

The Perfect Hope: Book Three of the Inn BoonsBoro Trilogy Study Guide

The Perfect Hope: Book Three of the Inn BoonsBoro Trilogy by Nora Roberts

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Plot Summary

Hope Beaumont is the innkeeper at Inn Boonsboro, a bed and breakfast in the small Maryland town of Boonsboro. She is highly detail-oriented which makes her perfect for the job. The inn is owned by Justine Montgomery's family. Her three sons include Owen, Beck, and Ryder. Hope's two best friends live in town as well, Avery, who is engaged to Owen, and Clare, who is married to Beck and expecting twins. Hope has another friend as well, a ghost named Eliza Ford who is an ancestor of Hope's family. Eliza lives where she died - at the Inn. She has been dead since 1862. She was waiting at the inn for her fiancé to return from the Civil War. Her fiancé was Billy Ryder, an ancestor of the Montgomery family.

Hope moved to Boonsboro to escape the memories of a bad love affair only to realize she hadn't really been in love at all. She is happy as the innkeeper and the one dark spot in her life is Ryder Montgomery, who never calls her anything but "innkeeper" and seems to dislike her. In truth, Ryder is attracted to Hope and hates that.

Ryder is a hard working man who is devoted to his friends and family. He is also aware of Eliza's presence, but has not grown close to the ghost like some of the family members. When Hope calls on him because of a malfunctioning light, he points out that he can't stop Eliza from messing around with the lights. When they get locked in a room together, Ryder is angry but Hope points out that Eliza enjoys matchmaking and will probably release them if they kiss. That kiss begins a relationship and both Hope and Ryder fully expect they will have sex for as long as it interests them both, then amicably go their separate ways. What happens instead is that they fall in love.

As Hope and Ryder seek to sort out their muddled emotions, the lives of their friends and family move on. Avery is planning to open a new restaurant and she and Owen are planning to marry. Clare is expecting twins boys which will make them a family of five. Justine is in a romantic relationship with Willy B., Avery's father, but tells him she's more inclined to keep their relationship as it is rather than taking a step into marriage. Meanwhile, Hope and the others continue their research into the life of Eliza with the hope they'll identify her fiancé. They have no illusions that he's dead but want to figure out the details on the chance that it will give Eliza peace. They discover he died at Antietam on one of the bloodiest days of the Civil War, and that his dying thoughts were of Eliza.



Chapters 1 and 2

Chapters 1 and 2 Summary

As the story opens, Hope Beaumont is giving all the rooms of Inn Boonsboro one last look before she heads to bed. As the innkeeper, she is careful that there are no burned out light bulbs or dirty dishes lying about. She is in Boonsboro, Maryland, near the Blue Ridge Mountains, and she loves her job. The inn and several other businesses are owned by Justine Montgomery and her three sons, Owen, Beck, and Ryder. Her two best friends are nearby. Avery MacTavish is engaged to Owen and owns the Vesta, a pizzeria. Clare Montgomery is married to Beck and is pregnant with twin boys. She owns Turn the Page, a bookstore located just around the corner.

Hope's apartment is on the third floor of the inn and she goes there once she's sure everything downstairs is in order. Once there, she remembers how she came to Boonsboro. She had been manager of a posh hotel called the Wickham in Georgetown. She'd been dating Jonathan, son of the owners, when he announced his intentions to marry someone else. Hope is restless because of the memories and then realizes the ghost that haunts the inn, Eliza Ford, is also restless. Hope often knows Eliza is nearby but Eliza never directly communicates. Hope talks to her anyway, mostly about mundane, everyday things in her life.

Hope goes downstairs the following morning to find Carolee already working on breakfast for the guests. Carolee is Justine's sister and serves as assistant innkeeper. After her morning duties are finished, Hope steps across Main Street to check on her friends, Avery and Clare. She sees Ryder at work on a nearby building which is destined to become a bakery. She notes that Ryder is sexy but surly. She meets Clare who has just returned from a doctor's appointment. Avery and Hope are anxious to know if the baby is a girl but Clare reveals that she's carrying twin boys. She already has three boys. She says the doctor is predicting a November deliver and she hopes to shed the extra weight by May when Avery and Owen will be getting married.

In chapter two, Ryder is thinking he'll take his dog and move to Barbados if his mother comes up with another project before he finishes some of those already begun. He's starting renovations on an "ugly green lump" of a building that will eventually be a fitness center. He is on edge and attributes that to Hope being nearby. She's been on his mind constantly since they kissed on New Year's, though he doesn't intend to kiss her again. His brother Owen arrives with building plans, coffee, and donuts.

The three begin the demolition and Hope eventually stops by to see what's going on, just to satisfy her curiosity. She finds Ryder working alone and tells him there's a problem with one of the lights at the Inn. He says the crew's electrician has already left but that he'll check on it later. Ryder arrives as promised and insists on changing the bulb though Hope has already done that. Ryder then points out that Eliza is playing with the lights and that he can't solve that. Just then they hear water running in one of the



bathrooms and go into that room. When they try to leave, the door is stuck and won't open. Hope suggests calling for help but Ryder refuses. Ryder's answer is to climb out a window but Hope talks him out of it, fearing he'll fall. Hope then points out that Eliza had once locked Avery and Owen in a room until they kissed. She suggests they try it to see if Eliza will open the door. When the kiss is over, Hope opens the door without a problem.

Chapters 1 and 2 Analysis

It's noted that Eliza is an ancestor of Hope's family and that enables Hope to do more research later in the book, which helps them locate Eliza's lost finance.

Clare and Beck were the subject of the first book of this series. In that book, Clare has returned to Boonsboro after the death of her husband who was a soldier killed in the Middle East. Clare was pregnant with her third child when she returned home and opened the bookstore. Beck is initially skeptical of being overly involved with Clare's life because of the three boys, but soon comes to love them as much as a father would.

Each time Eliza is in the room, the people there notice the scent of honeysuckle. There's no explanation until much later in the book when it's revealed that Billy had promised Eliza they'd let honeysuckle grow wild near their house when they were married.

Ryder and Owen are giving Beck a little grief over the fact that he's soon to be the father of twins, especially since the house is already crowded with three boys. Beck is generally unflappable but seems a little overwhelmed by the idea of twins. Owen, the brother who is constantly creating and checking lists in his effort to be always organized, says that Beck had already been planning on a fourth child and that he now just needs to plan for one more. Beck says the older boys want to name the twins Logan and Luke. Ryder immediately realizes they are talking about Logan for the Wolverine from the X-Men and Luke for Luke Skywalker from Star Wars.

When Hope tells Ryder she has a problem with a light, his first question is whether she's checked the bulb. Hope is furious that he would think her so dimwitted that she wouldn't think of that first. However, Carolee says that Ryder once dealt with a tenant who had called him because of a light problem that turned out to be a blown bulb.



Chapters 3 and 4

Chapters 3 and 4 Summary

In chapter three, Hope makes an opportunity to tell Clare and Avery about the kiss. Rants about Ryder, saying that he never calls her by name and that he's rude to her. Hope says she and Ryder have now kissed twice and that means there is a "situation." The three women are still talking when Justine walks in. Justine and Hope leave together with Justine suggesting ideas for the fitness center. As soon as they're out the door, Avery and Clare agree there's "a thing" between Ryder and Hope, and that they approve. They agree to tell Owen and Beck all about it, knowing they'll tease Ryder about it and perhaps prompt him to take the next step.

For the next week, Hope manages to avoid Ryder. Then she is watering the flowers one day when he slips up behind her. He startles her and she sprays him with the hose. Hope says he shouldn't have been sneaking around and he says he was looking for coffee. She offers to dry his clothes but he returns to the job in his wet ones.

In chapter four, Beck teases Ryder about being wet when he returns to the job site. He suggests they wait till Owen arrives and says he believes the three of them "can take her." Ryder then laughs, saying that he might have gotten hosed down but got coffee and a muffin from the inn. Beck's teasing stops and he asks what kind of muffin but Ryder indicates he won't share.

Hope is at the inn when the doorbell rings. She goes down to find Jonathan on the step. He asks to talk to her and she wants to be rude but figures it would be better to allow him to have his say before sending him away. He takes a seat in the garden while she gets tea and cookies. When she returns, Jonathan says he misses Hope and wants her to return. He says he'll set her up in an apartment of her choosing, take her on a vacation anywhere she wants, resume their affair, and give her back her job. She tells him she's involved with someone. Just then Ryder walks by and Hope rushes over, grabbing him and whispering that she needs him to "follow my lead." She kisses him passionately and Ryder steps into the role, following Hope to the garden table and is polite to Jonathan but makes it clear he has laid claim to Hope now. Jonathan leaves and Ryder wishes for a moment that he'd gone directly to the Vesta with the others where there would be no need to deal with the drama.

Chapters 3 and 4 Analysis

Hope is obviously not ready to become involved with Ryder though she admits that she's lonely for male companionship. She then reveals the real reason for her hesitation is that it reminds her of the situation between her and Jonathan. She says that Ryder's mother is technically her employer but she feels that she also answers to Ryder and



that makes the situation more complicated. In fact, that will be one detail Hope will insist they talk about prior to beginning their romantic relationship.

Clare arrives with her three boys. Ryder and Owen allow the boys to stay on the job site and Ryder teaches Harry some basics, thinking back to his own childhood when his father began Montgomery Family Contractors. Beck has stepped into the role of father to the three boys and has no problem dealing with them. For the most part, they are happy and well-behaved, but they are all-around boys and enjoy the things most little boys like. When they first arrive at the job site, one of them rushes to Ryder with a beheaded action figure, asking if Ryder can fix it. While Ryder and Owen aren't directly responsible for the boys, they spend a lot of time with them. Justine is obviously attached to them as well. They call her "Gran" and she spends time with them apart from her time with Clare and Beck.



Chapters 5 and 6

Chapters 5 and 6 Summary

In chapter five, Ryder asks Hope why she'd just kissed him and she briefly explains about her broken affair with Jonathan then about Jonathan's offer. Hope begins to calm down and says she owes Ryder a favor. She asks for his price and he says he wants a cherry pie. After Ryder leaves, Hope cries and is comforted by Eliza before Avery rushes in, having been sent by Ryder. The next evening, Ryder is headed to the Vesta for a beer with his brothers, planning to head home immediately after. Hope stops him and delivers a cherry pie. He's amazed at how good it is. They talk about ongoing construction projects, Owen's plan to get a dog, and other family news. Then Ryder "swooped in for a kiss" and Hope returns it. When she asks why Ryder had kissed her, he says he'd wanted to kiss her when it was his idea and offers to make her a pie. Clare and Avery visit and Hope fills them in on the most recent kiss.

In chapter six, Ryder spends an evening with Beck and the boys while Clare and Avery spend time with Hope at the inn. Ryder says he doesn't know how things work when Clare is home but that "man night" is a time for the boys to run wild. Ryder plays along, becoming involved in a battle between various action figures and in a video game. After dinner, Beck announces to Ryder that Clare is talking about bassinets and they discuss the possibility of building something for the twins.

Ryder tells Beck and Owen about Jonathan's visit, including the kiss and that Hope was "shaken" after Jonathan left. He tells them what kind of car Jonathan was driving and they agree they'll all watch out for it, just to be sure Hope is safe. He also tells them he'd kissed Hope and they warn him not to hurt her. Owen says Avery has told him about the situation, including that Jonathan's parents knew he was sleeping with Hope while preparing to marry another woman. They talk more about the situation with Ryder eliciting a promise from his brothers that they won't tell Justine about the situation between him and Hope. He also promises she'll be clear on his intention before he allows anything to develop. When Ryder arrives at home, he thinks about Hope, that he isn't at all the type of guy she'd usually date nor she his, and that he's been attracted to her from the beginning.

Chapters 5 and 6 Analysis

Ryder says it isn't cool that Jonathan had tried to "poach our innkeeper," but when Hope says Jonathan had offered to set her up as his mistress, he's very angry. He's obviously mad that Jonathan tries to hurt Hope and offers her such a slimy offer. He says that if he'd known the entire story before Jonathan left the inn, he might have beaten him up. This is Ryder's first instance of stepping up to try to protect Hope, but it won't be his last. Another important look into his character is seen when he reaches the Vesta. He tells Avery that Jonathan has been to see Hope and that Hope needs Avery. Hope hadn't



asked Ryder to do that and had been calmer when Ryder left. There was no reason for him to send Avery over except that he had known how important the friendship between Hope and Avery is, and that Hope would need one of her girlfriends nearby.

Hope is doing research to try to find out about Eliza. She reads letters written by Eliza's sister, Catherine, and learns that their father had been a hard man.

When Ryder tells Beck and Owen about Jonathan's visit, they are also angry on Hope's behalf. Though neither of them is romantically attracted to Hope, they obviously consider her part of their extended family because of her friendship with Clare and Avery, and because she works for them.

When Hope is telling Clare and Avery about kissing Ryder, they say there's nothing wrong with them engaging in some flirtation. Hope counters, saying it reminds her too much of her relationship with Jonathan, who was technically her boss when they became involved. It's obvious, though, that Hope is giving the idea some thought. When she talks to Ryder again after that, she asks him if he considers himself her boss. He says he doesn't, that anything related to her employment is his mother's problem, but she doesn't tell him why she wanted to know.



Chapters 7 and 8

Chapters 7 and 8 Summary

In chapter seven, Ryder goes by the inn to return the pie plate. No one is up and he considers just leaving but "was raised better," so he finds a sticky pad and writes a note of thanks. He talks briefly with Clare who says Hope seems recovered from her meeting with Jonathan. When Beck arrives on the job, they begin tearing off the roof of the huge green building that is going to be a fitness center, just across the street from the inn. Beck suggests Ryder ask Hope out for a date and there's more teasing. Meanwhile, Hope takes her opera glasses and watches Ryder work. Carolee catches her and laughs about it, then suggests they take lemonade to the work crew. Hope asks Ryder about "Man Night" and he says the boys ate most of the pie. She says there's a half a pie left at the inn and he accepts the offer.

That afternoon, Justine arrives with Willy B. MacTavish, Avery's father who is also Justine's lover. After they discuss the ongoing fitness center project, Justine mentions that Ryder had kissed Hope. Ryder denies there's anything going on but Justine says both Carolee and a woman from the neighborhood told her about it. Ryder tells her about Jonathan's visit and she asks why the neighbors are talking about a kiss rather than telling her Ryder beat up Jonathan. Ryder says he didn't know the full story until Jonathan was gone. Ryder assures Justine he's "Not hitting on her" and Justine responds that he should.

Ryder heads to the truck and encounters Hope crossing the parking lot with his pie. She comes out and asks if he's planning on asking her to have sex. She says she isn't angry if he isn't planning on it, but that she wants them to be on the same page. She says she's thinking about it and that she'd want no promises and "no complications" from the situation. He doesn't give her either a yes or a no and she says he should let her know when he decides.

In chapter eight, Justine stops by to visit Hope and brings up Jonathan. She reveals that she's been told about the kiss. Hope says she won't become involved with Ryder if Justine would prefer that, but Justine says anything between Hope and Ryder is their choice. She also says she's noticed the "sparks" between them and can't believe it's taken so long for them to act on the attraction.

Justine asks if there are any problems at the inn and they talk briefly about the research on Eliza. Hope says one or two guests have reported small things - such as music that wasn't really playing - as evidence of Eliza's presence but no one has been afraid. That weekend the guests arrive and one of the women is hateful and rude. That night, Ryder returns and tells her he's decided he does want to pursue a relationship. They make a date for later in the week.



Chapters 7 and 8 Analysis

The evening after Beck and Ryder remove the roof from the building destined to become a fitness center, Beck and Ryder have a few items to clear up as normal end-of-the-workday activities. Ryder had stopped by the inn that morning and encountered Clare briefly. Ryder made coffee while he was there and they talked for a few minutes. Ryder thinks back to that encounter and realizes that Beck is likely wishing for more time with Clare. With that in mind, Ryder sends Beck home and volunteers to finish up the work himself. This is another indication of Ryder's true nature as a loving, caring person.

Willy B. is an interesting character in that he is Justine's lover but was her husband Tommy's best friend in life. When the reader sees Willy B. for the first time, he mentions the upcoming wedding between Justine's son Owen and his daughter Avery. Then he says that Tommy would "do a dance over" that situation. Ryder realizes, apparently not for the first time, that this is a vital part of Willy B.'s character - his deep friendship for Tommy. It could be that is part of what drew Willy B. and Justine together in the first place but that isn't revealed in this story.

Often, the teasing among the brothers becomes a bit harsh and it seems as if they might take offense, but they never do.



Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 Summary

In chapter nine, Hope is wakened in the middle of the night by the rude woman's screams. She says she saw someone in their room and Hope realizes it was Eliza. She insists they leave but her husband objects and she finally agrees to stay in another room. A young couple, eager for a chance to see the ghost, trades rooms. Later, Hope is talking to Eliza and says she realizes Eliza was getting even with the woman for her rudeness. Suddenly, Eliza appears and says, "Good riddance." Hope's thoughts immediately turn toward helping Eliza and she says she needs more information about Eliza's fiancé if she's ever going to find him. Eliza fades away without offering more. The next day, Hope tells Carolee about the encounter.

Hope tells Avery her plans for the coming Tuesday with Ryder. Avery says it's sad that Hope has made "an appointment for sex," but Hope says she doesn't want to risk being interrupted by guests. Avery offers to cook a meal for them to share. Hope asks if she needs to be worried that things will get complicated with Ryder but Avery says Ryder isn't that kind of man.

In chapter ten, the family gathers at Justine's on Sunday afternoon. She encounters the two dogs recently adopted by Owen and Avery, including a little pug named Tyrone who is "a little overwhelmed" by the kids and the other dogs. The three youngsters are running wild. Beck, Owen, and Ryder are working on Avery's bar. Avery is enthralled with the progress and invites Hope to the workshop to look at it. At one point Ryder sniffs Hope's hair and suggests she drop by his house later. She declines, saying she has guests at the inn and can't impose that long on Carolee.

Justine starts cooking a meal and invites Hope to stay. Hope says she should go back to the inn so that Carolee can join the family. Justine says she's already talked to Carolee who said Hope should enjoy some time with the Montgomery family. The conversation then turns to Eliza and they discuss how they might further their investigation into her lost fiancé. Hope says that Eliza mentioned Ryder by name and the family considers that he might be the best person to talk to her next. Ryder finally agrees and his mother warns him to speak to Eliza "with respect."

Chapters 9 and 10 Analysis

In the first book of this series, Hope is at the inn for the first time. She is being interviewed for the job as innkeeper and doesn't expect to be offered the job or that she'll make a decision without careful consideration. However, Justine offers Hope the job on the spot and Hope accepts immediately, surprising them all. Ryder, Beck, and Owen aren't pleased that the decision was made without some conversation. However, Ryder doesn't tell the family until now that he'd been in the bathroom after being very



vocal about his anger, and that Eliza had created fog on the window then written Hope's name inside a heart.

Eliza says the name "Billy" often in connection with her fiancé and everyone assumes this to be the man's first name. Eliza also mentions Ryder quite often and everyone assumes at this point that she's talking about Ryder Montgomery. The family believes Eliza feels some special connection to Ryder but they later discover that her fiance's name was Billy Ryder and that he's an ancestor of the Montgomery family.



Chapters 11 and 12

Chapters 11 and 12 Summary

In chapter eleven, Ryder arrives at the inn on Tuesday as planned. He'd planned to use the shower before taking Hope to bed. However, Hope tells him she has guests and that they'll have to put off the sex. Ryder is disappointed and, since they can hear the young couple having sex, says they can just leave a note for the guests and go to one of the other rooms. Hope declines, saying she might be needed and that it's her job. They agree to plan their first night together again, but this time to meet at Ryder's house. Ryder showers and they reconnect in the kitchen. They talk about the Montgomery family and about Hope's past. She says she'd planned out her life with Jonathan, down to the two children and their social lives. She now realizes she's humiliated by Jonathan's treatment of her but she isn't heartbroken, and she should have been if she'd truly been in love with Jonathan.

Food is delivered for the guests, a very young couple on their honeymoon. Ryder kisses Hope then says it's ridiculous for them to remain "on duty" in case the honeymooners need her. Hope and Ryder head to one of the bedrooms and the sex is frantic and utterly fulfilling. When it's over, Hope jokes about the fact that Ryder hadn't even noticed the expensive underwear she'd bought for the occasion and he notes that she was nothing like he'd expected. They get up and go to the dining room to eat the meal Avery prepared, planning to return for sex again later in the evening.

In chapter twelve, Ryder and Hope settle into a routine. Ryder drops by the inn most evenings and if there are guests, he goes directly to Hope's apartment to wait for her. He had expected that Hope would make demands on him but she's always glad to see him and understands if she doesn't. She expects the same from him and continues to give her guests great service. The Fourth of July weekend is coming up and Ryder is a little upset that Hope can't attend the fireworks show with him because she has guests. Ryder, Beck, and Owen meet up in the courtyard of the inn for lunch. Hope brings them iced tea then returns inside. Ryder follows her and once he's gone, Owen and Beck note that he's "hooked" on Hope but doesn't yet know it.

When Ryder returns to the courtyard, he points out that Hope is working a lot of hours and needs a vacation. Hope joins them briefly a short time later, and Owen says that Ryder had suggested Hope needs more help so she can have some time off. Hope is immediately uptight, asking if there have been complaints. When they assure her there haven't been, she's angry at Ryder for butting in. She says she can take care of herself and storms away. Ryder, not knowing how to deal with Hope's anger, sends her flowers. When he drops by later, Hope tells him that she can speak for herself and that she'll talk to Justine if there ever comes a time she can't handle the job or needs extra help. Hope gives him a kiss and assures him she isn't angry at him. Ryder then asks her to the movies the following Wednesday. She says she'd be just as happy with a movie at his house.



On the evening of the Fourth, Ryder is with his family at the fireworks show. Hope is at the inn and is puzzling over the fact that Ryder invited her for a movie. She wonders if their relationship is moving to a new level. She likes the fact that they each enjoy the sex and like each other even out of bed, and she wonders if it's time to start thinking about the "rules" of dating. She reminds herself she should simply enjoy their time together and at that moment, Eliza's hand closes over hers, comforting her.

When Ryder arrives at the inn after the show, Hope is still tied up with her guests. He goes to her apartment and she joins him when she's finally done for the evening. There, she discovers Ryder has bought her a cheesy magic wand at the fireworks show. A few days later, Hope catches up with Avery on the work at the restaurant. Clare joins them and they tour the building, then talk about the situation with Hope and Ryder. Hope says she's confused by Ryder's invitation to the movies and the gift of the magic wand. Clare and Avery tell her she has to stop second-guessing every aspect of their relationship and enjoy herself. Once Hope leaves, Clare and Avery discuss the situation and agree that Hope has no idea she's falling in love with Ryder.

Chapters 11 and 12 Analysis

Ryder had referred to Hope as "snooty" and seems to expect that she's something of a prima donna, though it seems he should have come to realize by now that's not the case. Hope was a beauty queen when she was younger but she tells Ryder at one point that the pageants are a lot of hard work, and that she'd done it for the money rather than because she enjoyed it. Ryder notes that he's surprised as he begins to really get to know Hope.

Chapter twelve opens with Ryder's thoughts, acknowledging that he and Hope are something other than friends but that they really aren't dating. It's a small town and he parks his truck behind Vesta's or one of the other nearby buildings rather than leaving it behind the inn, a small attempt at keeping a lid on the rumors. However, it is a small town and he realizes that anyone who pays attention will figure out he's spending a lot of nights at the inn.

The magic wand is an impractical gift that signifies several things, including that Ryder was thinking about her while he was with his family at the show. He doesn't spend much money but the gift touches Hope in a way that a more expensive gift probably wouldn't have. Clare quickly realizes that Ryder bought the gift because Hope couldn't be with the rest of the family, and says it was a "sweet" gesture. She tells Clare and Avery about that gift and Ryder's invitation to go out, a dramatic change from how their lives have been. Hope says she doesn't understand Ryder and Avery points out that Ryder isn't anything like Jonathan and that Hope can't compare the two. She then says that Hope is going to have to realize that Ryder is a decent man and that she'll have to work at it if she wants to fully understand him.



Chapters 13 and 14

Chapters 13 and 14 Summary

In chapter thirteen, Ryder prepares for Hope's visit, including changing the sheets. He plans to grill steaks and "nuke potatoes," then pour a bagged salad into a bowl. He tries to convince himself he isn't nervous. Hope arrives with dessert from the newly-opened bakery. She also has a rawhide for D.A. Ryder says she almost always gives the dog a treat or a toy, and that he'll come to expect it. Hope cringes when she sees the papers scattered all over the dining room, which serves as Ryder's office. Ryder had planned to have dinner before taking Hope to bed but she's beautiful and he can't resist.

Hope and Ryder talk about her past, including that she'd won a beauty pageant when she was young. Ryder asks if she twirled flaming batons but she says she sang. She admits that she didn't win the talent portion of the pageant but that she aced the interview, winning the crown in the process. Ryder says she probably still has the crown and Hope says her mother probably has it but what was more important is that she used the scholarship money to keep her parents from going deeper in debt. Ryder challenges her to sing and she does, but refuses to sing for long. She asks about his past and Ryder says he could kick a football in high school, and that he kicked a sixty-three yard field goal to win the championship.

In chapter fourteen, Ryder goes to a minor league baseball game with Beck, Owen, and Beck's boys. A foul ball comes their way and Ryder instinctively grabs one of the boys, Liam, and boosts him into position to catch the ball. Everyone looks the ball over, congratulating Liam. Another of the boys, Murphy, then wants to catch one too. The third boy, Harry, says he's pitching in an upcoming game and that Beck has taught him about curveballs. Just then a pretty blonde shouts at Ryder. Her name is Jen and she gives him a hug then a kiss. She asks if Ryder will drive her home after the game and he says he's with his family. She says she'll make it to Boonsboro sometime soon and that he should give her a call. Ryder waits a moment, then follows her on the pretext of getting something to drink. Ryder catches up with Jen and they talk a little more. Jen asks if Ryder is busy over the weekend and he blurts out that he's "seeing somebody." Jen says she was certainly looking forward to spending time with Ryder but seems genuinely happy that he's happy.

When the Montgomery brothers return home, Ryder intends to spend some time at home but winds up driving back to the inn. He is in turmoil over his relationship with Hope and doesn't know how to deal with it, but thinks it's time for a heart-to-heart talk with Hope. He finds Hope studying more of her family history, hoping to learn the identity of Eliza's fiancé. He abruptly tells Hope that he isn't sleeping with anyone else and that he doesn't want her to without telling him. She says that's a fair request. Ryder seems ready to leave but Hope asks what brought this conversation about. Ryder tells her about the ballgame and about meeting Jen. Hope doesn't overreact and Ryder says Hope keeps him unbalanced by the fact that she doesn't place demands or want to



know where their relationship is headed. Ryder also says most women hate it if a man has female friends. She assures him she isn't the jealous type. Then she asks if he wants to spend the night, and he does.

Ryder, Beck, and Owen install the bar in Avery's new restaurant a few days later. Hope arrives in time to see the finished product. She tells them she's found out more about Eliza, including that her father was apparently making plans for her to marry the son of a state senator and that Eliza wasn't happy about it. She has also learned that Eliza has been sneaking out of her room at night to spend time with a stonemason working on the property, which they assume is Billy. As they all head to their respective homes, Ryder offers to bring Hope some dinner. She asks for a salad and he agrees. She then says she'll be picking up some sticky buns for breakfast and Ryder says he'll plan to be there for that.

Chapters 13 and 14 Analysis

There are long scenes describing the lovemaking between Hope and Ryder. These are, in many ways, typical of this kind of novel with words like "release" and "the curve of her throat." Some readers may find these tedious but they play a major role in moving the action of the book.

At one point during the evening at Ryder's house, Hope picks up her phone to check in with Carolee at the inn. Ryder says Carolee will call if she needs anything and Hope points out that she's been very good at not checking in, but had a momentary lapse. Ryder says that Hope has been an excellent manager for the inn and she points out that he had his doubts when Justine hired her. Ryder admits he'd expected her to have big-city ideas that wouldn't work for their inn. They then go to the basement where the TV is, and Ryder says Hope is free to choose a DVD. Hope says it's considerate of him and he points out that he knows every movie in the collection and there's nothing there he wouldn't want to watch. Hope then laughs and says that he could have left off the last comment and she would have thought he was being nice, but she isn't angry about it.

When Ryder returns to his seat at the ballgame after talking to Jen, Owen questions him. He asks what Ryder told Jen and Ryder is snappish, and says, "Jesus Owen, I don't mess with women that way." Murphy, the youngest of Beck's boys, very seriously turns to Owen after that and says, "He doesn't mess with women that way." For good measure, Murphy then says, "Jesus, Owen." Making the others laugh though Beck, already seeing that sort of comment might get him in trouble with Clare, winces.



Chapters 15 and 16

Chapters 15 and 16 Summary

In chapter fifteen, Carolee plans to do some shopping after the last of the guests have checked out for the day. Hope, Clare, and Avery plan to try to talk to Eliza with their latest pieces of information, hoping she'll be able to give them more. Hope begins to recount what she's learned from reading the letters of Eliza's sister, Catherine. She says Catherine kept Eliza's secret about loving Billy, and Hope says she now believes Billy was a stonemason. Eliza appears to the three girls and says that Billy carved their initials into a stone that was then set in the wall on her father's property. Eliza says she met Billy on a Sunday afternoon in March when he was fishing and she was riding. She says they should never have even spoken to each other but it was love at first sight. Hope asks if Eliza's father found out about her secret but Eliza says he wouldn't have believed she would dare defy him in such a manner, and didn't suspect. Eliza and Billy planned to marry and Eliza would remain with Billy's family until he returned from his stint in the military. On the night they were to elope, Eliza's father signed a marriage contract and she shouted at him. He locked her in her room and she couldn't get away then but escaped later. Eliza says she believes she was pregnant when she ran away. Hope asks Eliza for a full name and Eliza says Joseph William, Billy, and Ryder. Hope ignores Ryder, thinking Eliza is referring to Ryder Montgomery, and when Eliza fades away, says the possibility of a first and middle name will certainly help with the research. They decide to meet again the next night to work on the problem some more.

Carolee returns just as Justine pulls into the drive, and they all begin unloading supplies. When Hope goes outside alone for the last of the items in Carolee's car, a BMW pulls into the parking lot and Sheridan Massey Wickham - Jonathan's wife - gets out. Sheridan immediately tells Hope to stay away from Jonathan. She says she knows Jonathan has been there and grabs Hope by the arm, digging her nails into Hope's arm. Sheridan then says she knows Hope slept her way into her job as manager and that she won't tolerate Hope's presence now. Hope says that Jonathan contacted her and that she has no interest in him. Sheridan calls her a liar and slaps her. Ryder grabs Sheridan's arm and pulls her away. Sheridan threatens Ryder then and says she plans to tell Hope's employer all about Hope's faults. Justine has appeared by that time and says Sheridan should leave or Ryder will call the police. Sheridan lunges for Hope again but Ryder steps between them and demands again that Sheridan leave. He points out that an entire crew of workers saw Sheridan slap Hope, which is assault, and that they'll testify to that. Sheridan is crying by the time she's leaving, but she does leave.

Hope apologizes and is obviously mortified at the situation. She rushes from Justine's grip and heads to her apartment. Justine tells Ryder to go to her but he refuses, saying he doesn't get involved when a woman's crying. Justine is furious at Ryder and says that he should do what he does best, call in some flowers because that's the only way he knows how to deal with a woman in crisis. She walks away and Ryder pulls out his phone.



In chapter sixteen, Justine goes to Hope's apartment and assures her that no one thinks less of her because of the scene Sheridan made, and that no one believes Sheridan. Justine apologizes for the fact that Ryder didn't come to Hope. She says that if Hope were to cut off her finger, Ryder would be there to help. But the minute she cried, he'd be gone. Justine says that Ryder is off-balance with Hope. She predicts he'll send flowers and that he'll hope the storm is over by the time he gets back, but urges Hope to force him to deal with the fact that she's sometimes going to be upset and will sometimes cry.

Back on the job site, Ryder is obviously furious and snaps at Beck. They almost have a fight before Ryder reveals the story of Sheridan's visit. By the time he's told the story to Beck and Owen, Ryder is trying to decide what he'll do about it. He says he'll handle it but Owen points out he needs his brothers to go along in case someone has to post his bail. Ryder says it won't come to that.

Ryder drives to D.C. and pushes his way in to see Jonathan's father. He pledges to file charges against Sheridan for assault if she or Jonathan spread any more rumors about Hope. Mr. Wickham says he'll handle it. When he gets back to Boonsboro, Hope is angry that he took the situation into his own hands. She says she doesn't expect that Ryder will dry her tears when she cries, but that she does expect him to consider her before he takes action. As she walks away, he tries to call her back. She says she waited for four hours for him to return from D.C. and that it's now his turn to wait for her. As an afterthought, she thanks him for the flowers, but inserts a curse word into the sentence.

Chapters 15 and 16 Analysis

Eliza had obviously had wonderful plans for her life with Billy. She mentions having dogs and a family, and that Billy would build a house for her. Hope, Clare, and Avery realize that Eliza was incredibly brave to step out on her own as she did. Eliza describes the fear of running away, leaving her family and all that was familiar behind as she sought Billy.

As Sheridan rails at Hope, she accuses Hope of sleeping her way into the job at the Wickham and of trying to regain her relationship with Jonathan. It's obvious that the marriage between Sheridan and Jonathan is already in trouble. Sheridan is desperately jealous and is going through Jonathan's credit card receipts, which is how she came to discover that Jonathan had been in Boonsboro.



Chapters 17 and 18

Chapters 17 and 18 Summary

In chapter seventeen, Hope decides she and Ryder can't possibly make it as a couple because there is too much passion and too little in common. She hates that he doesn't seem to respect her wishes or her capabilities, evidenced by the fact that he went to Wickham without asking her and without considering that she could perhaps take care of herself. Avery stops by and announces she's chosen a wedding gown from an online supplier, a fact that Hope finds horrible because she feels Avery should have the opportunity to try the dress on. Avery says Clare is already getting so big with the pregnancy that she probably wouldn't enjoy a shopping trip and she doesn't want to go without Clare. Avery says Hope is being stubborn with regard to her relationship with Ryder. Days have passed and they haven't spoken at all. Hope says Ryder can apologize if he wants but Avery points out that Ryder did what he thought was best for Hope, and that Hope should accept that's the kind of person he is. Avery pushes Hope to accept that she's really trying to change Ryder by being angry that he took action he felt was appropriate. As she's leaving, Avery says Hope and Ryder owe each other the courtesy of at least talking about the situation.

Hope is outside and when she starts back into the Inn, she finds she's locked out. She realizes it's Eliza and curses but the door doesn't open. She heads to Avery's to borrow the spare key kept there, and meets Ryder who asks if there's a problem. Hope tells him about Eliza and Ryder asks what Hope did to make Eliza mad. Hope says she didn't do anything and Ryder easily opens the door. As Ryder starts to step through the door to leave, the lock clicks and Hope suggests Eliza is angry that Ryder hasn't been around. Ryder says he felt he wasn't welcome but Hope says that isn't true. They agree to make up but Hope pushes Ryder to take into consideration her feelings before he rushes into action again. Ryder says he was only thinking of Hope when he took that action. Hope agrees that she should have appreciated Ryder's action more and he realizes he should have talked to her first because he actually cheated her out of the opportunity to stand up to Wickham herself. Hope then says she wants Ryder to replay the entire conversation he had with Wickham and he agrees, but says he deserves "makeup sex" in return. What Ryder doesn't tell Hope is that he'd been outside the inn because he was on his way to talk to her, having had enough of the silence. Later, Hope realizes she has fallen in love with Ryder though that wasn't her plan.

After Ryder is gone, Eliza talks to Hope and Hope suddenly realizes that Eliza hadn't been talking about Ryder Montgomery when she used the name "Ryder," but had been trying to tell Hope Billy's last name.

In chapter eighteen, the family meets at Justine's house to talk about this new piece of information. Willy B. and Justine are hugging when Ryder enters the room and he makes a big deal of not getting too close to them. By the time Hope arrives there's a water gun battle in progress. She has pies and escapes being shot with the water guns



by pointing out that the pies will be ruined. When they begin sharing information about Billy, Hope says she can't find a record of him being buried at the national cemetery. Justine recalls a story of a family cemetery on the farm and they head to it. There, Ryder goes directly to the correct grave. They learn he died within a day of Eliza.

Chapters 17 and 18 Analysis

Ryder says if he'd stopped to talk to Hope before heading to see Wickham that she would have tried to talk him out of going, and that they'd have just had a fight about it then. He says he wasn't about to allow anyone to treat Hope as Sheridan did without taking some action. Hope says she would likely have tried to talk him out of it at first, but that she'd have probably gone with him. This surprises Ryder who can't imagine that reaction from Hope. They are each just learning about the other and Ryder still has some preconceived notions about how Hope thinks. He's surprised several times in the coming weeks as they get better acquainted.

While Willy B. and Justine are preparing dinner in chapter eighteen, Willy B. comes out with a question that is apparently meant to be a proposal. He asks Justine if "you don't want to get married or anything, do you?" It seems that Willy B. doesn't really want to marry but that he would if Justine wanted to as well. Justine says she doesn't and that he's sweet for asking her. She says she's happy with their relationship as it is and then asks if Willy B. is unhappy. He seems to be caught up in the situation, especially the approaching marriage of his daughter, Avery, to Justine's son.



Chapters 19 and 20, and epilogue

Chapters 19 and 20, and epilogue Summary

In chapter nineteen, Ryder has a dream about Billy's final day of life. He sees the battlefield through Billy's eyes and is horrified at the carnage. There is a particular path that has become so filled with dead men and their blood that it is later known as Bloody Lane. Billy obeys the orders to push forward again and again, though hundreds from both sides are dying. Suddenly he realizes he can't possibly take one more life and he stops firing. In that moment, he's shot. He doesn't really feel the pain as he falls but he pulls Eliza's picture from its hiding place. His hands are bloodied and he can't hold the photograph. Then he knows he's wounded and he won't be returning to his beloved Eliza. His one regret is that he won't share the life he'd envisioned for their future.

Ryder later reveals the dream to everyone and Eliza is clearly present as he tells the story. Eliza says it means a great deal to her that Billy's final thoughts were of her and the life they'd missed. She says she was thinking the same. Eliza thanks Beck for his renovations to the inn and says it was Beck's work that made it possible for her to return. She then vanishes.

In chapter twenty, the inn is reserved for family and friends on the night the MacTavish Family Restaurant and Tap House opens. Avery is a bundle of nerves and Hope pitches in to help. As Ryder prepares to get dressed, he tells Hope that Willy B. is wearing a suit but that he isn't. Hope tells him that's okay but she plans to use the event as an excuse to dress up, and she does.

When Ryder and Hope return to the inn after the successful event at Avery's restaurant, Ryder takes her onto the deck. He begins to tell her about things he hates and things he won't do. He says he doesn't like opera and she says she doesn't either. He points out he's seen her opera glasses and she tells him she's used them when she was trying to get a better look at him as he worked nearby. Hope says they are also good for ballet and he says he won't attend ballet either. Hope says he's missing out if he doesn't, but that it's fine with her. She counters, saying she doesn't mind a day of lazing around watching football as long as he doesn't paint his face. She says she's up for baseball but isn't sure about the minor league games until she attends one. She refuses to say she won't have extra pillows on the bed but says he's welcome to throw off any that are in his way. Ryder says he won't go shopping with her and Hope says he's the "last person I'd want as a shopping buddy."

They continue in this vein and then Ryder says he wants to tell her something he's never said to another woman who wasn't a relative. He says he loves her and that he's "okay with it." He then says he used to hate that she's perfect but now realizes she's perfect for him. He pulls out an engagement ring and she agrees to marry him. As they stand on the porch, locked in an embrace, she sees Eliza hugging a young man in laborer's clothing.



Chapters 19 and 20, and epilogue Analysis

There is a great deal of humor mixed into the dialogue. At one point, Hope is relating the details of Jonathan's visit. She says that after she kissed Ryder, she offered to do something for him and he asked for pie. Avery asks if that's code, obviously believing it might be some sort of innuendo for sex. Hope counters, saying, "No, it's pie." In another conversation, Beck tells Ryder that Clare is talking about bassinets. Ryder asks for a definition and Beck says it's a basket on legs and that there's "a frilly white skirt." He says it would be embarrassing for his sons to be in that. Ryder suggests that Beck "man up" on the topic but Beck says that Clare's pregnant, as if that explains everything. Ryder says Beck is embarrassing.

In the Epilogue, Hope is helping Avery prepare for her wedding. Ryder suggests they go ahead and get married since they're already dressed up and there's a preacher already in the building, but Hope laughs it off, saying she has lots of planning still to do for her own wedding. As she leaves the inn, she looks back and waves at Eliza and Billy.



Characters

Hope Beaumont

The innkeeper of Inn Boonsboro, Hope is a beautiful, self-assured young woman except when it comes to Ryder Montgomery. When she arrives in Boonsboro, Hope is recovering from a broken love affair. She'd believed herself in love with Jonathan, and was devastated when she found out he planned to marry someone else. However, later Hope realizes she wasn't truly in love with Jonathan and that what she felt for him was minor in comparison to her love for Ryder. Hope has a close connection to the ghost of the Inn, a young woman named Eliza Ford who is actually one of Hope's ancestors. Hope isn't at all afraid and considers Eliza a friend. Hope spends a great deal of time seeking the fate of the ghost's fiancé and is sorry for her when they discover his grave. It seems that Hope and Ryder serve as a catalyst to bring the two dead lovers back together. Hope is close friends with Clare and Avery, both business women in the community. Their friendship is part of what brought Hope to Boonsboro in the first place. Hope is furious when Ryder goes to D.C. and confronts Mr. Wickham. Ryder wants to fix the situation and wants to be sure that Hope isn't hurt again. Hope is more humiliated that everyone saw the confrontation than hurt, and she hates that Ryder took it upon himself to address the situation.

Ryder Montgomery

One of the three Montgomery brothers, he is part owner of the family's construction company and their various properties. Ryder is self-confident and hates that he's attracted to Hope as the story opens. Because of this attraction, he tends to keep his distance. Ryder is extremely honorable and has never indicated that his affairs were anything more than pleasant interludes prior to his relationship with Hope. Ryder is a carpenter by trade and is devoted to the family business and the family. He works hard but also enjoys his life. When Jonathan arrives in Boonsboro and harasses Hope, Ryder steps in and pays a visit to Jonathan's father, insisting that Jonathan stay away or face the consequences. He then doesn't understand why Hope would be angry at his interference. Ryder is the descendant of the long-lost William Ryder who was the fiancé of the ghost that haunts Inn Boonsboro. When that connection is made, he is obviously moved. This softer side of Ryder is evident to those who know him well though he tries to disguise it. One of Ryder's greatest faults is that he doesn't know how to talk to women when they are in high emotional states. He believes that sending flowers should calm the woman down, whether he's the reason for her distress or not. He accepts Hope's criticism of this aspect of his character, knowing that she's assessed him correctly.



Eliza Ford

The ghost who haunts Inn Boonsboro, she died in the inn in the 1860s, waiting for her fiancé to return from the war. She seems to have almost faded away before the Montgomerys began renovating the Inn. The various characters have accepted her presence and she is not malevolent though she sometimes plays tricks on people. At one point she locks a door and refuses to allow Ryder and Hope to leave until they kiss. She is waiting for the return of her lover, William Ryder, who died in a battle nearby, just about the same time Eliza died of a fever. She is eventually reunited with William, who she calls Billy.

Justine Montgomery

Ryder's mother, she is outspoken but loving and kind. She has many ideas for expanding their holdings in Boonsboro and she sets out plans for her sons' construction company, knowing they will do the work she asks of them. Justine is in a relationship but is self-sufficient and doesn't feel the need for that to make what many might see as a logical next step - marriage.

Carolee

Sister of Justine, Carolee works as an assistant innkeeper and loves the family, the businesses, and the town. She is an unassuming woman, always willing to pitch in where needed.

Avery MacTavish

One of Hope's best friends, she is engaged to Owen Montgomery. Avery is a hard working young woman and already owns a pizzeria as the story opens. She later opens a pub as well. She is devoted to her friends and family and anxious to protect those she cares about, including Hope.

Owen Montgomery

Ryder's brother, he is engaged to Avery MacTavish, one of Hope's best friends. Owen is the quieter of the brothers and is often the one focused on the details of the various projects the construction company is working on.

Beckett Montgomery

Brother of Ryder and husband of Clare, he is an architect by trade but does a great deal of the hands on labor for the construction company, as is the case with all three of the



brothers. Beck is father to Clare's three sons though he is not a biological father. He cares for them and his devotion is obviously returned.

Clare Montgomery

Wife of Beck, she's the mother of three sons and was a widow when she moved to Boonsboro after her first husband died in the war. She owns the bookstore and is pregnant with twin boys as the story unfolds.

Jonathan Wickham

Hope's former boyfriend, he shows up in Boonsboro, proposing that Hope return to work at the Wickham and renew her sexual relationship with him. Jonathan is self-centered and arrogant, and it seems he will harass Hope until he gets his way, but Ryder talks to Jonathan's father and puts a stop to it.

William Ryder

Known as Billy, he is the fiancé of Eliza Ford. Billy is in a horrific battle during the Civil War and dies with Eliza's photo in his hand, his one regret that he would never return to her to build the life they'd planned.

Willy B.

Father of Avery, he is something of an artisan and displays his work in the gift shop when it opens. He is in a romantic relationship with Justine and asks if she wants to get married, but it's obvious he is happy to allow their situation to stay as it is when she refuses.



Objects/Places

Boonsboro

The town in Maryland where the majority of the action occurs.

Inn Boonsboro

The name of the bed and breakfast where Hope is the innkeeper and where Eliza Ford lives as a ghost.

The third floor

Where Hope has an apartment at Inn Boonsboro.

The Wickham

The name of the fancy hotel where Hope had been manager prior to her arrival in Boonsboro.

Turn the Page Bookstore

The store owned by Clare Montgomery.

Vesta Pizzeria

The pizza place owned by Avery.

MacTavish's Restaurant and Tap House

The restaurant being opened by Avery as the story comes to a close.

Montgomery Family Contractors

The name of the company owned by Ryder and his brothers, established by their father.

Main Street

The street in front of the Inn Boonsboro.

D.A.

Ryder's dog.



Themes

Acceptance

The Montgomerys, Hope, and Avery have come to accept the presence of Eliza Ford, the ghost of a young woman who died more than a century earlier. Eliza is a ghost who is very vocal and is often able to communicate. The fact that she's a ghost is a fantastic aspect of this story but the various characters accept her presence and her right to be there. To a lesser degree, this theme is seen in Hope and Ryder's relationship. Ryder Montgomery is a strong, self-reliant and self-confident man who believes in protecting those he loves. When Hope is being plagued by her ex-boyfriend and his wife, Ryder doesn't talk to Hope about it or ask what she wants him to do to help. He takes it upon himself to visit the Wickham and confront Jonathan's father. Ryder doesn't take time to consider that Hope might want to go with him or that Hope might not want him to go at all. He merely sees that someone he loves has been hurt and he sets out to confront those who hurt her. Hope is furious because Ryder went and seems to be unwilling to say that he might have been right in his action. It's not until much later that Hope accepts she is expecting Ryder to stay. Meanwhile, Ryder has believed Hope is the epitome of a beauty queen who would love opera and demand that he attend those kinds of events as well.

The importance of love

The power of love is an overriding theme in this story seen in the lives of several of the characters. There are three Montgomery brothers, and each of them has fallen in love. This book is the story of Ryder Montgomery and his relationship with Hope Beaumont. Equally important to the story is the relationship between Eliza Ford and Billy Ryder, both dead about a century and a half. Eliza is a ghost who lives at Inn Boonboro, apparently because she died in that house. Her love for Billy Ryder, who died about the same time, is important to the story and drives some of the action. As the story comes to an end, Eliza and Billy are reunited. Ryder and Hope can barely tolerate each other as the story opens though this is largely because they are fighting their mutual attraction. When they put aside their animosity, they discover they enjoy each other's company and that puts them in a position to fall in love. There are others who are deeply in love, including Beck and Clare Montgomery and Owen Montgomery and Avery MacTavish. Each of them also fought against the attraction, at least to some degree, but love triumphs in each case. Justine Montgomery, mother of Ryder, Owen, and Beck, is also in love though her relationship with Willy B. MacTavish is different.

The importance of friendship

Hope takes the job as innkeeper in Boonsboro at least partly because she wants to be near her friends, Avery and Clare. The three are very close and think of the feelings of



the others constantly. When Avery's wedding date is nearing, she announces to Hope that she's buying a wedding dress online. Hope is horrified that Avery isn't going to hit the boutiques and try on dresses to find the perfect fit. Avery points out that Clare is already getting heavy with the twin and knows that Clare wouldn't enjoy a shopping trip. For Avery, the shopping trip would have been an opportunity to spend time with her best friends - Clare and Hope. It seems likely that Clare would have gone along simply because they are best friends and Avery knows it wouldn't have been enjoyable for Clare. The three are constantly talking about feelings and their lives. When Hope is hurt by Jonathan's appearance, Avery rushes to check on her. This same level of friendship exists among Ryder, Beck, and Owen Montgomery, though the three brothers express themselves differently and have a completely different way of being friends. When Ryder is first acting on his attraction to Hope, his brothers talk about it behind his back, noting that Ryder is already falling in love but doesn't yet realize it. When Ryder is angry over Jonathan's appearance in Hope's life, both Beck and Owen agree they'll be keeping an eye out for a return visit from Jonathan. This is also evidence of another level of friendship between the Montgomery brothers and the three friends, Hope, Avery, and Clare.

Style

Point of View

"The Perfect Hope" is presented in a third-person perspective from an omniscient point of view. This unlimited perspective means the reader knows the thoughts and actions of the various characters at the time those happen. For example, Hope is at the Inn early in the story and her actions are presented as a series of narratives, conversations, and thoughts while she is there. Later, the reader is given a look at the life of Ryder Montgomery through the same techniques. At another point in the story, the reader is presented a conversation between Justine and Willy B. This means the reader has a clearer picture of what the characters are thinking than would have been possible with a limited perspective. The exception to this perspective is Eliza Ford. Eliza has apparently forgotten a great deal about her life and her love for Billy Ryder in the years since her death. As she begins to remember, she tries to convey the memory of Billy's full name to Hope. Hope misunderstands and the reader is likely to be misled by Eliza's words until Hope figures out the true meaning. The use of the omniscient perspective also means the reader doesn't have to wonder whether Hope and Ryder are falling in love. For the most part, their intentions and feelings are detailed as they become fully aware of them. The overall perspective is appropriate and acceptable for the story.

Setting

The story is set in the small town of Boonsboro, Maryland. The town is real, though the book opens with a statement that the people and places are "the produce of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously." The use of the real place for the setting adds a level of credence some readers may appreciate, especially those who know the city or the region. There are also references to the nearby battlefield of Antietam, a famous battle of the Civil War. That scene includes a reference to "Bloody Lane," which is a nickname that stuck after so many young men died there. There are specific settings within the story, including the Inn Boonsboro where the ghost Eliza Ford lives and where Hope serves as an innkeeper. Other specific places include Vesta Pizzeria and Turn the Page Bookstore, as well as the homes of several of the characters, including Justine Montgomery who hosts gatherings for her family on several occasions. The various settings are described in detail, obviously an effort to give the reader a mental picture of the places. For example, the brothers are working on the renovations for Avery's restaurant and there is a great deal of information provided about that space, including where the original brick wall will be exposed and the effects of the Tiffany light shade on a particular part of the room.



Language and Meaning

"The Perfect Hope" is written in a straight-forward manner and the action moves fairly quickly. The language is modern English and there are few words and terms that would be unfamiliar to the average English-speaking reader. There are some words and terms that indicate the time setting and the characters of the various people involved. For example, when Hope is telling Clare and Avery all the things Ryder does to make it seem he doesn't like her, she says that he is rude, never calls her by name, and "he snarked on my shoes," indicating he'd made rude comments about them. There are curse words throughout the book that some readers might find offensive. The brothers often make teasing comments to each other that contain curse words and that would be extremely rude except that it's obviously their way of communicating. There are also overt references to sex as well as some innuendos. For example, when Hope is talking to Clare and Avery, she says it has been a long time since she's been involved with a man. In her words, "the desert is dry." The story focuses on a ghost and the reader is asked to believe that the ghost appears and that she communicates with the others. Without the idea of the ghost at the center of the story line, a great deal of the story is lost.

Structure

The story is divided into twenty chapters and includes an epigraph and epilogue. Prior to the opening of chapter one, there is a map of downtown Boonsboro which includes the locations for several of the businesses, including the inn, bookstore, gift shop, and pizzeria. The map is obviously designed to lend a level of believability that might not otherwise exist. The story is the third of a trilogy. Each book focuses on the story of one of the three Montgomery brothers falling in love. In this book, it's Ryder and Hope who connect romantically and become engaged. An important theme common to the three books is the presence of Eliza Ford, the ghost of a young woman who died at the inn in the 1860s. Eliza is searching for her own lost love, her fiancé Billy Ryder, who turns out to be among Ryder's ancestral family. Billy and Eliza are reunited as the story comes to a close and Hope and Ryder begin plans for their own wedding. The story runs generally in chronological order with some historical information presented as memories or stories told among the characters. For example, Hope arrives in town in the first book of the series but the story of her arrival is presented as her own memory of that event. The story is divided between dialogue and narrative. Both are reasonable and believable considering the characters, storyline, and setting.



Quotes

"His mother was driving him crazy. If she popped up with another project before he finished one of the half dozen currently on his plate, he might just take his dog and move to Barbados." Ryder, Chapter 2

"We're dealing with a romantically inclined ghost, which sounds enormously silly, but it is what it is." Hope, Chapter 3

"The two of you think that way because your current life punch is spiked with weddings and babies. Mine is a crystal-clear bowl of career." Hope, Chapter 3

"Ryder didn't know what rules applied when the lady of the house was in residence, but Man Night equaled a free-for-all. The kids ran around like demons, ate like wolves, fought like mortal enemies, and laughed like loons." Chapter 6

"Hope considered herself a pretty good judge and in her judgment she and Ryder Montgomery were having a serious flirtation. They'd see where it went from there." Chapter 7

"The combination of fatigue and caffeine made her feel like an exhausted hamster who couldn't stop running on its wheel." Chapter 9

"Vesta's pasta's more than fine, but why not bump it up a level? It'll be my contribution to the Hope Finally Gets Laid Event." Avery, Chapter 9

"And those workings struck him as pretty well oiled. No surprise, since in a lot of ways she was Owen in a skirt." Ryder referring to Hope's organization of the inn, Chapter 12

"So he'd grill the steak, nuke the potatoes, and dump the salad mix he'd picked up into a bowl. If she didn't like it, she should go to some other guy's house for dinner." Chapter 13

"You're going to be a hook in her craw as long as she's with him. Which I predict won't be more than a year - two at the outside." Justine referring to Sheridan's hatred of Hope, Chapter 16

"If I had to choose which one of you is more stubborn, I'd judge it a dead heat." Chapter 17

"I love you. And I'm okay with it." Chapter 20

"Look at us. The wife, the bride, and the bride-to-be." Epilogue

"on the porch facing the flower-decked arbor, Lizzy stood with her Billy." Epilogue



Topics for Discussion

Describe Hope. Describe Ryder. How does their relationship begin? What brings them together? What almost tears them apart?

Who is Eliza? Who is Billy? Describe their relationship. What brings them together? What tears them apart? How are they reunited?

Who are Clare and Avery? What is their relationship with Hope? How are they connected to each other? What is the job of each? How are their lives changed over the course of the story?

Describe the relationship between Ryder, Owen, and Beck.

Who is Justine? Carolee? Willy B? Tommy Montgomery? How is each related to Hope and Ryder? What are the roles of each in the story?

What do you consider the most important theme of the story? Why is this theme important? List at least two instances in which this theme plays a part in the story.

Describe Boonsboro. What are some of the buildings in town? What is the nearby Civil War battlefield? Why is it important?

Compare the relationship of Ryder and Hope to that of Eliza and Billy. What are the similarities? What are the differences?