the identity of the Harper Bride, the woman who haunts Harper House. Roz and Mitch had shared an unsettling experience with the Bride the previous spring and the work had stopped. Roz thinks about her encounters with Mitch.

"He had, in her opinion, the credentials she needed, along with the spine and the open mind. Best of all he'd yet to bore her in their discussions of family lineage and the steps necessary to identifying a dead woman" (Chap. 2, p. 17).

Mitch is in a panic. He has to buy a gift for his six-year-old niece and has no clue what to do. Roz picks out a gift. After Roz finishes her shopping, she meets Mitch in a restaurant where they catch up. Mitch talks about the project he has recently completed.

"'A history and study of Charles-Pierre Baudelaire.' He waited a beat, noted her questioning lift of brows. 'Nineteenth-century poet. Wild man of Paris —druggie, very controversial, with a life full of drama. He was found guilty of blasphemy and obscenity, squandered his inheritance, translated Poe, wrote dark, intense poetry, and, long after his death from a sexually transmitted disease, is looked on by many to be the poet of modern civilization—and others as being one sick bastard'" (Chap. 2, p. 23).

Mitch says now that he is finished with Baudelaire he would like to get back to work on the Harper Bride. Mitch asks for a list of family records and a space to work at Harper House. Roz is prepared to give Mitch all the necessary tools.

As Roz and Mitch part company, Roz reminds him that Christmas is coming soon and he would have to shop again for his sister and her family. Mitch is panic-stricken until Roz gives him a gift idea.

Roz goes home and looks at her purchases, realizing that she had gone a bit crazy at Wal-Mart. Stella comes into the room and teases Roz about her spree. Roz begs off



work and goes to take a hot bubble bath. Roz thinks about not having a man in her life and how it might be nice to show someone her sexy purple toes.

Roz sees the Harper Bride standing between the doors to the terrace. She does not speak. Roz asks why the Bride is there. The Bride vanishes.

Prologue; 1-2 Analysis

The Prologue is the beginning of the story. It refers to Amelia, who will later become the Harper Bride. Amelia is the mistress of Reginald Harper, owner of Harper House. Reginald was also Roz Harper Ashby's paternal great grandfather. Amelia and Reginald had had an affair that resulted in the birth of a son. Amelia was told that her son was a girl that had been stillborn. Reginald took the boy to raise with his wife. As a result, Amelia had sunk into madness.

Chapter One involves the current mistress of the house, Roz Harper Ashby. Roz is a woman who has been twice divorced. Her last husband had cheated on her. Since her divorce, Roz has focused on herself, on Harper House, her sons and the nursery. Roz is independent, savvy, smart, and not one to be messed with. Although there have been struggles in Roz's life, she is determined to keep up with Memphis society as one of the Harpers. The Harpers had once held a great deal of power and wealth.

Roz has raised three sons, almost single-handedly. Roz is proud of her sons and of the people she has "adopted" into her family such as David, Hayley, Lily, Stella, Logan and their three children.

While Roz keeps very busy, she enjoys taking time out just to enjoy Harper House and the fruits of her labor.

When Roz meets Mitch Carnegie, sparks begin to fly. Roz considers Mitch but plans to keep their relationship professional. Mitch feels something for Roz almost immediately.

The appearance of the Harper Bride shows that something is about to happen at Harper House. Roz believes that the woman's name is Amelia. Amelia does not speak, only makes her presence known.



Chapters 3-5

Chapters 3-5 Summary

Chapter 3:

Chapter 3 begins with Mitch in his apartment. He, unlike Rosalind Harper, does not have a green thumb. Mitch thinks about the greenery on the Harper estate. It pales in comparison to seeing the Harper Bride for the first time.

"He'd seen some of the gardens on her estate this past June. But even their graceful beauty had paled next to his encounter with the Harper Bride. He'd always believed in the spirit of a person. Why else would he be so drawn to histories, to genealogies, to all those roots and branches of family trees? He believed that spirit could, and did, have influence and impact for generations, potentially centuries" (Chap. 3, p. 27).

Although Mitch had always believed in spirits, he did not believe that they could physically manifest until he saw the Harper Bride.

Mitch arrives at Harper House. He parks at In the Garden and begins to look for Roz. Soon he gets caught up in the surroundings. Mitch is deeply impressed with the vast amount of wares, plants, trees and flowers. After browsing for a while Mitch sees Harper. Harper guides Mitch toward the propagation house where Roz works. Mitch surprises Roz at work. Mitch takes a minute to admire Roz before she realizes she is not alone in the greenhouse.

Mitch and Roz discuss the contract. Mitch shows interest in Roz's work and is clearly impressed with her knowledge and ability. Mitch and Roz also discuss a little bit of Harper family history.

Hayley sells Mitch a lot of decorative items for his apartment. Hayley and Stella decide that Mitch is perfect for Roz.

Chapter 4:

Mitch decides it is time to clean his house. He had tried to hire cleaning services before but either forgot what day they were scheduled or they had taken one look at his apartment and were never seen again.

Josh, Mitch's son, arrives. He oohs and aahs over the Christmas decorations and teases his father that there must be a woman in his life. Mitch denies it. They discuss plans for Christmas. Mitch and Josh will celebrate early before Josh goes to his mother's house. Josh hates that Mitch will be alone for the holiday. The men order pizza and prepare to watch the game.



Roz dresses for the holiday party. She thinks about how she has been shirking her duty to entertain at Harper House. Harper House was designed to be a show place. As Roz stands outside admiring the lights, David brings her a drink. David says everything is under control.

The party begins and Harper House is packed. Roz begins to make the rounds, talking to old friends. Mitch arrives. Mitch gives a gift to Roz for helping him with shopping. Roz takes the gift to her room where she sees Amelia. Roz tells Amelia that she will live her own life, suspecting that Amelia is unhappy about Mitch's presence.

Mitch asks Stella if Roz is dating anyone and is pleased to receive the negative answer.

When Roz comes downstairs, she sees her ex-husband at the door. Roz is furious. He has come with an invited guest. Harper wants to pound the man to dust but Roz calmly takes them outside. She explains to the guest that Bryce is her ex - one who had cheated at a similar party - and tells him to get off her property or she is calling the police. Heated words are exchanged but Bryce and the date leave.

Chapter 5:

Roz tries to calm herself. She thinks about the one other time Bryce had dared to come to Harper House and how Harper had escorted him from the house. Roz wonders how long she will have to pay for her mistake. Roz gives into feeling sorry for herself.

Stella joins Roz on the porch. She brings chocolate truffles to make Roz feel better. The two chat about Stella's place in the house and business. Stella will be married soon and is glad to stay at Harper House until the wedding. Stella carefully pries into the events of the evening and Roz's thoughts. Roz talks about being private and how she avoids most people on an intimate level.

Roz visits Harper in the grafting house. Harper is still upset at Roz. Harper says he is going to protect Roz whether she likes it or not.

Roz throws herself into her work for the rest of the day. Mitch stops by to put in a few hours of research. Mitch begins to pry and meets with resistance from Roz. Mitch tells Roz to get used to it.

When Roz goes to her room after a long day, she indulges in a steamy shower. On the bathroom mirror is written "Men lie."

Chapters 3-5 Analysis

This section begins to show Mitch's character. Mitch is impressed with Roz and her estate and business. Mitch is much like Roz in that he is closed off in some ways, particularly when it comes to relationships. Both Roz and Mitch have made mistakes in the past.



Mitch and his son have a good relationship. Mitch is still punishing himself for past transgressions although he has been making living amends.

The arrival of Bryce upsets Roz although she struggles not to show it. Roz shows dignity and fortitude when dealing with the sudden appearance of Bryce. Harper is angry because Roz asked him to stand down when he wanted to beat Bryce to a pulp. Roz insists on handling the incident by escorting Bryce and his date outside and off the estate. Bryce attempts to cause a scene but Roz does not play along. Roz knows that Bryce merely wants to upset her while wooing a wealthy and somewhat naïve woman. Mitch shows his protective side when Roz returns from outside.

Roz is wounded further when Harper says he is disappointed in her.

Amelia's appearances are surprising to Roz. Roz makes it clear that while Amelia may not approve of her feelings toward Mitch, Roz will live her own life without interference. When Roz returns to the house, Amelia has left a message. This may make the reader wonder what is in store for Roz in regards to Amelia.



Chapters 6-8

Chapters 6-8 Summary

Chapter 6:

The Harpers and their adopted family celebrate Christmas. The boys tease Roz endlessly. Roz is happy to have a house filled with noise and chaos, a far cry from days gone by. At the end of the day, the boys present Roz with an antique mirror like the one they broke as kids. Roz is overwhelmed.

Roz and Hayley talk about Christmas. Hayley speaks about her father's death and is surprised that she could be happy only a year later. Roz talks about having her sons at home.

Roz goes into the library and speaks to Mitch. They discuss family history for a while. Roz says she will be home on New Year's Eve. Mitch plans to work and begin his interview with Roz.

Chapter 7:

New Year's Eve arrives. David has prepared a feast for Roz and Mitch including two bottles of champagne. Roz takes over as Lily's caregiver. Mitch can hear Roz cooing to Lily through the baby monitor. Later that evening, Roz prepares sandwiches. Roz offers champagne to Mitch who declines. Mitch explains that he is a recovering alcoholic. Roz apologizes for not figuring that out sooner.

"No need to be. Sara, my ex, did everything she could do. She loved me, and she wanted the life I'd promised her. She stuck with me longer than many would have. She begged me to quit, and I'd promise or reassure, or fluff her off. Bills were paid, weren't they? We had a nice house, and we never missed a mortgage payment. I wasn't some stumbling-down, sprawled-in-the-gutter drunk, was I, for God's sake? I just had a few drinks to take the edge off. Of course, I started taking the edge off at ten in the morning, but I was entitled" (Chap. 7, p. 76).

After they eat, Mitch asks if they can begin their interview. Roz takes fruit and cheese into the parlor and they sit down to talk. Mitch asks about the first time Roz saw Amelia. Roz says she doesn't remember the first time but remembers Amelia singing to her. Amelia sings to all children in the house until about age 12.

Mitch asks about family sightings and remembrances. Roz recalls stories from her grandmother. Her great grandmother refused to go into certain rooms, including the nursery/ballroom, the kitchen and the carriage house.

"The family would talk about her casually, in vague terms. She was both a point of pride—we have a ghost—and a slight embarrassment—we have a ghost. Depending on who



was talking. My father believed she was one of the Harper Brides, while my grandmother maintained she was a servant or guest, someone who'd been misused somehow. Someone who had died here, but wasn't blood kin" (Chap. 7, p. 78).

The pair hears Amelia singing to Lily. When they go upstairs, the singing stops. It is midnight. Mitch kisses Roz for the first time. Roz says if they become involved it will be serious business as she does not take lovers lightly. Mitch goes home when Hayley calls to check on Lily.

Chapter 8:

Mitch begins to dig onto the Harper family history. He confirms some of the birth, wedding and death dates listed in the family Bible. So far he is unable to locate anyone named Amelia in the family or among the servants.

Roz works at the nursery. She is approached by Cissy Pratt, a schoolmate. Cissy is a notorious gossip and feels the need to bring up the Bryce incident. Cissy is unable to rile Roz into saying anything noteworthy.

After Cissy leaves, Roz goes home to take an aspirin and a nap. She sees the image of a woman in a grave. The woman's eyes open, showing madness.

Chapters 6-8 Analysis

Roz is proud of her sons and the things they have accomplished. There is a great deal of love between them and it fills the house. The additions to the family only make the holiday more special for Roz who is, in some ways, lonely.

Mitch is surprised that Roz is staying home on New Year's Eve. Both have declined invitations. Mitch is pleased that he will be able to spend the evening with Roz. Mitch also learns that Roz has a great deal of knowledge about her family tree and loves genealogy.

Mitch thinks Amelia is trying to warn Roz away from him. Roz disagrees.

It becomes clear that Mitch wants to become involved with Roz. Roz remains aloof but is interested. Roz makes it clear that she will not enter into a relationship lightly. This does not scare Mitch.

Mitch is pleased to get insight into Roz's family memories of Amelia. However, he is determined to find proof to back up some of the stories and assumptions regarding Amelia's identity.

Roz continues to deal with gossip about Bryce and wishes she no longer had to pay for her mistake.



Chapters 9-11

Chapters 9-11 Summary

Chapter 9:

Mitch and Harper have an interview. Part way through Roz enters the library. She invites Mitch to stay for dinner. Mitch agrees. Mitch also asks Roz to go to Josh's basketball game.

Hayley and Stella fuss over Roz as she gets ready for her date with Mitch. Roz finally shoos them away and prepares to get dressed. As she selects a sweater from her drawer, the sweater is ripped from her hands. The sweater is shredded. Roz becomes angry and tells Amelia that she will not be manipulated.

Roz and Mitch go on their date. Mitch is stunned by Amelia's actions. Roz enjoys the game and is impressed that Josh has been drafted by the Celtics. Mitch is impressed that Roz knows about sports.

Chapter 10:

Chapter 10 begins with Harper working in the grafting house.

"Harper could and did spend hours a day in the grafting house without being bored or missing the company of others. The plants he worked with were an endless fascination and satisfaction to him. Whether he was creating another standard or experimenting with a hybrid, he was doing the work he loved" (Chap. 10, p. 104).

Hayley enters the grafting house to pick up some winter plants for a sale planned by Stella. Hayley asks Harper if he could teach her some techniques. Harper had already created many plants including a blue dahlia for Stella.

Hayley and Harper talk about Roz and her amazing ways. Harper thinks that everything seems to center around his mother, maybe even the Bride. Harper wonders if the Bride would still be there if a Harper wasn't in the house.

Roz learns that Bryce has taken a credit card out in her name. There is \$8000 worth of charges. Roz is furious. Harper and David want to beat the tar out of Bryce. David's cool head prevails. Harper, still angry and overprotective, goes to see Mitch instead. Harper wants to know Mitch's intentions. He warns him about hurting Roz. Mitch calms Harper and they end up watching the game together.

Chapter 11:



Roz works on her new potting soil line. It is a good business move. Harper comes to the shed and confesses to Roz about his visit to Mitch's apartment. Roz isn't as angry as Harper expected but neither is she pleased with her son's actions.

After work Roz returns home. She receives a call from a gallery about a painting she had purchased. However, she had not purchased the painting - it was Bryce. Roz breaks the news that the charge is fraudulent. She also calls her lawyer and the credit card company.

David leaves lasagna and a note for Roz, telling her to invite Dr. Studly to dinner. As Roz enters the study, books begin to fly off the shelf. Amelia is apparently in a rage. A book nearly misses hitting Mitch in the head.

Roz and Mitch talk for a while before going upstairs to make love for the first time. Amelia makes vain attempts to stop them then eventually quiets down.

Chapters 9-11 Analysis

Harper continues to play his mother's keeper and protector, even when she objects. Mitch is surprisingly open to Harper's interrogation and eventually wins Harper over. Roz and Harper are a great deal alike in that they are both stubborn and in control. They are careful to maintain boundaries.

Roz turns a corner when it comes to being involved with Mitch. Part of it might be that she is not willing to have anyone tell her what to do. Even Amelia's wrath does not stop Roz from becoming intimately involved with Mitch.



Chapters 12-14

Chapters 12-14 Summary

Chapter 12:

Roz comes into the kitchen to find the kids amidst the usual morning chaos. Everyone grins at Roz, able to read her mood. David teases her about the lasagna. Stella offers Roz a ride to the nursery since it is raining.

Stella attempts to subtly grill Roz about Mitch. Hayley is much more to the point. Roz wants to tell the girls to mind their own business but doesn't. The girls want Roz to know that they are happy for her.

Roz goes to her monthly garden club meeting. She runs into several people whom she thinks are her friends. Mandy approaches Roz and makes a scene. Mandy talks about the lies Roz is spreading, clearly believing the lies told to her by Bryce. Some of Roz's true friends stick up for her, including her oldest customer.

"I'm as interested in juicy gossip as the next, and don't mind some enhancements to a story, but these are outright lies. Rosalind comported herself with absolute propriety under extremely difficult circumstances. And, young lady, she was kind to you, I saw that with my own eyes. When she came back inside, she said nothing whatsoever about you or that unfortunate bastard you've chosen to champion. If there's anyone here who can say different than that, let's hear it" (Chap. 12, p. 130).

Even Cissy sticks up for Roz, which is a bit of a shock.

Roz returns home and is working outside when Amelia tries to convince her that all men are liars. Mitch comes outside to tell Roz he wants to talk about Amelia. Roz talks about the night her husband John was killed and how she saw Amelia that night.

Chapter 13:

Roz tells Mitch that the family is interested in their personal relationship. Roz had wanted lust but this was so much more. As Roz and Mitch stand in her room, talking, the glass door flies open and just misses hitting Roz in the face. Glass breaks and shards fly, cutting Mitch's face and hands. Roz stands up to Amelia and lets her know who is in charge at Harper House. Roz promises to right any wrongs but will not tolerate such behavior in her home.

Mitch insists on staying at the house, as does Logan. Mitch and Roz have a quiet dinner on the patio.

Chapter 14:



Mitch goes to meet Roz's cousin Clarise. Clarise is an older woman, very formal and Southern. Mitch tells her briefly about his work. The woman dismisses the story of the Harper Bride. She insults Roz and Harper. It is clear that she takes great pride in Harper House. Mitch notices that the woman has a secret that she is unwilling to tell. Clarise tells Mitch she will think about the interview and will contact him with her decision.

Roz goes to work at the nursery. Hayley and Stella quiz her about the garden club meeting. Roz says there is nothing to talk about, that Mandy is the one who came off as foolish and shrill. The girls tell Roz that they are friends and friends talk about such things.

"Well, if we're friends, especially girl friends,' Hayley continued, and sat beside Roz on the swing, 'you're supposed to tell us when some skinny-assed bitch rags on you. How else are we going to know we hate her guts? How else are we going to know to think up nasty things to say about her? Like, here's one. Did you know that seventy-three percent of women whose name ends with the i sound are bimbos?'" (Chap. 14, p. 156).

Bryce writes a letter to the Country Club, posing as Roz. He resigns her membership and sends a list of complaints regarding membership and service. Roz is furious.

Chapters 12-14 Analysis

Bryce continues to cause grief for Roz. It is unclear what his vendetta is all about except that he seems to enjoy torturing Roz. Bryce's lies are easily believed by Mandy and some of Roz's supposed friends. Still, Roz refuses to stoop to his level. Still, it angers Roz to have to take time away from work to deal with the mess.

Amelia also continues to make her presence known, more violent with each appearance. It is clear that both situations will get worse before they get better.



Chapters 15-17

Chapters 15-17 Summary

Chapter 15:

Roz walks into the propagation house. Suddenly, it is not the prop house but her bedroom. She relives the scene with Bryce and the party guest involved in sexual activities on her bed. Bryce mocks her. Then Roz sees John. John becomes vicious and says terrible things to her about being unfaithful. Roz knows it is all lies, caused by Amelia. Roz knows it is not true but still feels cut to the quick. Harper walks into the building and is shocked to see Roz so shaken and sobbing. Harper takes her back to the house. Harper, Mitch and David fuss over Roz until she relays the tale.

"She dropped me right down to the ground, and there was nothing I could do. How can I fight that? How can I fight something that doesn't really exist? Even knowing why she did it doesn't stop it from squeezing my heart into bloody pulp" (Chap. 15, p. 168).

Roz goes upstairs and Mitch follows. Roz tries to kick him out of the room but Mitch refuses to go. They talk until Roz calms down. She tells Mitch about Bryce's latest tricks and her embarrassment. Roz asks Mitch to go to the club with her for a formal dance. Mitch agrees.

Chapter 16:

Roz prepares for the long day ahead. Spring is the nursery's busiest season. Cissy comes in and begs for Roz's help. She needs to fix up her gardens before her in-laws arrive. Roz and Harper spend the day fixing the issue and are joined by Stella and Logan later. The job costs a great deal but Roz thinks it will be worth it.

Roz and Mitch have a long discussion after work. They realize that the conversation and talking about their days seems very married. They consider the possibility. Mitch tells Roz about his second meeting with Clarise. Mitch plants the idea that perhaps Jane might help them with the research and retrieving some items that belong to Roz and to Harper House.

Roz tracks down Jane and proposes the trade. Roz will help Jane get a job and an apartment if she helps. Jane is unsure. Roz says she will help anyway because she was once in a similar position. Jane plans to assist Roz in retrieving the diaries, letters, and photographs.

Chapter 17:

Hayley and Harper talk about Cousin Rissy. Harper explains that Roz thinks Rissy is evil. The focus changes when Harper holds out a rose to Lily, who takes her first steps. Hayley is over the moon with excitement.



Roz sits outside, enjoying the company of her family. Soon Hayley and Harper rush over and announce Lily's victory. After a few tries, Lily demonstrates.

Roz talks about Cousin Rissy's failure to cooperate. If Jane does not come through with the items, Roz says she has a few cards up her sleeve. Roz will not reveal her ace in the hole.

That night, Roz and Mitch discuss Harper and Hayley. Roz says it is obvious that Harper is in love with Hayley but probably doesn't realize it yet. Mitch talks about Josh's new girlfriend.

Mitch begins to talk about Amelia. He hits upon the theory that Reginald had taken a mistress or had hired someone to give him an heir. Roz thinks it's a cold theory. As the discussion continues, Roz faints. When she comes to, she tells Mitch about a vision she had of Amelia. Amelia was in the grave, once again.

"More than dead, decomposing. I could see it, smell it. I suppose that's what took me down. It was, to put it mildly, very unpleasant. I was burying her, I think. Then she opened her eyes, started to climb out" (Chap. 17, p. 188).

Roz decides that they have to dig for Amelia in the spot she envisioned. Mitch and the others wonder if it was real or a metaphor. Roz needs to find out.

That night Roz dresses for the party. She wows everyone in her gold dress and diamonds.

Chapters 15-17 Analysis

Roz continues to survive the pettiness of others. Cissy, who calls herself Roz's friend, begs for Roz's help. Although Cissy and Roz are often at odds, Roz is not about to let childish behavior and gossip cloud her judgment when it comes to business. Roz pulls together a crew and revamps Cissy's yard and at the end, presents a hefty bill to her friend. Cissy knows it is money well spent and does not complain.

Amelia becomes increasingly present and increasingly violent. She had not appeared to Roz in a long time until she began to have feelings for Mitch. Amelia had not appeared when Bryce was around because Roz did not love Bryce. Amelia feels the need to warn Roz about men. While the things Amelia says are untrue, it is clear that she believes them. Roz is affected by Amelia's visions, enough to want to find her body.

Although Roz is a very private person, she is beginning to open up a little to the others, especially Mitch.



Chapters 18-20; Epilogue

Chapters 18-20; Epilogue Summary

Chapter 18:

Roz and Mitch go to the country club. Roz is introduced to Josh. Shelby is Josh's date. Shelby introduces Josh and Mitch to her parents. Her mother, Jan, is extremely rude to Roz. Roz feels bad for Shelby. Shelby and Josh join Roz and Mitch at their table. Roz manages to hide any ill will.

Bryce comes into the room. Roz excuses herself and goes to the ladies room. Cissy enters and talks about her gardens and the arrival of Bryce. Mandy and Jan storm into the restroom. Mandy threatens Roz about harassing her. Jan says Roz has also caused Quill to lose an important client. Roz is furious but handles it with aplomb.

Roz exits the restroom and is confronted by Bryce. Bryce admits to everything he has done and says he will continue. He says he is with Mandy because she is rich, young and stupid. Bryce admits to fleecing Quill because he is greedy. Roz lets Bryce go on and on, not realizing that Mandy and Jan are standing directly behind him. Roz leaves and chaos ensues. Mandy screams and wails and Quill punches Bryce and knocks him out. A brawl breaks out while Roz and Mitch dance on the terrace.

Later that night Mitch works in the library while Roz decompresses with a hot bath. Amelia appears and attempts to drown Roz in the tub. Roz fights back hard and manages to escape.

Chapter 19:

The morning begins with everyone gathered in the kitchen. Mitch retells the story of the previous evening. While the revenge isn't quite sweet enough for Stella and some others, at least Bryce is gone.

Roz goes to work and takes time out to get some air and catch her breath. Amelia fills her head with more talk about men lying. Amelia says that Roz is her blood. Amelia begs Roz to find her.

Mitch and Roz have a long discussion about Amelia's possible identity. Although they have come from very different points of view, both decide that Amelia must have been Reginald's mistress.

Roz, Stella and Hayley go to Cousin Rissy's house to get Jane and the journals. Jane is so nervous that she is on the verge of fainting. Roz notices many items in Rissy's apartment that were stolen from Harper House. Roz, although disgusted, decides to leave the items where they are. She takes a large bundle of journals and leaves the apartment.



That evening as everyone is gathered in the parlor, Cousin Rissy arrives. She is angry with Roz. She demands to know the whereabouts of Jane ("that useless girl") and her grandmother's journals. Roz admits to taking the journals and says that they are legally hers. Rissy argues. Roz says Rissy has stolen them and many other things from Harper House. Roz is not afraid to drag Rissy through the mud. Rissy eventually leaves after managing to insult everyone in the house.

Chapter 20:

Roz wakes early. She goes into the sitting room and begins to read one of Beatrice's journals. Roz realizes that she is nothing like her great-grandmother. Roz strikes upon the information she has been seeking about Amelia.

"He arrived home this evening and requested that I come to the library so he could speak to me privately. He told me he had impregnated one of his mistresses. This is not a conversation that should take place between husband and wife, and when this was my response, he brushed it aside as if it was no matter" (Chap. 20, p.226).

Beatrice goes on to say that she hopes Reginald's mistress bears a daughter and that the baby and mother die.

Mitch wakes and Roz shares the journal with him. They read on and learn that Roz's grandfather, Reginald Harper, Jr., was Amelia's son.

Stella's wedding day has arrived. Everything is perfect and Stella is glowing with joy. Roz runs back to the house to get a special bottle of champagne. On the way, she sees that the nursery has been vandalized. She jumps out of the car and confronts Bryce. Bryce comes at Roz with a baseball bat. Roz punches Bryce in the face after he sucker punches her. Roz gets him down on the ground. Amelia arrives and attacks Bryce. Roz calls Amelia off, saying that she knows Amelia is her grandmother. Harper and Mitch arrive. Hayley says the police are on their way. Mitch punches Bryce in the face and then leaves him to Harper while Roz regains her composure.

Epilogue:

Roz and Mitch talk about the events of the day. Mitch says he cannot believe that she took on a man with a bat. Next time, he will be kicking Roz's behind for plowing forward in that way. Mitch asks Roz to marry him. Roz says yes. Roz thinks about their future together and Amelia's part at Harper House.

Chapters 18-20; Epilogue Analysis

Roz reads Bryce exactly right. The man is arrogant and cannot help but brag about the fact that he has defrauded Roz and has pulled mean tricks on the others. Bryce is using Mandy and Quill. However clever Bryce may be, Roz is smarter and allows Bryce to hang himself. Roz is embarrassed that there had to be another public scene but handled herself with as much grace as humanly possible.



Roz uses her wits again when it comes to Amelia. Amelia is enraged with Roz. Roz says that she cannot help Amelia if she is dead. Roz manages to break through Amelia's madness and sees a broken and shattered woman.

Roz shows her cunning side when she goes to Rissy's apartment. Rissy is a mean old woman who feels she has every right to take whatever she wants from Harper House as the oldest living relative. Rissy claims that she was trying to preserve the family name by keeping the journals and other items. Rissy's insults fall on deaf ears. She does, however, confirm that Roz is Amelia's kin.

Bryce's actions are shocking in that he has no intention of giving up. He is furious with Roz for exposing him to the people of Shelby County and is determined that she will pay. Roz surprises Bryce by attacking him and defending herself. Amelia shocks both when she flies into Bryce like a fury. If Roz had not stopped Amelia, she would have killed Bryce.

Roz and Mitch have a promising and happy future at Harper House. It is clear, however, that Amelia's story has not ended.



Characters

Roz Harper Ashby

Roz Harper Ashby is the mistress of Harper House. Roz is a woman who has been widowed and divorced. Her last husband had cheated on her. Since her divorce, Roz has focused on herself, on Harper House, her sons and the nursery. Roz is independent, savvy, smart, and not one to be messed with. Although there have been struggles in Roz's life, she is determined to keep up with Memphis society as one of the Harpers. The Harpers had once held a great deal of power and wealth.

Roz has raised three sons, almost single handedly. Roz is proud of her sons and of the people she has "adopted" into her family such as David, Hayley, Lily, Stella, Logan and their three children.

While Roz keeps very busy, she enjoys taking time out just to enjoy Harper House and the fruits of her labor.

When Roz meets Mitch Carnegie, sparks begin to fly. Roz is uncertain about starting any kind of romance given her history. However, Mitch proves to be persistent.

Mitch describes Roz: "She was no delicate English rose. More a black rose, he decided, long and slender and exotic. A little haughty, a lot sexy" (Chap. 3, p. 35).

In the end, Roz gives in to falling in love with Mitch. This enrages Amelia and causes trouble at Harper House. Roz's determination wins out in the end.

Amelia Connor

Amelia Connor is one of the main characters in the story. Amelia is the mistress of the wealthy and powerful Reginald Harper. After the birth of her child, Amelia goes insane and returns to Harper House as a disembodied spirit. Amelia is going mad with grief. She begins to see herself in her current state, which is that of a once beautiful but ill and neglected woman.

"She turned to the mirror and saw what she needed to see. Beauty, charm, grace. She didn't see that the red gown sagged at the breasts, bagged at the hips, and turned her pale skin a sallow yellow. The mirror reflected the tumbling tangle of curls, the overbright eyes, and the harshly rouged cheeks, but her eyes, Amelia's eyes, saw what she had once been" (Prologue, p. 4).

Amelia feels slighted by Reginald and begins to take chances to contact him. Everyone treats Amelia as if she is crazy although she knows the truth about her baby, James. Amelia goes so far as to hire a voodoo priestess to create a gris-gris - an item that will bind Amelia to her child even after death. Amelia eventually commits suicide and



attempts to kill her baby at the same time. The baby is saved. Amelia, however, cannot rest until justice is served.

Meanwhile, Amelia appears to various members of Harper House. She is very fond of children and has been known to sing lullabies to the children at night. Amelia rarely appears to adults.

Dr. Mitchell Carnegie

Dr. Mitchell Carnegie is a professor and professional genealogist. Mitch begins to study the Harper family history and eventually falls in love with Roz Harper, his black rose.

Harper Ashby

Harper Ashby is one of the main characters in the story. Harper works in the family business alongside his mother and resides in the carriage house at the family home.

Hayley

Hayley is one of the main characters in the story. Hayley is 26 years old and a relative newcomer to Harper House.

Stella

Stella is a woman who has recently wed Logan. Stella works at the Harper nursery. She is the mother to three children.

David

David is the Harper House manager and Roz's close friend.

Lily

Lily is Hayley's daughter and Roz's surrogate granddaughter.

Logan

Logan is one of the people who has become like family at Harper House. Logan and Stella are newlyweds.



Reginald Harper

Reginald Harper is Roz's paternal great-grandfather. He was involved in an affair with Amelia, the Harper Bride.



Objects/Places

Harper House

The setting used in *Black Rose* by Nora Roberts is Harper House. Harper House is an elegant manse located in Memphis, Tennessee. The house has been in the Harper family for generations and has been passed down to Roz Harper Ashby. When it is time, Roz will pass the house on to one of her three sons.

Roz is particularly proud of Harper House. It is a combination of Greek Revival and Gothic styles. The house is yellow stone with white trim. The gardens are a source of pride for Roz since she has created much of the atmosphere with her gift of gardening. The grounds are covered with towering magnolias, floods of pansies, delicate dogwoods, and ornamental shrubs.

A large double staircase leads to the second floor balcony which wraps around the second story. The balcony also serves as a crown for the grand entrance. Roz loves the lacy woodwork of the third floor rail and the tall windows that allow light to pour inside the house. The house itself is vast and contains many rooms, formal and informal. One of the crowning jewels of Harper House is its grand ballroom on the third floor.

Unfortunately for the Harper Ashbys, Harper House is also haunted.

In the Garden

In the Garden is a nursery - a family business owned and operated by Roz. Stella works as the company's manager.

Roz has worked hard and put a lot of money into creating a nursery that prides itself on unusual plants and goods, specialty items and hybrid plants created by her and her son, Harper.

The nursery employs several people at Harper House including Roz, Stella, Hayley, and Harper. The business, although expensive, is growing and promises to produce a good living for Roz and her family.

Memphis, Tennessee

Memphis, Tennessee is the location of Harper House and the Harper nursery.

Carriage House

The carriage house is where Harper lives.



Propagation House

The propagation house is one of Roz and Harper's favorite places to work since it is quiet and allows them to be creative with the plants.

Library

The library is the place where Mitch does the majority of his writing and research.

Ballroom

The ballroom is the place where Amelia hanged herself.

Porch

The porch is one of the favorite places to spend quiet evenings with family.

Parlor

The parlor is a common place for the family to gather.

Stella's House

Stella's house is located near to Harper House which makes it easy for her and the children to visit their adopted family.



Themes

Harper Bride

Amelia Connor is one of the main characters in the story. Amelia is the mistress of the wealthy and powerful Reginald Harper. After the birth of her child, Amelia goes insane and returns to Harper House as a disembodied spirit. Amelia is going mad with grief. She begins to see herself in her current state, which is that of a once beautiful but ill and neglected woman.

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Amelia feels slighted by Reginald and begins to take chances to contact him. Everyone treats Amelia as if she is crazy although she knows the truth about her baby, James. Amelia goes so far as to hire a voodoo priestess to create a gris-gris - an item that will bind Amelia to her child even after death. Amelia eventually commits suicide and attempts to kill her baby at the same time. The baby is saved. Amelia, however, cannot rest until justice is served.

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Love

Love is a powerful emotion that often pervades the story, from the love between Amelia and Reginald, Amelia and her child, to the love celebrated by the newlyweds Stella and Logan, the love of Roz for her sons and adopted family, and the new love between Roz and Mitch.

The real story begins when Amelia Connor begins an affair with Reginald Harper, a powerful man who is married to Beatrice Harper. Reginald gives Amelia everything she could ever want, except for a wedding ring. Amelia gives birth to a son. Amelia is told that the baby, a girl, was stillborn. Amelia had already fallen in love with the unborn child and knows that the story is a lie. Amelia tries to keep her relationship burning with Reginald but Reginald had gotten what he wanted from Amelia - an heir.

Love bloomed in the previous book when Stella and Logan met, fell in love, and planned to get married. In *Black Rose*, it is Roz's turn. Roz is a woman who has been widowed and divorced. Her last husband had cheated on her. Since her divorce, Roz has focused on herself, on Harper House, her sons and the nursery. Roz is independent, savvy,



smart, and not one to be messed with. Roz has raised three sons, almost single-handedly. When Roz meets Mitch Carnegie, sparks begin to fly. Roz is uncertain about starting any kind of romance given her history. However, Mitch proves to be persistent. In the end, Mitch and Roz both win and decide to get married. Neither has ever been so happy. Unfortunately for Harper House, love in the air also means trouble from a spurned and angry Amelia, the Harper Bride.

Harper House

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Style

Point of View

The point of view used in *Black Rose* by Nora Roberts is third person omniscient. This point of view works well throughout the book since there are several components and underlying factors that would not be revealed otherwise. The story itself is rather complex and only third person omniscient would allow the reader to follow and understand the activities of all of the characters as well as the dangerous and ghostly events involving the Harper Bride, and the events that take place regarding the blossoming relationship between Roz and Mitch. Third person also allows for the reader to follow and understand actions and thoughts of other characters in the book as well as those events of which one single character has no knowledge.

The use of third person in the case of Amelia, the Harper Bride, is interesting in that it gives Amelia's perception of events rather than an overall view. Amelia is going mad with grief and the reader is able to get valuable insight into Amelia's mania.

While the first person point of view might have been interesting when coming from the characters in their time of confusion or during visions or other experiences involving the Harper Bride, third person conveys the entire story and not just the subjective opinions of the characters. It also permits the reader to take part in the journey and development of each character in the story.

Setting

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Language and Meaning

The language and meaning used throughout *Black Rose* by Nora Roberts reflects on the times in a number of ways. Most of the language is in modern tones, often using some popular slang that will give hints to the time period without dating it in a negative way. It is clear that the people in the stories live in the current time until the Harper Bride speaks. The language used by the Harper Bride is somewhat dated to give the more formal feel of the late 1800s. There are times when that language is referenced. The effect is beneficial in giving the characters a sense of place and time but not so daunting that it distracts the reader from the story.

Roberts is a master of simple yet effective language and is not afraid to exercise her vocabulary. There is a marked absence of sex, violence, and vulgarity throughout the stories and it is rare to see any use of profanity. This allows the reader to focus wholly on the story.

There are many references to gardening which include the vernacular of the trade. Roberts explains the terms or refers to them in a way that will not confound the reader or make the text difficult in any way.

Structure

Black Rose by Nora Roberts is chronological in nature. It is comprised of 234 pages, broken into 20 chapters. The shortest chapter, the Prologue, is four pages in length; the longest chapter is 12 pages in length; the average number of pages per chapter is 11 pages.

The Prologue is the beginning of the story. It refers to Amelia, who will later become the Harper Bride. Amelia is the mistress of Reginald Harper, owner of Harper House. Reginald was also Roz Harper Ashby's paternal great grandfather. Amelia and Reginald had had an affair that resulted in the birth of a son. Amelia was told that her son was a girl who had been stillborn. Reginald took the boy to raise with his wife. As a result, Amelia had sunk into madness. There are several references and flashbacks involving Amelia, particularly when Mitch begins to dig into the family history.

Chapter One involves the current mistress of the house, Roz Harper Ashby. Roz is a twice divorced businesswoman. Roz is savvy, smart, and a bit jaded. The main story involving Roz is her blossoming romance with Mitch. The romance, however, ignites anger in Amelia who begins to appear and to create misfortune at Harper House.



Quotes

"She knew all the tricks of the trade. How else could she have caught the eye of a man like Reginald Harper? How else had she seduced him into making her his mistress?"

Prologue, p. 3

"She turned to the mirror and saw what she needed to see. Beauty, charm, grace. She didn't see that the red gown sagged at the breasts, bagged at the hips, and turned her pale skin a sallow yellow. The mirror reflected the tumbling tangle of curls, the overbright eyes, and the harshly rouged cheeks, but her eyes, Amelia's eyes, saw what she had once been."

Prologue, p. 4

"You're beautiful, Roz thought, puffing a little on that last half mile. Now, stay the hell out of my gardens."

Chap. 1, p. 10

"It had been too long since there were children in the house for Christmas, Roz thought as she hurried upstairs. And damn if having them there didn't make her feel like a kid herself."

Chap. 1, p. 15

"He was brilliant, and twisted. And believe me, you don't want to get me started, so I'll just say he was a fascinating and frustrating subject to write about."

Chap. 2, p. 20

"In any case, it wasn't even particularly apt. She was no delicate English rose. More a black rose, he decided, long and slender and exotic. A little haughty, a lot sexy."

Chap. 3, p. 35

"A relationship with him might be interesting, even entertaining, and God knew she was due for some passion in her life. But it would also be complicated, possibly intense."

Chap. 7, p. 75

"There would be no Stella's Dream without the Bride. And no Bride without Harper House. None of it, he supposed, without his mother's steady determination to keep the house and build the business."

Chap. 10, p. 103

"Everything was arranged in assembly-line efficiency."

Chap. 1, p. 113

"How could he see her so well? How could he see what she was able to hide from most?"

Chap. 12, p. 134



"So none of your family, to your knowledge, actually saw this legendary bride?"
Chap. 14, p. 158

"It was pleasant to sit out like this in the early evening, with the light soft and blue and the smell of growing things quiet on the air. Pleasant, too, since she was in the mood to have company."
Chap. 17, p. 182

Topics for Discussion

What do you think is the mystery behind the Harper Bride? Why is she appearing at this time? Why had no one in the family reported seeing the Bride?

Discuss Roz's character. How is she different from a typical southern belle?

Discuss Mitch. What brings him to Harper House for the first time? When does it become obvious that he is attracted to Roz?

What is Stella's role at Harper House and the nursery? How did Stella come to live in the area? What developments have taken place since Stella's arrival?

Discuss the relationship between Roz and her three sons.

Discuss David's role at Harper House.

Examine Roz's relationship with the children and how it has changed the atmosphere at Harper House.