

Manhunt Study Guide

Manhunt by Janet Evanovich

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Plot Summary

Alexandra Scott leaves her New Jersey high life and executive's job to find a husband on the Alaskan frontier. Alex battles the climate and the fall out of a bad business deal as well as a man burnt by a former love to get what she wants in life. In the end her persistence wins out as she successfully lands the man she wants as a husband.

Although she doesn't know it Alex first meets Michael Casey when her dog Bruno jumps off a boat ramp in Juneau. They meet again at Alex's cabin in Alaska. Casey is Alex's closest neighbor. She sees him as highly attractive but not marriage material. Casey helps Alex make her cabin livable as well as improving the hunting and fishing store she has also purchased. During the time they spend together the two become very close and very aware of the attraction between them. Both Alex and Casey, however, keep each other at a distance.

One night after the two have dinner together the two make love and Alex believes this will be the start of a relationship. The next morning, however, Casey is curt and tense. Several weeks later the same thing happens. The morning after Casey announces he is taking a personal trip and will be away for a week. Alex questions Andy and discovers Casey has gone to visit his son from another marriage. It is at this point that Alex realizes Casey has been pushing her away because he is afraid of being hurt again. She also decides that she is the one who should be his next wife.

Throughout the story Casey and Alex work together and against each other in a way that is humorous and light-hearted. In the end Casey buys Harry a plane ticket back to Alaska in an attempt to run Alex away for good. It is only when Casey believes he has really succeeded in running Alex away that he breaks down and asks her to marry him.



Chapter Two

Chapter Two Summary

Alex, Casey and Bruno examine the inside of the unkept cabin. The one room features a sleeping loft with a tattered mattress, a wood cooking stove and crude plank table. Alex wipes a window and is pleasantly surprised by the beautiful sunset. Casey adds to her delight by explaining there is a moose that walks across the muskeg each morning. Alex shivers in the cool drawing Casey's attention to her inappropriate silk shirt as well as her body beneath the shirt. Alex finds herself babbling to Casey and realizes she is attracted to him as well. Casey puts his heavy shirt on Alex then tells her she can spend the night at his house. She refuses, thinking of the trouble hormones might bring. As the two talk Alex tells Casey she has come to Alaska in search of a husband. She lets Casey off the hook claiming he's not her type. She wants a non-rich, plain husband with brown hair.

Alex tells Casey she plans to sleep in the tent she has brought. Casey and Alex set up the tent and Alex settles in. Casey doesn't feel easy leaving Alex alone but does so with the promise he will leave his door unlocked if she gets scared. Although she does get scared Alex stays in the tent. It is Casey who joins her a while later. As Alex flails about the tent trying to get out of her sleeping bag Casey cracks a joke about getting his nose hurt by her again. It is at this point Alex realizes Casey is the one who saved her and Bruno when they jumped in the water. After they exchange thanks and apologies, Casey settles his own sleeping bag next to her and sleeps with her cuddled next to him.

Alex awakes the next morning surprised to find herself sleeping in Casey's arms. She leaps up only to become entangled in her sleeping bag and fall back down again. Casey again questions Alex about the reality of her living in the cabin with no running water or electricity. She claims she will have herself an outhouse built. Frustrated with his inability to talk her out of her determination to live in the cabin Casey turns to leave, but then turns back to kiss Alex good morning. She enjoys the kiss, and then reluctantly gives in to his offer to come to his house when he suggests coffee.

Chapter Two Analysis

Although Casey and Alex are obviously both attracted to each other, they both hold back and try to cover their emotions. Alex pretends not to like Casey because he is rich and handsome. She claims to want a stable husband with plain brown hair. Casey also seems to be holding back from Alex although it is very clear he is not only attracted to her but also feels protective of her. The reasons for this seem to go beyond those of the ordinary confirmed bachelor. It seems Casey is fighting very hard not to love Alex but the reader has not been told what that something is yet.



Life in Alaska takes on a whole new meaning for Alex as she realizes there are many men who live in small cabins such as hers with no electricity or running water. These men use outhouses for bathroom facilities and chop their own wood to heat their homes. Casey also tries to stress to Alex the dangers of bears and other Alaskan wildlife. He also points out that in the winter the average temperatures will be twenty to thirty degrees below zero. Although Alex recognizes her life will be different from city life, she doesn't believe it will be anything that she can't handle.



Chapter Three

Chapter Three Summary

Alex is envious of Casey's large, modern home. She is not envious, however, of his clutter. The home is full of trash, dirty dishes, dirty laundry and beer cans. She finds unspoiled food in the refrigerator and fixes breakfast while Casey showers. Although Casey's kitchen equipment is high tech, it doesn't make up for the fact everything is so dirty. As she watches Casey eat the two share a little about their backgrounds. Casey dropped out of college his senior year to buy a plane and begin his cargo business. It is from this business he earned his current riches.

Casey encourages Alex to tell him exactly why she came to Alaska. She admits her main reason for making the trip was to find a husband. She reasons that since there are more men than women in Alaska it will be easy for her to find an acceptable mate. She also hopes to find a manly man, not one who has spent his life in a stressful office. Casey makes fun of her plans but when she asks him about his ideal mate he answers that he has no plans to marry at all. Again Casey almost leaves the house but is drawn back to Alex to give her a kiss. He makes her promise she won't put herself into danger while she is alone during the day.

After Casey leaves Alex moves on to check out his bedroom. She finds it is in a mess similar to the kitchen and living room. As she watches Bruno pull a box of chicken nuggets, a pizza box and a black teddy out from under the bed. She catches a glimpse of herself in the mirror and realizes she does need a shower. After her shower she tries to eat a bowl of granola but is unable to stomach eating Casey's food. She gives Bruno the cereal then collects some tools to work on the cabin.

It takes Alex nearly three hours to get the boards off all the windows in the cabin. She then evicts the wood table and tries to move the mattress. As she pulls at it, mice run from the moldy fibers. She runs straight for Casey's house and grabs a beer from the fridge. Although he wasn't supposed to be home until that evening Casey surprises her by walking in the door behind her. She tells him about the mice. He admits he canceled his meeting and came home because he was afraid she would hurt herself. Casey also admits he enjoyed kissing Alex but Alex lets him know she will not allow him to kiss her anymore. Alex says because he does not want to get married he is all wrong for her and she doesn't want to start anything. Casey questions the possibility of them being able to fool around which Alex replies she does not fool around. Armed with Raid and a broom, Alex treks back to her cabin to deal with her rodent problem.

After a full day of cleaning, Alex finds herself worn out. Casey again questions why she is so determined to make a go of life in this particular cabin. She confides that she couldn't find a husband in New Jersey because she didn't have time. For this reason she gave up her job, and traded her condo and mortgage payments for the cabin and hardware store. Now Casey gives her the bad news about the hardware store. He



explains it is more a fishing and hunting store than a hardware store. Alex notes in a positive nature that although she doesn't know anything about fishing it will be a great way to meet men. Casey kids her telling her no man would want to marry a woman with hair like hers. In the back of his mind, however, he is thinking that her hair is sexy and attractive. He puts these thoughts out of his mind. Casey tells Alex he will work on her driveway the next day but she will either have to pay for stone to make it passable in her car or else get a four wheel drive vehicle. He then suggests they go to his home.

Alex asserts her independence and tells him she will stay at her place. Again Casey is frustrated by her assertiveness and drives off just as rain begins to fall. In her frustration Alex kicks one of the tent stakes out of the ground causing her tent to collapse. She decides to stay inside the cabin but the smell of insecticide is too strong. Bruno leaves her and starts up the path to Casey's house. Alex follows unhappy to have to go to Casey for help. Because she falls on the trail, she arrives at his house soaked with a bloody knee. Casey takes one look and carries her to bathroom where he examines it carefully. He commands her to take a warm shower. He offers to scrub her back, an offer he knows will be declined. After her shower Alex realizes she has put herself into an uncomfortable position. She has no fresh clothes in the bathroom.

Chapter Three Analysis

In Chapter Three things continue to heat up between Casey and Alex. There is no denying the spark between the two of them but Alex has firmly decided Casey is all wrong for her simply because he does not want to get married. Casey continues to fight with his feelings for Alex. While it is obvious he cares deeply for her and finds her extremely attractive, he continues to push her away. He hopes they might be able to just fool around but Alex refuses to be distracted from her hunt for a husband by a fling. There seems to be something in Casey's past that keeps him from wanting to get married. However, there are no clues as to what this something might be.

Casey continues to try to convince Alex she is not cut out to survive in Alaska in her cabin in the shape that it is in. He also tries to explain to her that the store she has bought is not the hardware store she thought she was getting. She instead has purchased a hunting and fishing store. Alex takes each blow with bravery trying to find a positive side to each negative point Casey presents. Alex reaches an uncharacteristically low point after she accidentally collapses her tent and finds there really is no way she can stay on her own that evening. In an act of disloyalty, even Bruno abandons her to go to Casey's house where it is warm and dry.



Chapter Four

Chapter Four Summary

Alex wraps herself in a towel as best she can and goes to find Casey. He has been fixing coffee and cookies. He helps her switch the towel for a blanket with the promise of going after her clothes when they finish eating. Alex finds the blanket to be abrasive and believes Casey has used it to trick her. She informs him she won't fall for a man not interested in marriage. Casey admits he wants to seduce her but also feels guilty because he doesn't want marriage. She again ticks off her requirements for a husband, a description of a man Casey doesn't believe is suitable for her at all. He goes after her clothes and Alex settles in for a nap while he is gone.

Alex doesn't wake until the next morning. Casey is in the kitchen frying bacon and feeding Bruno. She is amused to see Casey wearing an apron. Casey explains the last time he tried to cook bacon he caught his pants on fire. After flirting for a moment Alex goes for her clothes. Casey walks in to find Alex fixing her hair and marvels at her beauty. He reminds himself she is not the type who will stay in Alaska and that he needs to back off. Alex tells Casey she plans to go shopping and visit her store. Casey laughs at her fancy clothes and flimsy shoes. He ends the conversation by telling her he will go shopping with her to get proper Alaskan clothes.

During their shopping spree Casey prods Alex into buying a leopard print toilet seat claiming it will be warmer than a regular plastic one. Alex has already bought many items she didn't intend to on Casey's insisting so he decides to buy the toilet seat for her as a present. He makes it up to her by also buying her a red down comforter for her bed.

After getting the things needed for her house, the two head on to check out the store. Alex is unpleasantly surprised by the unsophisticated, barren look of the outside of the store. Although Casey tries to warn her, she is almost sickened by the unkept, out of date interior of the store. She feels completely swindled. Although Casey feels sorry for her that she has been misled by Henry, he also believes the store could be profitable if run by the right person. He also can't stop thinking that Alex will move away as soon as the weather gets cold and the snows come. Casey weighs both options and decides based on past experience she might have more stamina than he gives her credit. He goes about advising her how she should go about making the store the best it could be.

Personalities clash as Alex and Andy met the first time. Andy has worked as a clerk in the store for nearly twenty years and feels he should have sole say in what happens there. Alex's equally strong personality matches his and she refuses to be backed down. Casey is impressed by her strong will but warns her against getting rid of Andy. Once they are outside the store Casey kisses Alex in a possessive way and Alex once again warns him the kissing has to stop.



Once they are back at the cabin Alex sands and varnishes the cabin's floor and woodwork while Casey uses a chainsaw to clear the overgrown driveway. She is exhausted and covered with varnish when Bruno and Casey come to take her to Casey's house. She showers then falls into Casey's bed as Casey fixes supper. Casey serves her supper in bed and kids her about letting him sleep with her. Alex lets him know he's out of luck, but allows one kiss in exchange for ice cream. Because she enjoys the kiss so much, Alex decides she doesn't need to stay with Casey that night. Alex puts herself on the defense against what she sees as Casey's desire to win over her.

Chapter Four Analysis

As Casey and Alex spend more and more time together they each feel strongly drawn to the other. They continue to keep their distance, however, each for their own personal reasons. Alex doesn't want to waste her time on a man who doesn't want to get married. Casey is open to the idea of just having a fling, but is dead set against getting married. It is obvious that he respects Alex too much to insist that she sleep with him. He appears to care about her not only on a sexual level but also almost on the level a parent would care for a child. This is seen in the way her reacts when Alex falls on the trail and hurts herself. Casey begins to show signs of worry that Alex will leave Alaska. This may be a key to his hesitation about tying the knot.

The main action of chapter four centers around Casey and Alex's trip to town and their visit to the store. Although Alex was disappointed with her cabin, she is appalled at her first sight of the store. In her eyes it is dirty, badly stocked and badly run. Casey fight with himself while deciding how to counsel Alex and finally decides to give her advice that will help her run the business. Alex and Andy, the store clerk, have opposite opinions of how to run the store so it is obvious they will be at odds in the future.



Chapter Five

Chapter Five Summary

As she insisted, Alex sleeps in her tent. She wakes to the beauty of the Alaskan morning. Although she has steeled herself against the allures of his bed, she give in to her weakness and visits for coffee and plumbing. Because one of his pilots has called in sick Casey is in a hurry to get to work. Before he goes he tells Alex he will send her some men to build her an outhouse. After he leaves Alex is so overwhelmed by his dirty house that she cleans for him. After she finishes Casey's house, Alex loads her own furniture into a truck and starts working on her own cabin. After arranging her things in the cabin, Alex is happy. She is still glad to be away from her former life. She looks forward to the tests that the Alaskan life will bring.

When Casey arrives home to find Alex has moved her furniture out of his garage, he feels a pang of emotion. He is again surprised to find the house has been cleaned and Alex is cooking dinner in the kitchen. She emerges fresh from the shower wearing one of Casey's shirts, a sight he finds very provocative. Alex informs Casey she doesn't have a romantic dinner in mind, but wants to talk about the store. She recites a list of things she believes she needs to complete. Although Casey is distracted by the sight of Alex in his shirt, he helps her come up with a new name for the store and even make out a to do list. Both feel the desire and love in the air but try to suppress these feelings. Casey is overwhelmed with emotion as he buries his face in her hair. The two share a glance of mutual understanding and then find themselves in the bedroom where they each give up their personal fight against the other. It is at this point Alex realizes how deeply she loves Casey. Casey, on the other hand, seems angry at himself for letting the act happen. He vows to find her a suitable man for a husband.

Next morning Alex fixes Casey's breakfast. He eats quickly in an attempt to avoid his desires. Casey gives Alex only a kiss on the cheek and a promise to send workers for her outhouse that morning. When the carpenters arrive, they make a point to say Casey sent them because they have brown hair and aren't married. Alex instructs them to build the outhouse as well as a counter in the cabin. She leaves to begin cleaning the store. Although she thinks this might be Casey's idea of a joke, she is badly hurt by the men and their comments. Alex arrives at the store to meet the electrician who also informs her he is unmarried. Alex picks up an ax and come close to threatening the man when he asks her for a date.

Alex returns to her cabin to check out her outhouse and is met by Casey. Although he tries to be light, she is angry with him. She returns each of his jabs with one of her own. However, Casey helps her unload and put away her groceries in her cabin. Alex unpacks and puts away her clothes then follows Casey in the truck back to his house. In an attempt to seduce her he goes inside so she will have to come in to give him back his key. He offers to fix soup for her but she declines. Casey asks if she'll be back in the morning for coffee and a shower. She answers both questions in the negative. He gives



Alex the toilet seat and a roll of toilet paper and tells her she is free to go. At the last minute he is unable to stop himself and he kisses her.

Chapter Five Analysis

In this chapter Casey and Alex take a step forward in their relationship. Although Alex is finally able to admit to herself how much she loves Casey, Casey seems to try to push Alex even further away after their love making. Casey understandably angers Alex by sending eligible bachelors her way. She begins to believe it was Casey's intention the whole time just to get what he wanted from her and then dump her. It is clear to the reader, however, that Casey feels very strongly about Alex. There are apparently equally strong feelings prompting him to steer clear of her.

As Alex's excitement about her cabin and store increase it is obvious she plans to stay in Alaska. She considers this wilderness life a challenge, a challenge she enjoys after her years of stress. With her cabin inhabitable and her outhouse built, she is also able to be less dependent on Casey.



Chapter Six

Chapter Six Summary

Alex awakes her first morning in her own cabin surprised to find how cold it is. She wraps up in an assortment of winter clothes before letting Bruno out. Alex is surprised to find Casey outside her door armed with a thermos of coffee and a basket of freshly washed laundry. He arranges to send a sign painter and phone installer to the store, and also get someone to fix her driveway before leaving for work.

Although Alex has scrubbed and revamped the store, business has been slow. Andy has also been resistant to the changes, not making things easier for Alex. She has not seen much of Casey in the past two weeks and is surprised when he drags a cardboard carton into the store. Although she has not seen him, Casey has been keeping an eye on her, watching to be sure she got to the store and then back home safely. He stops now to give her his approval of the store. A customer comes in asking if the store's gas pumps work and Casey can't pass the opportunity to try to set Alex up with the brown haired man. After the customer has left Alex accuses Casey of making her look ridiculous. Casey tries to pacify her with the gift he has brought. He brings in a huge item wrapped in a tarp. Casey pulls back the tarp wrapping to expose a stuffed grizzly bear.

Casey asks if his gift is worth a kiss and pretends to take Alex by force. Alex takes the opportunity to ask Casey how he really feels about her. Casey admits she is driving him crazy and that he has only been sending her suitors in the hopes that she would become interested in someone else. Andy walks in on the couple at this point. He is put out by their emotions, but pleased with the stuffed bear. Before Casey leaves he invites Alex to dinner. She is to provide dessert.

Although Alex stops at a bakery to pick up a cake, she knows what Casey is talking out when he puts her in charge of dessert. She prepares herself carefully for the night, shaving her legs and wearing a flattering dress. Casey arrives home to see Alex's car in his driveway and is happy she hasn't changed her mind. As Casey prepares supper, they talk about the store. After dinner they again make love.

Chapter Six Analysis

Now that Alex is not as dependant on Casey, she doesn't see as much of him. She is not aware, however, that he is keeping tabs on her. Finally one day Casey comes to the store to bring her a stuffed grizzly bear as a present and invites her to dinner. He admits to Alex he is confused by the feelings he has about her and that he has been sending her prospective mates only because he is scared. Despite the cooling period of the past two weeks, things heat up again and after their dinner together the couple again makes love.

Alex finds herself discouraged with her store. She has cleaned and reorganized, and is even serving coffee and cookies in an attempt to draw customers in. So far business has been discouraging. Casey insists she listen to Andy and not give up hope in her store. Partially as a joke he brings her a stuffed grizzly bear to display in the store. It turns out Andy likes the gift better than Alex.



Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven Summary

Casey wakes in the night and leaves Alex to shower. He feels guilt at having slept with her three times with no protection and he is afraid of making another mistake. He decides to make a trip. Casey tells Alex of his plans to take a trip. He warns her he may be gone as long as a week. Alex senses the tension in his voice and instinctively covers herself up. Casey is angry with himself for hurting her but swears he cannot lead her on anymore. As Casey leaves the room, Alex is sure he is walking out of her life forever.

Alex tries to learn from Andy the basics of the fishing business but is unable to catch on. Andy continues to make fun of her attempts and look down his nose at her. She has also not been able to figure out how to work the woodstove in her cabin. She wishes Casey would show her but he has not spoken to her since he arrived home the night before. As Andy senses she is upset she asks Andy if he knows where Casey was the past week. Andy tells her Casey went to see his son in Florida, a response that shocks Alex. She learns he was married to a woman who packed up and moved herself and their young son away in an attempt to hurt Casey.

Alex goes home early to see Casey. She indicates she has learned his secret and asks why he didn't tell her. Casey says he wasn't sure how to tell her. His former wife had become pregnant while they were in college and he married her for that reason. She hated Alaska and moved away when the child was only one year old. Casey is most disappointed in himself because of his lack of involvement in his son's life. He tells Alex that having an absentee child is wrong and he doesn't plan to do it again. Casey informs Alex they are wrong for each other and that she won't last in Alaska. Alex is defiant and tells him she is leaving, then turns and asks him to help her with the wood stove. After Casey teaches her about the wood stove, Alex lies in bed and ponders her feelings. She is disappointed, but not by any of the things Casey believes she should be disappointed by. She is disappointed that she has met so few men in Alaska. Besides, the only man she wanted now was Casey.

Alex settles on a plan of action and decides she is going to marry Casey no matter what it takes. She has gone out and bought wood so she can impress him with her independence. She dresses to please him and prepares dinner. Then she makes it look as if she has tried to start her wood stove and failed. After this is finished, she walks to Casey's house and asks for help. She meets Casey halfway through the woods. He has noticed smoke coming from her cabin and is coming to check things out. Casey corrects her mistakes and helps her get the stove going. Alex offers him a glass of wine, then begins dinner. As she cooks she tells him he is right about them not being suited for each other. She makes a point to say they are just friends now that their fling is over. She discusses the option of artificial insemination so she can have a baby even if she doesn't find the right man. The idea makes Casey crazy with worry and he tries to talk



her out of it. As the two wash dishes together there is a moment of sexual tension that Alex fights off, knowing she must keep Casey at a distance in order for her plan to work.

Chapter Seven Analysis

Casey's reasons for not wanting to have a serious relationship with Alex are finally out in the open. He has forced himself to believe Alex will not stay in Alaska and that he will face another situation like the one he is in with Ellen. He is hurt and disappointed that his son is not part of his life. Casey is also angry with himself that he has allowed things to go as far as he has with Alex. Once Alex learns his secret, however, she is determined she is the one for him. Despite Casey's disbelief, Alex loves Alaska and plans to stay there.

In order to get Casey as her own, Alex toys with his emotions. She dresses provocatively and reminds him of what he is missing but at the same time remains aloof and distant. Alex talks of trying out other men as if she were discussing test driving cars. She also suggests she might have herself artificially inseminated so that she can have a baby before she even gets married. This idea drives Casey over the edge. He begs her not to do this, thinking not only of the child but also of how worried he would be for her to be pregnant and alone during the Alaskan winter.

Despite Alex and Andy's differences, it is Andy who tells Alex about Casey's past. Up to this point she has only seen the cruel, crotchety side of Andy. It is almost with affection and sorrow that Andy tells about how Casey's first wife took his son away from him and moved as far away as possible.



Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight Summary

As life settles into a routine Alex feels lonely and disappointed. She still feels useless in her store as the men prefer to talk to Andy. She has also only made one sale from her new line of cross country skis. Even Bruno had left her to live with Casey. Casey has become quite cool, not accepting dinner invitations or inviting her to his house. As she thinks about how she plans to stay in Alaska until spring, Andy brings her back to reality by flipping on a light and asking why she hasn't gone home yet. He tells her the trip home will be difficult in her small car but because she doesn't have friends to stay with she decides to head home. Alex realizes Andy was right as she reaches her snow covered driveway. Her car slides off the road in the first curve and she is forced to walk the rest of the way.

Meanwhile Casey is waiting and watching for Alex to get home. Although he hopes she has stayed at the store, he knows he is wrong. Bruno also paces anxiously in front of the windows. Casey has been keeping Bruno at his house in an attempt to make Alex so lonely she will leave Alaska.

Alex walks up her driveway and finally reaches her cabin almost frozen from the cold. Once she is inside her fingers are so stiff she can't even start her kerosene heater. She cries as she realizes Casey was right about her inability to deal with the Alaskan winters. She cheers as she finally gets her lantern lit. She starts to undress but then decides to use the outhouse first.

Casey is relieved when he finally sees light at Alex's cabin. As he dresses and walks through the woods he smells burning wood and sees flames shoot up above the tree line. Casey runs toward the cabin, then sees Alex standing outside. She has accidentally burned down her outhouse. In the blaze her hair and coat caught fire also. She asks only to use Casey's restroom. He wraps her in his coat and helps her to his house, afraid he will be overcome by emotion and beg her to marry him. Once she is safe inside his house Casey goes back to the cabin to be sure the fire is out. Alex is surprised she is no more shook up than she is, but finally realizes how much Casey cares about her. Casey puts out Alex's heater and lantern, grabs her some clothes. He returns to his house to find Alex just out of the shower. He tells her he will stay at her cabin that night.

Alex is feeling more useful at the store. Her studying has paid off and she has finally been able to start contributing to customers' conversations. Casey, however, has been ignoring her again. She is just deciding to be patient with the situation when she hears Harry's voice. He is unhappy with the improvements to the store and also makes fun of her singed hair. Harry also announces he doesn't like New Jersey and that he feels swindled by Alex. He announces the deal is off and he wants his cabin back. Alex refuses to switch back with him. When he tells her all he has ever had was the cabin



Alex relents and agrees to sell the condo to someone else and to let Harry live in the cabin. In fact, she decides Andy and Harry can move into the cabin together and let her live in the back room of the store.

The agreement is made and Alex moves her things out of the cabin. When she stops at Casey's house to leave him a note and pick up Bruno she finds a receipt where Casey bought an airline ticket from New Jersey. Alex concludes that Casey bought this ticket so Harry could come back to Alaska. At first Alex considers leaving Alaska for good. Then she decides to make Casey pay for his actions by moving in with him. Casey arrives home to find Alex unpacking lingerie into his drawers and demands an explanation. She explains Harry has moved back. She plans to stay with Casey and cook and clean for him in exchange for room and board. She even sets up her tent as a bedroom for herself. In passing she warns Casey she has a date and will be out late.

Chapter Eight Analysis

Casey goes to the ultimate extreme to convince Alex she needs to leave Alaska. He buys Harry a plane ticket back to Alaska. Alex agrees to let Harry have his cabin back but once she realizes what Casey has done, she moves in for the kill. Instead of leaving Casey alone, she moves in with him. This way he has a constant reminder of what he is missing. On top of moving in with him she also begins dating, and letting Casey know that she is dating. Casey is put in the position where he is frustrated by his inability to have Alex, he is frustrated by his inability to make Alex leave, and is also frustrated by being forced to witness Alex going out with another man.

Although it could have been fatal, the scene where Alex accidentally burns down her outhouse is portrayed in a humorous fashion. Even Alex herself does not realize what a dangerous position she put herself into because she is so enthralled with the idea that Casey cares about her. This close brush with losing Alex seems to make Casey even more determined to make her leave Alaska.



Chapter Nine

Chapter Nine Summary

During Alex's "dates" with Bubba she is actually learning the art of mushing. Casey doesn't know this and the idea of Alex being with another man drives him crazy. He tries to drown his pain in liquor and only succeeds in giving himself a hangover. Alex fixes him breakfast and dinner. That night she goes out with Bubba again. Once again Casey is furious when she comes in late. The third night he meets Alex and Bubba at the door when they come in a twelve-fifteen. Alex is glowing from her success at driving the mushing team. They inform Casey they are coming in to drink cocoa and talk about breeding. Casey misinterprets this comment and punches Bubba in the nose, sparking a fistfight. Alex goes for Casey's gun and fires it inside the house, effectively stopping the fight. She sends Bubba home with a bag of snow for his swollen nose and then doctors Casey's bruised eye. As Alex beds down in the tent Casey watches her silhouette as she undresses and prepares for sleep. He pulls her from her sleeping bag and takes her to his bed where they make love.

The next morning Casey asks Alex to leave. When he returns he believes she has done as he has asked because her car is full of boxes. They discourse angrily then Alex drives off down the slick driveway. Casey follows her knowing she will slide off the road. Sure enough he finds her car in a snow bank and she asks for a ride to town. Casey is upset because Alex is leaving and because he feels he is the one who caused her to go. He decides he loves her even more than Alaska and asks if there is room on the plane for him. It is at this point that Alex tells Casey she is only leaving to have her hair done and that she plans to come back. She wants to live in Alaska. Alex tells Casey she plans to buy a mushing team, her real reason for hanging around with Bubba. Finally, Casey gives up his pride and asks Alex to marry him. She says yes.

Chapter Nine Analysis

In this final chapter Alex plays on Casey's emotions of jealousy and loneliness to make him realize how much he really does love her. Despite Casey's jealousy, however, Alex spends time with Bubba because she is truly interested in learning about mushing. Alex and Bubba's late nights together cause Casey to break down and finally have a fist fight with Bubba over Alex. After this fight Alex and Casey make love once again. It is at this point Casey decides Alex has to go. Although he realizes how much he loves her and how badly he has treated her, he still holds back from giving her a second chance.

Again Alex tricks Casey into believing she is really leaving Alaska for good. He feels the pain of his break up with Ellen and his son once again. When he finally realizes Alex is not really leaving for good but only to get a haircut that he begins to realize she has been playing him all along. Alex tells Casey of the plans she has for herself in Alaska

and he finally understands that she really wants to stay in Alaska. At this point he asks her to marry him.



Characters

Alexandra (Alex) Scott

At twenty-nine Alex is the junior vice president of a large corporation in New Jersey. She leaves her high stress job and trades her condo in New Jersey for a cabin and hardware store in Alaska. Although she does want to get away from the stress and monotony of her life, Alex has a second agenda for moving to Alaska, she wants to find a husband. Alex is described as being tall and attractive. When Casey first sees her he imagines she might even be a model. In addition to being attractive, Alex is also strong-willed and independent. She has the intelligence to know the things she can do by herself and the things she needs help with.

Alex tells Casey she is looking for a common man with plain brown hair as a husband. At first she tells Casey he is completely wrong for her because he is a confirmed bachelor. As their relationship deepens, however, Alex begins to fall in love with Casey. After she learns about Casey's failed first marriage and his son, she becomes determined to make Casey see she is the right wife for him. The more Alex tries to get Casey to like her; he seems to grow more distant. It is only when Alex makes Casey believe she is really leaving Alaska that he asks her to marry him.

Michael Casey

Michael Casey is Alex's love interest and closest neighbor in Alaska. He works as owner and pilot of a cargo plane business. Casey is the epitome of male attractiveness with blonde hair and a muscular, well-proportioned body. He, however, refers to himself as a bum and is a confirmed bachelor, determined never to be married. Although Casey is deeply attracted to Alex, he works hard trying to get her to leave Alaska. The reason he does this is his first wife left him because of her dislike for Alaska. Although he could handle the divorce, Casey does not like having a son who does not even consider Casey to be his father.

On the other hand, however, Casey does much to help Alex in her first several weeks in Alaska. He works with her on her cabin, clears her drives and hires workers for her. Casey also encourages Alex to keep her store open and instructs her how to best make it profitable. It is obvious Casey cares deeply for Alex, but is still gun shy from his first ruined relationship. Casey's love for Alex seems to go beyond just a sexual attraction to almost the love of a father for a daughter. Even during the time Casey isn't speaking to Alex, he still watches each day to see that she gets home safely. He is terror struck and filled with fear that she has killed herself the day she burns down her outhouse. Casey also shows this fatherly love the day Alex falls on the path to his house and skins her knee. He goes overboard trying to take care of her wound.



Bruno

Bruno is Alex's elderly, obese rottweiler. Alex was willed this dog when her grandfather passed away. Although he is an animal Bruno is one of the most important characters in this novel because he is responsible for Alex and Casey's first meeting. Bruno also serves as an ice breaker and conversation piece when Alex and Casey met again outside Alex's cabin. Later in the novel, Casey encourages Bruno to stay at his house so that Alex will become so lonely she will want to move away.

Harry Kowalski

Harry is the man with whom Alex trades her New Jersey condo for an Alaskan cabin and hardware store. Harry does not tell Alex he has not lived in the cabin for several years and that the structure has no indoor plumbing or electricity. He is also not completely honest about the hardware store, which turns out to be a fishing and hunting store. Harry moves back to Alaska claiming he missed his cabin and that his daughter didn't want him around. In a twist, Harry accuses Alex of swindling him. He believes his cabin and store were worth more than Alex's expensive apartment. Alex, however, finds a receipt showing that Casey bought a plane ticket so Harry could come back to Alaska. Alex believes the reason Casey brought Harry back to Alaska is to run Alex away.

Andy Crump

Andy is the clerk Harry hired to work at his store. Neighborhood children know him as Crump the Grump. He lives in a single room at the back of the store. Although Andy is crotchety and not happy with Alex coming in a straightening up his store, many people come to the store to ask Andy for his hunting and fishing expertise. It is because of Andy's reputation with his customers that Alex does not fire him. Although Andy appears to have a gruff exterior he seems truly concerned about Alex when she decides to drive home in a snowstorm. When Alex asks Andy about Casey's past, Andy describes the break up of Casey's first marriage in a way that insinuates he feels pity for Casey and his situation.

Bubba Johanssen

Bubba owns a natural foods store located near Alex's store. At one point he buys a set of skis from Alex. Bubba is described as being tall, blonde and very common. Although Alex uses her relationship with Bubba to make Casey jealous, their relationship is actually a simple friendship. Bubba teaches Alex the art of mushing, an Alaskan hobby that she finds she actually loves.



Ellen McInerney

Casey met this California girl at Berkley and they had a brief affair. After Casey quit college and went back to Alaska he learned Ellen was pregnant with his child. They married but Ellen left Casey when the baby was a year old because she didn't like Alaska. Ellen moved with the boy to Florida where she remarried. It is suspected she moved so far away from Casey because she wanted to hurt him as badly as she could by separating him from his son.

Son

Casey's unnamed son is ten years old at the time of the novel. The boy was conceived before Casey was married to Ellen, the boy's father. Ellen and Casey married but Ellen left when the baby was a year old because she could not stand Alaska. Although this boy does not have an active role in the novel, he is the main reason why Casey pushes Alex away.



Objects/Places

Juneau Waterfront

It is at a port on this waterfront where Alex and Casey first encounter each other.

Candy Apple Red BMW Sports Car

This is Alex's sports car from New Jersey which is completely unsuited for her new home and lifestyle in Alaska.

New Jersey Condo

Alex trades this condo for an Alaskan cabin and store.

Hardware Store

Alex gains possession of this store under the pretense she is getting a hardware store. It is actually a hunting and fishing store.

Muskeg

Muskeg is a type of grassy bog that covers much of the Alaskan territory.

Leopard Print Toilet Seat

Casey buys Alex this toilet seat telling her it will be warmer than a plastic one in the outhouse.

Red Down Comforter

Casey also buys this for Alex's cabin claiming it is an Alaskan habit to buy something for someone that person likes, especially if they've just bought something for them that they hate.

Outhouse

Alex burns this outhouse down one night in an attempt to light a candle.



Stuffed Grizzly Bear

Casey brings Alex this bear as a gift for her store.

Woodstove

Alex lures Casey to her house by claiming to be unable to light this stove.

Airfare Bill

It is when Alex sees this receipt she realizes Casey bought Harry's plane ticket back to Alaska.

Themes

Sexual attraction

The main theme of this novel is the sexual attraction between Casey and Alex. Although the attraction is there from the beginning, it takes both Casey and Alex awhile to give in to their emotions. Casey fights against his feelings for Alex because he has been hurt in a prior relationship where his wife did not like Alaska and did not want to stay. At first Alex holds back from Casey because he tells her he does not want to get married. Once she learns the truth behind his not wanting to get married, Alex pursues Casey relentlessly.

It is important to notice the differences in attraction between Casey and Alex. Much of Alex's desire for Casey seems to be on a purely sexual nature. Although she does seem to care deeply for Casey, these emotions don't seem to spread to taking care of him or really worrying about him. Casey, on the other hand, almost seems to view Alex as a child. He is constantly worried that she will hurt herself or put herself in danger. Although he is sexually attracted to her, his attraction seems to go beyond the sexual and spreads to an almost fatherly concern.

Casey's Secret

Much of the suspense of this novel centers on the secret that keeps Casey from giving in to his desire for Alex. Hints are dropped occasionally but they are never strong enough to determine exactly what the truth actually is. For instance, Alex notes that Casey's kitchen is well-stocked and filled with good quality appliances, however, he does not seem to cook much or even to take care of his kitchen. This leads one to question why a man so disinterested in cooking would have such a nice kitchen.

Casey also reminds himself frequently that Alex is not the type of person who will stay in Alaska. Although this may seem like good common sense for someone who has lived in Alaska all of their lives, Casey does not look beyond this stereotyped belief to see that Alex really wants to stay in Alaska. Casey also beats up on himself for having unprotected sex with Alex. Although most men don't want their girlfriends to become pregnant only one who has had to get married because of a baby would truly know how bad the consequences of unprotected sex could be.

Even when Alex learns about Casey's ex-wife and son and tells Casey she doesn't plan to leave Alaska, he still pushes her away. It seems that the hurt from this one spoiled relationship was so painful that Casey is afraid to trust again. It is not until Casey really believes that Alex is truly leaving Alaska that he breaks down and asks her to marry him.

Bruno

It seems strange to consider an animal a theme but Bruno is used almost as a pawn to work the action of the novel. First, Bruno is the reason Casey and Alex meet in the first place. Bruno jumps from the ramp of a boat after a doughnut. In her fear that her dog will drown, Alex jumps in after Bruno. Casey follows suit to save both the woman and her dog. Bruno is also used as a pawn by Casey. As he tries harder and harder to run Alex away, he begins keeping Bruno at his house so that Alex will be lonely. Also, it is only when Alex goes to Casey's house to get Bruno that she finds the receipt where Casey bought Harry a plane ticket back to Alaska.

Bruno is also a character that provides comic relief to the novel. When Alex first meets Casey at the cabin Bruno cuts the ice between the two by lying on Casey's feet. Alex's reasons for having the dog are also humorous. She received this huge dog that is totally unsuited to her from her grandfather when he died. The overweight, fearful dog seems the opposite of everything a rottweiler should be. Rottweilers are generally characterized as being fearless, athletic dogs, not obese and lazy as Bruno seems to be.

Style

Point of View

This story is told from the point of view of the third person omniscient. This point of view is ideal for this story because it does not allow either the thoughts of Alex or Casey to be more well-known. It should be noted that the story does focus on Alex, her search for love, and her struggle to prove she is capable of living in Alaska. However, importance is also placed on Casey's feelings and emotions. The reader is given insight into both how Alex feels and in some instances how Casey feels. Some of Casey's actions and his reasons for these actions are cloaked at first and only revealed later in the novel. This is true in the case of Casey's refusal to be married again. It is clear Casey does not want to be married again, his reasons behind this decision, however, are not clear.

Setting

There are various settings for this story. After the initial prologue, which is set in Alex's office building in New Jersey, the remainder of the novel is set in Alaska. Although Casey travels to Florida at one point to visit his son, the action of the story is never located there. Casey and Alex first meet in Juneau when Bruno jumps off the boat ramp. The remainder of the story is set near the city of Fairbanks, Alaska. The major settings include Casey's house where Alex is forced to go to take a shower because she has no running water at her cabin; Alex's cabin, which Casey and Alex work on together to make livable; and Alex's store. Because Alaska is so sparsely populated it makes sense there are no other major settings and few characters. The main ones are Casey and Alex with only a few other minor characters sprinkled in the story.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is very relaxed and informal but at the same time very clean. The novel is written in a way so as to make it easy and enjoyable to read. In places slang terms are even used. For instance Casey believes Alex lets Bruno jump off the ramp on purpose believing she wants to deep-six, or kill, her dog. A great deal of the story is told through dialogue, especially between Casey and Alex. Passages of exposition work to provide needed detail about people and places, and to move the action of the novel along when only one person is involved in this action.

Although this is a romance novel, more emphasis is placed on the courting and wooing than the lovemaking. Although the reader is aware of what is happening between Casey and Alex, the writer does not feel the need to describe steamy love scenes. These are left to the reader's imagination.



Structure

This novel is comprised of nine chapters and a brief prologue. Each of the nine chapters is about twenty pages long. These chapters are given simply a chapter number with no description or hint of what the following chapter will be about.

The main plot is the love story between Casey and Alex. Alex has come to Alaska to find a husband and decides Casey is the one for her. Things become more complicated when the subplots are factored in. These subplots include Casey's ex-wife and son whom he does not tell Alex about as well as Alex's desire to make her fishing and hunting store a success. Because Alex is attractive and feminine Casey does not believe she is serious about her desire to stay and live in Alaska. For this reason he keeps her at a distance and at one point even tries to run her away from Alaska.

The novel moves along very quickly despite the setbacks in Alex and Casey's relationship. Although Casey seems desperately set against marrying, it is really not a big surprise at the end of the novel when Casey does finally ask Alex to marry him. The story stays fairly close to the real timeline. There is only one flashback to give the reader information about how Alex came to have a cabin in Alaska. There are also times where several weeks pass between one section of the novel and another but these passages of time are very clear.



Quotes

"It was the extravagance of her features, her intense vitality, and the dramatic combination of all the pieces put together that made her into an arrestingly beautiful woman." Prologue, pg. 1

"'Bruno and I are going to Alaska,' she explained to an elevator filled with strangers. 'I've bought a hardware store.'" Prologue, pg. 5.

"She'd never done anything this impulsive. For many years her life had been tightly ordered, controlled by thoroughly thought-out decisions." Chapter 1, pg. 13.

"What he really believed was that she was beautiful with or without a hair dryer, and if he hadn't been there to help, she would have had the tent up in half the time." Chapter 2, pg. 33.

"Alex looked at him. The new scar. The bruise. The voice. 'Oh, no.' It seemed impossible, but it was him! She was surprised she hadn't immediately recognized the voice. She didn't think she'd ever forget that husky whisper. And she'd romanticized their meeting in her mind, assuming she'd mystically sense the presence of the man who tried to rescue her. Now here he was, standing in front of her, and not only hadn't she recognized him, but she wasn't even sure if she trusted him." Chapter 2, pg. 41.

"Stay with Casey? He had a toaster, and a DustBuster, and an automatic icemaker. Very tempting. He also had a smile that made her crazy. She could eventually tear herself away from the appliances, but the smile could be addicting." Chapter 3, pg. 67.

"What did she think she was going to do with an indifferent man? She'd go nuts. And she'd probably turn him into a raving lunatic." Chapter 4, pg. 75.

"It took a lot of guts to uproot yourself and search for a better life. He respected her for that. And she'd worked side by side with him on the cabin yesterday and never complained, then had the pluck to want to sleep in her tent. He respected her for that, too. The war ended." Chapter 4, pg. 89-90.

"The attraction was there, constantly simmering below the surface. He could see it in her eyes, the interest and the wariness. He could see it in her parted lips. He closed his eyes and deepened the kiss with deliberate languor." Chapter 4, pg. 101-102.

"Without realizing it, he'd issued a challenge to her. This was war, and Alex had no intention of losing." Chapter 4, pg. 104.

"Alex watched Casey, knowing he wasn't exactly what she'd wanted to find in a husband, but that he was everything she'd come to Alaska looking for. He was the missing piece in her life that money and power couldn't buy, and she gave herself up to him completely." Chapter 5, pg. 119.



"Tomorrow he was going to find her a husband, and it wasn't going to be him." Chapter 5, pg. 120.

"The kid was just a year old when Ellen packed up and left. People tell me she went to Florida." Chapter 7, pg. 155.

"Alex hadn't been aware of the smile, but she was aware of feeling very happy. She was living with Casey, and she'd discovered an Alaskan activity that she genuinely liked - mushing." Chapter 9, pg. 200.

"'We're going to make babies the old fashioned way,' Casey said. 'Will you marry me?'" Chapter 9, pg. 219.



Topics for Discussion

Consider Alex's reasoning that it will be easy to find a husband in Alaska because there are more men than women there. In your opinion is this reasoning sound or unsound? Explain your answer.

Why does the author generally refer to Casey by his last name only? What impact does this have on the reader?

Compare and contrast Casey's and Alex's strengths and weaknesses. Do you think they are well suited for each other? Why or why not?

Consider the rashness of Alex's decision to move to Alaska. Would you have done the same? Why or why not?

Although Alex is portrayed as an intelligent woman she does some not so smart things in the course of the story such as jumping in the ocean after her dog and driving home in a snowstorm. How do you interpret these actions? Explain your answers.

Explain Bruno's role in the novel.

As a reader did you ever doubt that Alex and Casey would get together? Why or why not?