

Whiskey Beach Study Guide

Whiskey Beach by Nora Roberts

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Plot Summary

Eli Landon is the main character in "Whiskey Beach" by Nora Roberts. The book opens with Landon arriving at Bluff House in Whiskey Beach. Whiskey Beach is the Landon family home. Eli goes there for refuge and to watch over the house while his grandmother heals from a fall.

Landon is a recently retired attorney who has faced the most horrific year of his life. First, Landon discovers that his wife is cheating on him. Then, the soon-to-be ex-wife is murdered. Landon is the only suspect and is arrested. Although Landon is acquitted, his wife's family and a hard-nosed detective still believe Landon is guilty. Landon decides to go home to Bluff House on Whiskey Beach, a rural Massachusetts beach community. There Landon will work on his novel and attempt to heal from the wounds he incurred.

Landon meets the beautiful Abra Walsh, his grandmother's helper. Abra is Whiskey Beach's all around super-woman. She cleans houses, teaches yoga, cooks, designs jewelry, and works at the local pub. Abra is young and beautiful but bears secrets.

Abra is determined to help Eli regain his strength and vigor, despite Eli's attempts to dissuade her. Abra is not a woman who takes no for an answer. Eli's grandmother Hester encourages Abra's behavior.

As Eli starts to put his life back together, he learns that someone is trying to frame him for murder and at the same time, steal the Landon family treasure known as Esmeralda's Dowry.

An intruder attacks Abra in the house and Eli jumps into action. Eli determines that the intruder was most likely the person that had injured his grandmother which only fuels the fire. Eli, Abra and their friends hatch a scheme to catch the intruder in the act. The plan works and the intruder, allegedly the rightful heir to Esmeralda's Dowry, is apprehended.

Throughout the story, Eli must use his legal knowledge, his wits and skill to learn the identity of the murder and to save his family's heritage from ruin. In the meantime, Eli falls in love with Abra and decides to start life anew in Whiskey Beach.



Section 1: Dark; Chapters 1-5

Summary

Section 1: Dark

Chapters 1-5

“Through the chilly curtain of sleet, in the intermittent wash of the great light on the jutting cliff to the south, the massive silhouette of Bluff House loomed over Whiskey Beach.” Chap. 1, p. 12

Eli Landon arrives at Bluff House. It has been 2-3 years since Eli has been back to Whiskey Beach. He had always been too busy with his work or his wife – a wife who had been cheating on him for 8 months before she was murdered in their home. Now Eli is back at Bluff House, his childhood home, to look after the place while his grandmother recovers from a fall. Eli is broken in almost every conceivable way and perhaps Bluff House is the place where he can begin to heal.

The morning after Eli’s arrival, he meets Abra Walsh, Whiskey Beach’s super woman. Abra is a yoga teacher, masseuse, and house cleaner. It was Abra that found Hester Landon after she fell down the stairs. Abra has been watching over Bluff House in Hester’s absence. It is clear that Abra has a sense of ownership in the house and that she is determined to carry on as always despite Eli’s presence. Eli is surprised by Abra’s manner and although he is a grown man, Eli listens when Abra tells him to sit down and eat his breakfast. Eli becomes irritated when Abra begins to leave notes around the house – relayed by his grandmother – reminding him to eat, exercise, and work on his novel.

Eli had been a lawyer in his former life but now found that he was much more interested in finding justice through his writing. Writing brought him many things real life could not – joy, a sense of accomplishment and serenity.

“He could go away into a world he created, he—to some extent, anyway—controlled. And oddly felt more himself than he did outside that world.” (Chap. 2, p. 27)

Eli writes to his family and then takes a walk on the beach, noting that it would snow soon. He stops at Abra’s house to pay her for the groceries and inadvertently stumbles upon her yoga class. The women are intrigued by Eli. One of the women, Heather, comments that Abra should not be in the same house as a murder suspect. Abra points out that Eli was cleared of killing his ex-wife. Heather is not so sure Eli is innocent. Abra notes that Eli has suffered and lost weight.

Eli begins an exercise regimen. He is quickly reminded that he is in poor shape. The realization hits harder when he learns he cannot keep up with his 80 year old grandmother’s training schedule.



Eli works on his book and gets lost. Eli is irritated when Abra interrupts him and insists he eat something. Eli is fascinated by Abra and her beauty although he is irritated that she has made it a point to be his keeper.

Eli decides to take Abra's advice and leaves Bluff House to go for a walk. He was going to have to talk to his Gran about Abra.

Abra talks Eli into getting a massage. Eli is adamant to the point of being rude but gives in. Abra works her magic and Eli feels better than he has in some time.

Hester struggles to regain her strength and tries to convince Eli that she is fine although she is not.

Abra goes on a run with her friend Maureen. Abra confides to Maureen that she has been approached by a private investigator from Boston. The man has offered to pay Abra for information on Eli. Abra is insulted and refuses.

Analysis

Eli Landon's life is a mess. His soon to be ex-wife has been murdered, and he has been charged. He is finally acquitted. His wife's family is considering filing a wrongful death civil suit against Eli, convinced he killed Lindsay. Abra discusses the case with Eli and points out all of the reasons she believes he is innocent.

Eli is grateful to be back at Bluff House after being fired from his job. Abra takes up her post as his caretaker even though he fights her every step of the way. It is clear that Abra is taking care of Eli, not only because of his grandmother's wishes, but because she hates to see anyone in pain. Eli resists all of Abra's efforts but begins to realize that she is someone who cares about the people in her life.

Abra shows character when she becomes offended and refuses the private detective's offer to spy on Eli. The entire town is fascinated by Eli and each has his own opinion about Eli's guilt. Roberts does a fantastic job of capturing the feel of a small town with its wide variety of personalities.

There are mysteries about Whiskey Beach that are hinted at in this first section, ones that will surely be revealed as the story moves forward.

Discussion Question 1

If Eli was acquitted of all charges regarding Lindsay's death, why do you think he was fired from his job?



Discussion Question 2

Why has Eli become disillusioned with the law?

Discussion Question 3

Why does Eli resist Abra's efforts to help him?

Vocabulary

Pretense, deceitful, regret, gracious, foyer, intrude, civilized, absorbing, neutral, quirky, contentment, compatibility, muttered, honeymoon, charm, simplicity, mechanism.



Section 1: Dark; Chapters 6-10

Summary

Section 1: Dark

Chapters 6-10

Abra convinces Eli that he must fight to prove his innocence. Justin Suskind, Lindsay's lover, has an alibi, leaving Eli as the sole remaining suspect. Abra tells Eli he should go to Boston and meet with his lawyer. Abra also tells Eli about Kirby Duncan, the private detective.

Eli continues to allow Abra to give him massages and eventually apologizes for being so difficult and resistant to her care.

Eli tells Abra she was right in badgering him to fight the lawsuit. Abra says she knows what she is talking about because she has watched a lot of lawyer shows.

"I could make a living. They're just habeasing their corpus and whereforing the heretofore to screw with you." Chap. 6, p. 74

Eli leaves for Boston to meet with his lawyer, Neal Simpson.

Abra cleans Eli's office and thinks how, she too, had escaped to Whiskey Beach.

Eli speaks with Neal about strategy for combatting the impending lawsuit. Neal says there is no way to prevent Duncan from asking around about Eli. Eli wants to hire a new investigator. This time Eli wants a woman, one who might be able to get Lindsay's friends to open up about her life.

Eli visits Hester. They take stock of each other, somewhat relieved that the other is healing.

Duncan sits outside Eli's parents' home and takes notes. Duncan begins to doubt that Eli is guilty. He had expected Eli to be a violent sort. Duncan has also done background on Abra and has uncovered her past associations with violent types. Duncan had spent time talking to the chatty Heather Lockaby who was eager to talk about Eli's youth. Duncan had also learned about the secrets of Bluff House and the Landon family, beginning with their whiskey business, sunken treasures, and villains that had inhabited the area.

Abra goes to Bluff House to ensure that the windows have been closed. While in the house, Abra is attacked by an intruder. Abra gives the man a nosebleed and runs to Maureen and Mike's cottage. Mike calls the police as well as Eli.



Eli rushes home to find out what has happened. Eli and Abra share a moment but pull away before it is too late. In the basement Eli learns that someone has been digging a trench. Eli is shocked and surmises that someone is looking for Esmeralda's Dowry. Eli also wonders if the same intruder has injured Hester.

Duncan's client calls and asks to meet him. Duncan is angry, believing that the client hired him so that he could watch Landon and when it was clear, break into Bluff House

Abra talks Eli into going out on Friday night. Abra tells Eli that he needs human contact and kisses him.

Kirby Duncan's body is found. Eli's nemesis Wolfe and another cop interview Eli. Wolfe is convinced Eli murdered Duncan and Lindsay.

Analysis

The mystery begins to deepen. An intruder is digging in the basement of Bluff House. Although Eli thinks it is ridiculous, it is apparent that someone is looking for Esmeralda's Dowry. Eli refreshes his memory about the Dowry and the sinking of the Calypso.

Duncan was obviously murdered by his client, who remains unknown.

Wolfe's behavior has become so obsessive that he has lost all objectivity. The man is so irrational that the other cop apologizes to Eli for his behavior.

Eli suspects that the intruder also harmed Hester. Hester is not unstable and would not fall down the stairs. Hester has no memory of the event. The thought that the intruder might have harmed Hester fuels Eli's fire to discover the truth of recent events.

Eli begins to give in to human contact in Whiskey Beach. Abra is getting under his skin and he finds himself attracted to her. The couple kiss but are wary of going too far under the circumstances.

Abra and her friends are strangely devoted to Eli which allows the reader to surmise that Eli is going to become a permanent part of their lives.

More remains to be seen about the sinking of the Calypso and the truth about the lost treasure.

Discussion Question 1

Do you think the story of Esmeralda's Dowry is true? Why?

Discussion Question 2

Why is Wolfe so obsessed with Eli?



Discussion Question 3

What do you think might happen between Eli and Abra?

Vocabulary

Nondescript, sedan, nibbling, slouched, potential, instinct, toddler, Commons, encounter, insistence, circular, bluff, tourist, initially, plunder, distilleries, Prohibition.



Section 2: Light; Chapters 11-15

Summary

Section 2: Light

Chapters 11-15

Eli writes a note to his sister Tricia which gives her an update on the events at Bluff House.

“At this point it looks like some asshole’s been digging for mythical treasure. I don’t know what happened to the guy from Boston, whether he fell, jumped, or got tossed over the cliff by Captain Broome’s vengeful ghost.” (Chap. 11, p. 132)

Eli sits down and begins to make notes about the events that have occurred since he discovered Lindsay had been cheating on him. The events included the request for divorce, Lindsay’s death, his arrest and up to the death of Duncan Kirby. Eli searches the house to see if anything is missing. The guns are all locked away and it is clear that none have been used in decades. Eli notes that nothing is missing which is strange if the intruder had really been a burglar.

Abra comes across Eli’s notes in the library and reads through them. Later she confesses to reading them. Abra and Eli agree to full disclosure. Abra decides to make notes of her own regarding recent events. Despite the seriousness of what is happening, Eli’s mood is lighter than it has been in recent days, perhaps due to the feelings shared by the couple.

Eli tells Abra the story of the Calypso and Esmeralda’s Dowry.

“A lot of people believe Esmeralda’s Dowry exists. When treasure hunters found the wreck of the Calypso some thirty years ago, they didn’t find the dowry. Haven’t found it yet, and more have looked. Then again, there’s no solid, corroborated evidence the dowry was on the ship when it wrecked on Whiskey Beach, or was ever on it.” (Chap. 12, p. 184)

Abra tells Eli her story. She had been the marketing director of a non-profit organization in Washington, D.C. Abra had fallen in love with a man who turned out to be deranged and dangerous. After the relationship ended, the man continued to stalk Abra and eventually assaulted and raped her. Abra restored her health under the watchful eye of her mother before relocating to Whiskey Beach.

Vinnie visits Abra. Vinnie tells Abra that Wolfe plans to go after them next. The two old friends chat and laugh together, not undermining the seriousness of the matter. Abra tells Vinnie she is thinking about sleeping with Eli.



Corbett visits Eli and presents a search warrant. Corbett examines the family's guns. Corbett is apologetic, saying that Wolfe is determined to persecute Eli. Eli is surprised when Corbett says he thinks Eli is innocent of Lindsay's murder.

Abra is angry because Heather continues to gossip and tells the town about the police visiting Bluff House. Abra is also angry because she thinks Eli isn't going to fight back. Eli says it is his family and friends who hope the whole thing will go away. Abra apologizes. The couple decides to move forward with their relationship. When Eli tells his mother, she is ecstatic.

Analysis

More comes to light about Esmeralda's Dowry and Eli's ancestor Violeta. Abra learns more about the family history, and the couple wonders if there is any truth to the legend. Clearly, the intruder believes there is a fortune to be found.

Abra talks about her past with Derrick, the man that raped and abused her. Eli is stunned by Abra's resilience and willingness to become involved with people despite what has happened to her. Abra and Eli finally admit to their feelings for each other.

Corbett is a surprising ally to Eli. It is clear that Wolfe is obsessed to the point of being unstable and cannot effectively investigate either murder.

Eli's mother is thrilled that her son is finally coming back to life after a year of misery.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Corbett apologetic to Eli regarding the search warrant?

Discussion Question 2

What is Corbett's reaction to Eli's theory that the intruder had injured Hester?

Discussion Question 3

Why is Abra so angry with Heather?

Vocabulary

Competitor, evidence, corroborated, liaison, absconded, gossip, unnerved, eyeing, coolly, farewell, pawed, discredit, equation, shield, impasse, veer.



Section 2: Light; Chapters 16-20

Summary

Section 2: Light

Chapters 16-20

Abra is at work and, unknowingly, waits on the killer. The killer's plans to plant the murder weapon in Bluff House have failed since Corbett has already searched the premises. The killer wants Eli to die but knows that it has to look like an accident. The killer has to work hard to restrain himself when Eli walks into the bar.

Abra introduces Eli to Stoney, an elderly gentleman that always teases Abra. Stoney and Eli fall into easy conversation. Stoney tells Eli stories about his grandfather when they were boys.

Eli and Abra's romantic plans are thwarted when Eli notices smudges on the alarm panel. The couple checks the trench in the basement and finds that it is deeper than before. Eli calls Vinnie.

Vinnie and Corbett discuss what has been going on at Bluff House. Abra tells the men about a stranger at the bar. Abra did not get a good look at the man but agrees to work with a sketch artist. Back at her cottage, Abra finds a gun in her incense box. Abra tells Corbett about the gun. Corbett says the plant is a messy one and it is clear that the gun does not belong to Abra.

Abra and Heather mend their fences and both gloat over the interest in Abra's new jewelry stock at the gift shop.

An anonymous caller tips Wolfe that a curly-haired woman was seen at the lighthouse the night Duncan died.

Abra brings a dog to Bluff House. The owner had died and Abra thinks it is a good idea to have a watch dog at the house. Eli balks but gives in, even though he thinks it is unmanly for him to own a dog named Barbie.

The Landons come home to Bluff House for Easter. Eli is thrilled to see all of them, particularly Hester. Hester, knowing that Eli feels at home there, tells him that she will leave the house to him. Eli is also pleased that the family has taken to Abra although in many ways, she had been part of the family for a long time.

Hester has a dream about an intruder attacking her attached to her fall down the stairs. She shows Eli secret passages that have been worked into the floor plan of the house.

Mike lets it slip to Eli that Abra found a gun in her cottage.



Analysis

The killer, still unidentified, is taking stupid risks by showing up at the bar where Abra works. The man is convinced that Abra will not remember him. Because Bluff House has been searched, the killer decides to frame Abra for Duncan's murder. The killer is desperate to destroy Eli, convinced that he killed Lindsay. This leads the reader to believe that the killer knew Lindsay well and is bent on seeking revenge.

Abra continues to work her way into Eli's life. Eli realizes that he needs Abra and although he often disagrees with her, she seems to know what is best.

Hester begins to reveal more secrets about Bluff House. The reader can surmise that there are more secrets yet to be revealed about the house and, perhaps, about the treasure.

Discussion Question 1

Why didn't Abra tell Eli about the gun she found in her cottage?

Discussion Question 2

What is the Landon family's reaction to having Abra at their Easter celebration?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Hester's dream.

Vocabulary

Boosted, hefty, policy, designated, non-alcoholic, hustle, speculating, sober, channeled, milk-skinned, trooped, dangling, occupant, tonic, likelihood, tipper.



Section 3: Promise; Chapters 21-25

Summary

Section 3: Promise;

Chapters 21-25

Eli goes to Laughing Gull to see Abra. Eli confronts Abra about not telling him about the gun. Abra does not understand why Eli is so upset; the police know it is not her gun and she can take care of herself. Eli says he knows that she can take care of herself but that she should know when she can lean on him.

“I can’t get involved again with someone who won’t give as much as she takes, take as much as she gives. I found out, the hard way, if you do you end up empty-handed and bitter. I guess we both have to decide how much we can give, how much we can take.” (Chap. 21, p. 256)

Eli insists that Abra stay at Bluff House.

Eli searches out the once secret parts of the house. Eli particularly likes the attic and decides to turn it into his own private retreat. Abra supports Eli using more of the house and offers to help.

Eli waits impatiently for word from his agent on the manuscript he sent in to be reviewed.

Eli receives a call from Sherrilyn Burke, the new investigator Neal had hired. Eli meets with Burke and the pair discuss the case. Burke is thorough and Eli is impressed.

Eli reads more about Esmeralda’s Dowry. His ancestor, Violeta, became involved with a seaman. When her brother, Edwin, learned of the affair, he killed the seaman and Violeta ran off to Boston. Eli is able to corroborate the fact that Violeta was disowned by the Landons as a disgrace. Eli thinks he should hire a genealogist to track down information on Violeta.

Vinnie reports that the gun found in Abra’s cottage is the same gun that killed Duncan. The murders seem to be interwoven yet Eli and Abra remain in the dark. They are determined to solve the crimes.

Eli gets a positive reply from his agent and celebrates with Abra. Eli is still nervous about selling the book.

The killer devises a plan to get back into Bluff House. It was going to be difficult but he had to do it. The killer also feels the need to search the third floor for clues. The killer feels that the treasure should be his because he is the heir. He is related to the child of



Nathaniel Broome and Violeta Landon. When the killer enters Bluff House, he is scared off by Barbie.

Eli meets with Burke. Burke is certain Eli is innocent and explains how he could not have committed the crime.

Abra berates Eli for not taking time to eat or walk Barbie because he has been so involved in solving the murders.

It is learned that Justin Suskind has purchased Sandcastle, a house on Whiskey Beach.

Burke and Eli begin to think that Suskind is Lindsay's killer despite his alibi. Eli shows Abra a photo of Suskind. Abra confirms that Suskind was the man at the bar. Eli has found the intruder. Eli and Abra plan to take a fake trip, leaving Bluff House open to Suskind's intrusions. They will set up cameras and hide in the secret passageways, hoping to catch Suskind in the act.

Abra reads Eli's manuscript. She laughs at the things he has added because of her, including her orange sunglasses. Abra realizes she is in love with Eli.

Eli and Abra go to Boston. Eli visits Eden Suskind who tells Eli details about the night Lindsay was murdered. Eli also visits Duncan's office.

Eli and Mike talk about the rental of Sandcastle. Mike worries that he may have coaxed a murderer into coming to Whiskey Beach. Eli eases Mike's mind by saying the man already knew about the treasure.

Analysis

Eli and Abra are committed to solving the murders even more than before. They begin to investigate Duncan to see if they can learn anything about his client. The couple is convinced that Suskind is involved but lack proof. The visit to Duncan's office nets little.

Eli realizes he has changed since moving to Whiskey Beach. He is not willing to fight against Wolfe directly but intends to prove him wrong. The people of Whiskey Beach are accepting of Eli which is a surprising development. It seems as if Eli is having a difficult time adjusting to his new life as an author as well as being in love with Abra, even if he does not realize it yet.

The killer has become sloppy and scared. Although he is convinced that the Landon fortune is rightfully his, he has made mistakes. Eli is outwitting him by staying close to Bluff House. The killer thinks he should kill Eli and Abra as well.

The police are trying to locate the murderer without getting caught up in Wolfe's melodrama. Wolfe continues to harass Eli, believing he can get Eli to crack or mess up in some way.



The addition of the secret passages is somewhat predictable but intriguing, especially if they can be used to catch Lindsay and Duncan's killer.

Discussion Question 1

Why is the history of Violeta missing from the Landon family history? How can Eli find out more about his ancestor?

Discussion Question 2

How is the killer related to Esmeralda's Dowry?

Discussion Question 3

How do Eli and Abra plan to catch Suskind in the act?

Vocabulary

Delighted, shrubs, crowded, whoosh, scantily, clads, glanced, advantage, earmarked, underlings, smoky, spiel, gothic, homicidal, maniac, proximity.



Section 3: Promise; Chapters 26-30

Summary

Section 3: Promise;

Chapters 26-30

Kirby Duncan's office is in a low rent part of Boston. Eli and Abra pose as potential clients to get information but come away with little. Even Duncan's residence is in a seedy part of town.

Abra sees Eli's old house and says he does not belong there anymore. Wolfe is outside waiting for Eli. Wolfe continues to follow Eli. Abra claims that it is harassment.

Eli and Abra visit Hester. Abra blurts out that she loves Eli. Abra tells Eli that he does not have to reply in kind.

Eli and Abra find a secret compartment in a trunk on the third floor. It contains a letter from James Fitzgerald to Edwin Landon. James was Violeta's son. The letter stated that Violeta was ill and wanted to come home to Whiskey Beach. Violeta was shunned. Eli says that it is apparent that the Landons were cold and unforgiving. At this time the Landons were building their fortune. Eli and Abra think that Edwin may have found the Dowry. Eli believes that the Dowry is actually Bluff House.

Eli receives another report from Burke. He learns that Suskind plans to poison Barbie to get into the house. Eli plans to keep close tabs on his new, beloved dog.

Eli asks his sister to look over the ledgers and letters he found in the trunk. Tricia says she and her family will come up for the weekend.

Eli and Abra learn that Suskind is back in Whiskey Beach. They prepare to go ahead with their plan to trap him once he enters Bluff House. The plan works, and Suskind is caught red-handed. Suskind is confronted, and Corbett arrives. It is learned that Suskind killed Duncan, but it was Eden that killed Lindsay. At trial, Eden says Lindsay provoked her.

Eli shows Abra plans for the third floor of Bluff House. Abra expects Eli to ask her to move in. Instead, Eli proposes with Hester's emerald ring which was part of Esmeralda's Dowry.

Analysis

Things begin to fall together quickly. Eli finds letters and ledgers in a trunk on the third floor. The letters show that Violeta had a son. Although Violeta begged to be allowed to



return to Bluff House, she was shunned. Eli figures out that Bluff House is Esmeralda's Dowry and that the Landons hoarded Violeta's trousseau and used the money to build their own fortune. It makes sense that Violeta's heir would feel wronged.

With Burke and Abra's help, Eli figures out that Eden Suskind was lying. Burke couldn't see it because of her own successful relationship but Eli knew deceit when he saw it, partly from being a defense attorney and partly from being wronged by Lindsay.

The trap to catch Suskind works. Eli gets his own when he punches Suskind in the face. Suskind admits to murdering Duncan. It is a relief to all to finally have the cases solved and to clear Eli's name once and for all. Sadly, there is no remorse from Wolfe.

Eli completes his new life by asking Abra to marry him.

Discussion Question 1

How was Violeta's heir wronged?

Discussion Question 2

What was included in Esmeralda's Dowry?

Discussion Question 3

How does Eli know that Eden Suskind is lying about her husband's alibi?

Vocabulary

Scope, questioning, yoga, testament, boosted, whoopee, blowout, overnights, vibrate, passageway, murmured, cottage, spook, anchor, nanny, sunbathe.



Characters

Eli Landon

Eli Landon is the main character in “Whiskey Beach” by Nora Roberts. Landon is a recently retired attorney that has faced the most horrific year of his life. First Landon discovers that his wife is cheating on him. Second, the soon-to-be ex-wife is murdered. Landon is the only suspect and is arrested. Although Landon is acquitted, his wife’s family and a hard-nosed detective still believe Landon is guilty. Landon decides to go home to Bluff house on Whiskey Beach, a rural Massachusetts beach community. There Landon will work on his novel and attempt to heal from the wounds he incurred. While at Bluff House, Landon learns that someone is trying to frame him for murder and at the same time, steal the Landon family treasure known as Esmeralda’s Dowry. Landon must use his legal knowledge, his wits and skill to learn the identity of the murder and to save his family’s heritage from ruin.

Abra Walsh

Abra Walsh is a main character in “Whiskey Beach” by Nora Roberts. Abra is Whiskey Beach’s all around super-woman. She cleans houses, teaches yoga, cooks, designs jewelry, and works at the local pub. Abra is young and beautiful but bears secrets. Abra fled from Washington, D.C. after barely escaping a dangerous love affair. The affair left Abra beaten and broken with a need to steal away and to help other people heal their lives.

Abra falls in love with Eli Landon almost as soon as he arrives in Whiskey Beach. Abra can see that Eli is broken and suffering from his recent traumas. Abra takes it upon herself to help Eli to heal, meanwhile stepping in to solve the murders of Lindsay Landon and Kirby Duncan.

Hester Hawkin Landon

Hester Hawkin Landon is Eli's grandmother and the owner of Bluff House.

Maureen O’Malley

Maureen O’Malley is Abra's close friend.

Heather Lockaby

Heather Lockaby is the owner of a gift shop and the town gossip.



Neal Simpson

Neal Simpson is Eli Landon's criminal defense attorney.

Justin Suskind

Justin Suskind is Lindsay Landon's lover and a direct descendant of Nathaniel Broome and Violeta Landon.

Lindsay Piedmont Landon

Lindsay Piedmont Landon is Eli's wife. Lindsay is murdered by Eden Suskind.

Kirby Duncan

Kirby Duncan is the private detective hired by Justin Suskind.

Detective Wolfe

Detective Wolfe is a hard-nosed Boston detective who is convinced that Eli is lying about the murders of Lindsay and Kirby Duncan.



Symbols and Symbolism

Bluff House

Bluff House is the Landon family home. It was built in the 1700s by Edwin Landon and his family in celebration of their great fortune. The house is three stories tall overlooking the Atlantic coast. The house seems to have a personality all its own, a determination to brave the harsh winter winds, secrets, and foes. The house is grand by any standard with gardens, a stone cottage, and an air of wealth. Golden sand walls, large terraces and master stone work finish the exterior. Inside the house the newel posts feature grinning gargoyles. The stairs sweep off to separate wings of the house. High arched windows give views of Hester Landon's beautiful gardens or the formidable sea.

Landon Family Fortune

The Landon family is very wealthy and has been for centuries. The family started out earning their fortune by distilling whiskey, hence the name Whiskey Beach. From that fortune other businesses appeared. It is rumored that the family also gained riches by looting and pirating from other ships. It is believed that Edwin Landon was a cold-hearted man who would do anything to gain wealth and power.

The family fortune was a source of contention between Violeta and her brother. When Violeta disobeyed Edwin, she was cut off from the family fortune as were her heirs. This includes the wealth gained from the legendary Esmeralda's Dowry.

Esmeralda's Dowry

Esmeralda's Dowry is a legendary treasure that was believed to be lost when Nathaniel Broome was thrown overboard by Edwin Landon. Bluff House is part of the Dowry.

Laughing Gull

Laughing Gull is the name of Abra's cottage. When Abra moved to Whiskey Beach, she revamped the cottage and brought it back to life.

Gun

A gun is hidden in Laughing Gull with the purpose of framing Abra for Duncan's murder.



Secret Passageways

Hester shows Eli and Abra secret passageways in the house that could be used to capture the intruder.

Chest

Eli discovers a secret compartment in an old chest. The compartment contains records and documents regarding the Landon family fortune.

Barbie

Barbie is the dog Abra gives to Eli.

Suffering

Both Eli and Abra have gone through great suffering but manage to heal each other.

Emerald Ring

Eli gives an heirloom emerald ring to Abra for an engagement ring.



Settings

Bluff House

Bluff House is the Landon family home. It was built in the 1700s by Edwin Landon and his family in celebration of their great fortune. The house is three stories tall overlooking the Atlantic coast. The house seems to have a personality all its own, a determination to brave the harsh winter winds, secrets, and foes. The house is grand by any standard with gardens, a stone cottage, and an air of wealth. Golden sand walls, large terraces and master stone work finish the exterior. Inside the house the newel posts feature grinning gargoyles. The stairs sweep off to separate wings of the house. High arched windows give views of Hester Landon's beautiful gardens or the formidable sea.

Whiskey Beach

Whiskey Beach is a small resort community located in Essex County, Massachusetts. The community is located 2 hours from Boston where many of its residents live off season. Bluff House is the Landon family home. It was built in the 1700s by Edwin Landon and his family in celebration of their great fortune. The house is three stories tall overlooking the Atlantic coast. Bluff House is one of the centerpieces of Whiskey Beach. The house is currently owned by Hester Hawkin Landon. Hester is one of Whiskey Beach's year round residents; that is until she suffers an unexplained fall and sustains many severe injuries.

Whiskey Beach is much like any small town across the country. Everyone knows each other and everyone's business. Friends greet each other on the street and help out when needed. Eli Landon soon realizes that he has missed the friendly atmosphere of the town and soon plans to take up permanent residence.

Boston

Boston is the home of Eli Landon's parents and temporary residence of his grandmother Hester.



Themes and Motifs

Legend

The main legend in the story regards the story of the Calypso and Esmeralda's Dowry.

"A lot of people believe Esmeralda's Dowry exists. When treasure hunters found the wreck of the Calypso some thirty years ago, they didn't find the dowry. Haven't found it yet, and more have looked. Then again, there's no solid, corroborated evidence the dowry was on the ship when it wrecked on Whiskey Beach, or was ever on it." (Chap. 12, p. 184)

Eli learns more about Esmeralda's Dowry. His ancestor, Violeta, became involved with a seaman. When her brother, Edwin, learned of the affair, he killed the seaman and Violeta ran off to Boston. Eli is able to corroborate the fact that Violeta was disowned by the Landons as a disgrace. Eli determines that his great-grandmother's emerald and Bluff House were part of the dowry stolen from Violeta.

Murder

Murder appears as a main theme in the story as the book begins.

Eli Landon's life is a mess. His soon to be ex-wife has been murdered and he has been charged but finally acquitted. His wife's family is considering filing a wrongful death civil suit against Eli, convinced he killed Lindsay. All of the detective work had not been successful in locating Lindsay's murderer. Eli was at the house at the time of the murder but the details so not fit. Private investigators are also on the case trying to find resolution.

The second murder is that of Kirby Duncan, a Boston PI hired by Justin Suskind. Suskind kills Duncan after he is unable to pin Lindsay's murder on Eli. Suskind learns later that it was his wife, Eden, that killed Lindsay. Fortunately, Suskind is apprehended before he can kill Abra and Eli.

Money

The Landon family is very wealthy and has been for centuries. The family started out earning their fortune by distilling whiskey, hence the name Whiskey Beach. From that fortune other businesses appeared. It is rumored that the family also gained riches by looting and pirating from other ships. It is believed that Edwin Landon was a cold man who would do anything to gain wealth and power.

The family fortune was a source of contention between Violeta and her brother. When Violeta disobeyed Edwin, she was cut off from the family fortune as were her heirs. This includes the wealth gained from the legendary Esmeralda's Dowry.

Styles

Point of View

The point of view used in “Whiskey Beach” by Nora Roberts is third person omniscient. This point of view works well throughout the book as there are several components and underlying factors that would not be revealed otherwise. The story itself is rather complex and only third person omniscient would allow the reader to follow and understand the activities of all of the characters as well as the dangerous and deadly events involving the dynamics surrounding the Landon family and their heritage as well as the mystery of Esmeralda’s Dowry. Third person also allows for the reader to follow and understand actions and thoughts of other characters in the book as well as those events of which one single character has no knowledge.

While the first person point of view might have been interesting when coming from the characters in their time of confusion or during the historical part of the story, third person permits the reader to take part in the journey and development of each character in the story.

Language and Meaning

The language and meaning used throughout “Whiskey Beach” by Nora Roberts reflects on the times in a number of ways. Most of the language is in modern tones, often using some popular slang that will give hints to the time period without dating it in a negative way. It is clear that the people in the stories live in the current, as they speak of particular trends of the time.

Violeta Landon and Nathaniel Broome are characters from a much older time. There are times when that language is referenced, particularly through flashbacks and references to letters found at Bluff House. The effect is beneficial in giving the characters a sense of place and time but not so daunting that it distracts the reader from the story.

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

Structure

The work is chronological in nature. It is comprised of 372 pages, broken into 30 chapters. The average number of pages per chapter is 12 pages. The book is separated into three sections: Dark, Light, and Promise.



Eli Landon is the main character in “Whiskey Beach” by Nora Roberts. The book opens with Landon arriving at Bluff House in Whiskey Beach. Whiskey Beach is the Landon family home. Eli goes there for refuge and to watch over the house while his grandmother heals from a fall.

Landon is a recently retired attorney that has faced the most horrific year of his life. First Landon discovers that his wife is cheating on him. Second, the soon-to-be ex-wife is murdered. Landon is the only suspect and is arrested. Although Landon is acquitted, his wife’s family and a hard-nosed detective still believe Landon is guilty. Landon decides to go home to Bluff House on Whiskey Beach, a rural Massachusetts beach community. There Landon will work on his novel and attempt to heal from the wounds he incurred.

Landon meets the beautiful Abra Walsh, his grandmother’s helper. Abra is Whiskey Beach’s all around super-woman. She cleans houses, teaches yoga, cooks, designs jewelry, and works at the local pub. Abra is young and beautiful but bears secrets.

While at Bluff House, Landon learns that someone is trying to frame him for murder. At the same time, someone also wants to steal the Landon family treasure known as Esmeralda’s Dowry. Landon must use his legal knowledge, his wits, and his skill to learn the identity of the murder and to save his family’s heritage from ruin.



Quotes

Through the chilly curtain of sleet, in the intermittent wash of the great light on the jutting cliff to the south, the massive silhouette of Bluff House loomed over Whiskey Beach.

-- n/a (Chapter 1 paragraph 1)

Importance: The quote shows that despite time and events, Bluff House has withstood anything that has been thrown at it.

He could go away into a world he created, he—to some extent, anyway—controlled. And oddly felt more himself than he did outside that world.

-- N/A (Chapter 2 paragraph 3)

Importance: This quote shows the importance of Eli's novel writing and how he is using it as a catharsis to combat everything that has gone wrong in his life over the past year.

I could make a living. They're just habeasing their corpus and whereforing the heretofore to screw with you.

-- Abra (Chapter 6 paragraph 2)

Importance: Abra is pleased that Eli has agreed to fight the wrongful death suit. She jokes about knowing the ins and outs because she has watched a lot of lawyer shows. She is right and amuses Eli in the process.

Maybe he'd been gone only a few weeks, but it felt like a homecoming.

-- n/a (Chapter 6 paragraph 11)

Importance: Eli takes comfort in his family home after being away at Bluff House.

Esmeralda's Dowry, according to Haversham, had been magically imbued with its mistress's loving heart so the jewels could be held only by one who'd found true love.

-- n/a (Chapter 128 paragraph 1)

Importance: Eli begins to suspect that someone is looking for Esmeralda's Dowry. Eli thinks it is a fool's errand.

At this point it looks like some asshole's been digging for mythical treasure. I don't know what happened to the guy from Boston, whether he fell, jumped, or got tossed over the cliff by Captain Broome's vengeful ghost.

-- Eli (Chapter 11 paragraph 12)

Importance: Eli tries not to concern himself with Duncan's death or the other things that are happening at Bluff House. He is only focused on the security of the house and of Abra.



Kirby Duncan's killer had done him a horrible kind of favor.
-- n/a (Chapter 11 paragraph 16)

Importance: Eli realizes that there is more to Lindsay's death than meets the eye. In any case, Duncan had done him a favor, as had his killer.

The cast of characters, the connections between them, or among them, the timelines and factors, all there, all logical. That all seems like a good start.
-- Abra (Chapter 12 paragraph 7)

Importance: Abra is fully immersed in the search for the intruder and Duncan's killer. This shows a strengthening of the bond between Abra and Eli.

A lot of people believe Esmeralda's Dowry exists. When treasure hunters found the wreck of the Calypso some thirty years ago, they didn't find the dowry. Haven't found it yet, and more have looked. Then again, there's no solid, corroborated evidence the dowry was on the ship when it wrecked on Whiskey Beach, or was ever on it.
-- Eli (Chapter 12 paragraph 17)

Importance: This quote's importance relates to the legend of Esmeralda's Dowry and why someone would be willing to murder to retrieve the precious cargo.

I can't get involved again with someone who won't give as much as she takes, take as much as she gives. I found out, the hard way, if you do you end up empty-handed and bitter. I guess we both have to decide how much we can give, how much we can take.
-- Eli (Chapter 21 paragraph 8)

Importance: Eli and Abra are both brutally honest about what it would mean to be involved in a relationship. Both have learned from their past and want to make a fresh start.

They should've stuck by you, Eli, even if only out of principle.
-- Abra (Chapter 27 paragraph 12)

Importance: Abra shows her disdain for the people who have abandoned Eli in his time of need. Even people who believed Eli was innocent had abandoned him.

On impulse, he took Barbie for a walk into the village. It struck him that people spoke to him, called him by name, asked how he was doing without any of the wariness, the awkwardness he'd become so accustomed to.
-- n/a (Chapter 28 paragraph 21)

Importance: Although Eli had loved Boston, he had become accustomed to its cold demeanor, particularly after Lindsay's death. The friendliness of the people at Whiskey Beach let him know that he was at home.