



The Cottage At Glass Beach

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Heather Barbieri follows her acclaimed Gaelic-tinged drama *The Lace Makers of Glenmara* with the resonant tale of a woman who, in the wake of scandal, flees to a remote Maine island to reconnect with her past—and to come to terms with the childhood tragedy that has haunted her for a lifetime.

Set on the rugged New England coast, Barbieri's *The Cottage at Glass Beach* strikes the perfect balance between high lit and mainstream women's fiction, infusing a potent and unforgettable love story with unforgettable characters that will remain with you long after the final chapter. Richly evocative, Barbieri's narrative of intimacy, struggle, and redemption will call out to readers of Joanne Harris, Alice Hoffman, and other modern masters of drama.

The Cottage At Glass Beach Details

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Author : Heather Barbieri

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Genre : Fiction, Womens Fiction, Chick Lit, Romance, Adult Fiction

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From Reader Review The Cottage At Glass Beach for online ebook

Kay says

The Cottage at Glass Beach was a very pleasant read. It has a soft, quiet quality to it and from the start gives you a hint of magical realism. Burke's Island is rich in history, and I found the numerous characters to be all equally intriguing; as Nora, Ella and Annie (Nora's daughters) meet them, I wanted to know more about them and their life on the island.

There's also a beautiful mix of styles; the book isn't straight romance, and in fact I would say it mostly isn't about the romance. There's the mystery of Nora's mother's disappearance, the story of Maire (the aunt they are living with), the family aspects, the mystery of Owen, etc. While the book isn't a mystery novel, there are enough unanswered questions to keep you guessing all along.

While I loved the setting and enjoyed the story, there were two aspects that kept me from truly loving the book. The first was my inability to connect to Nora. I felt for her, sure, but I was unable to reach over that wall that exists between reader and character and really understand her. That was a bit unfortunate since she was the main character, and I am not sure where the fault is since I actually liked the author's writing, which I found to be poetic in places. The second point was Nora's daughters. Again, I understood they were going through a lot, but I had a hard time sympathizing with them, especially Ella. Also, I found their conversations to be a bit too adult-like, and until I went back, confused, to reread the first few pages, I actually thought they were both teenagers.

This being said, I mostly enjoyed the book. I went through it quite quickly and its dreamy, mysterious atmosphere stayed with me thorough the days. It reminded me how much I love magical realism, and it was nicely done here. The story gave me a taste of summer and made me wish I could go hang on the beach, too!

In the end, while it wasn't a perfect read, I closed the book feeling satisfied. I would definitely read more of this author - which is great since I already have one of her books on my ereader!

East Gwillimbury says

Summer romp at the beach, infidelity, family history, death and a new beginning.

Naomi says

What drew me to this book originally was that it was reviewed by an author I really like. It isn't what kept me there though. I found this book to be cookie cutter and boring. This book is the epitome of what is put out by big house publishers that is pure vanilla with the same old storyline regurgitated into yet another book. I recently read a blog post by an author I follow on twitter that asks if there are really any other "original" story lines left. If this book was an indication, I would say "NO!"

I actually found myself skimming over parts of the book because it was so predictable in spots that I really just wanted it to end and it was a fairly short book.

Kristen says

GENRE: Fiction

THEME: Myths/Family Drama

RECEIVED: Received for Review from HarperCollins

BLOG: <http://seeingnight.blogspot.com/>

3.5 stars

REVIEW:

The cottage at Glass Beach was a little out of my norm of genres, but it had that kick of mythology and romance that I absolutely love. The major premises of this novel are really about family and healing from the heartbreak in the families past and present. This was my first novel by Heather Barbieri and definitely not my last.

Nora Cunningham has just been dealt with a major blow, her husband a well-known political figure has cheated on her. It's been all over the news and she just has to get away. Taking her two daughters to the island where she was born, just trying to make it through the summer to heal and maybe mend her relationship. But the past of her mother's disappearance and a man, who washes in with a storm, brings a whole lot more drama into Nora and her daughter's lives.

Nora is a very strong woman whom is devoted to making sure her daughters don't see what there father has done. But sadly has to deal with one daughter in particular who thinks her mother is at fault. I felt so bad for Nora; she has a good heart and really loves her daughters. Her husband is a selfish and horrible man, who really only thinks of what he wants and not his family. She slowly uncovers her mothers past and what kind of woman she really was.

Owen is a man who is all about mystery, washing up from a ship wreck and taking in my Nora's aunt. He becomes someone who helps heal not only Nora, but also her Aunt whom is damaged a bit from her sister's disappearance. He is kind and really tries to connect and help Nora. I absolutely loved his character and his connection to the myths of the island.

My only issues were that Nora didn't explain more to her daughters. She was the victim and her daughters kept asking for their father who hurt their mother. Ella, Nora's eldest daughter was cruel and extremely hurtful to her mother, I really didn't like her at all and she pretty much angered me through the whole book. Also the ending fell flat and felt unfinished for me, in some ways people who see it as finished but for me I wanted more explanation. The readers do get a hint about Owen and what happened to Nora's mother, but for me more would of been better.

Overall I enjoyed the mystery and the myth behind Nora's family, both Owen and Nora's aunt really pulled the story along and kept me reading. This is a story about a family that needs to heal and is trying to find that strength to help each other. This is the perfect summer read that you'd be able to relax and dig into a story, really making you pull for these characters to find that piece that's missing in their lives.

RECOMMENDATION:

This is an adult book that's a perfect summer read, the island details make you wish you were there with the characters. Fans of Nancy Thayer of Heat Wave and Mary Alice Monroe of The Beach House will enjoy The

Cottage at Glass Beach.

Claire Jenkins says

Can we talk about how much the ending of this book sucks? Like a few other readers, I was ready to slap 4 stars on this novel, but that last chapter really soured quickly. 2 stars is being generous for that last chapter. When I closed the book, I nearly stomped off, saying WTF?!! Second "F" intended...

The majority of the book is great but damn if I didn't wanna slap Ella. She had promise but sometimes a mother has to explain things, even if the daughter is still angry. Loved Aunt Maire, Polly, and sweet Annie. But the end? So her mom became a seal/was a selkie? She was there on Little Burke? Someone else said the last chapter made her think she was supposed to understand everything when she didn't. I even went BACK to previous chapters trying to find conversations or explanations that I thought maybe I had missed. Nope, just weird as hell.

Sorry Heather, better luck next time.

Candy says

I wanted to love this book, because I chose it on the title alone. I have a thing about sea glass... The story started out strong. The main character Nora, goes to a remote island to get away from her cheating high profile husband. Her goal is to get her girls away, and enjoy the summer in peace. There she meets her Aunt, whom she has not seen, for reasons she doesn't know, since she was about 5 years old. Once there, a mysterious stranger 'washes' up on shore. From here on in, I found the story a bit silly. Very few people in the town like her, a number of them feel she has no place there. One town lady is just down right creepy... Her eldest daughter, Ella is nearly unmanageable... I didn't like how it kept drawing out, and how Ella daughter kept trying to convince her mother she needed to return home, to her husband [who didn't want anything to do with being a family, it would seem] And then suddenly, the story was over... And to be honest, I'm not completely sure what happened...

Bookphile says

The Cottage at Glass Beach got off to a very promising start. Fleeing scandal, Nora heads for Glass Beach, where she grew up before her mother's mysterious disappearance. There was a lot of meat to the basic setup of this book: the scorned wife struggling to learn how to make sense of her husband's betrayal, the troubled daughter lashing out at her mother, the remote and atmospheric island with its secrets. Unfortunately, the narrative falls apart about three quarters of the way through the book. Some spoilers will follow.

My first criticism of the book is with the character of Nora. She just feels so inconsistent and wishy washy at times, particularly when it came to her encounters with her cheating husband and with her insolent daughter, Ella. I just found these passages patently impossible to believe. Though she's seething with anger at her husband, their exchanges are, for the most part, very civil. There are a few fights between them, but I just couldn't buy that all that seething anger, hurt, and resentment she was feeling didn't come boiling up,

especially because the man had pretty much made a public mockery of her. Likewise, her actions are equally difficult to believe when it comes to her interactions with Ella. Ella says some really awful, hurtful things to her mother and Nora more or less lets her do it. I just could not believe the failure of any spark to ignite in this aspect of the story. Ella says unspeakable things and Nora simply stands there and lets her say them. I understand that the idea was that Nora was trying to keep her opinions about Malcolm's actions to herself, but it seemed to me that it would take a saint to put up with what Nora puts up with. In the end, it just made her character seem too ambivalent. It's as if she spends the entire novel hemming and hawing about everything.

I also have to call this book out for using one of the most tired plot twists in literature: the hero swooping in to rescue the heroine from a threat of sexual assault. I was all but rolling my eyes when I read this portion of the books, because as soon as Nora parked her car in that dark alley before heading into the pub, I knew exactly what was going to follow. I would really like to see this tired trope laid to rest in favor of a more creative method of showing the worth of the potential love interest. Then again, Owen is little more than a character sketch, so I'm not really sure what could have been done with him.

The hints of magical realism also fell flat to me. I don't mind a book with a touch of magic, and have read several that have been well done. However, with this book, there are hints of magic...and that's about it. I don't need everything explicitly spelled out, but more detail was necessary to prod me to suspend my disbelief. Instead, the magical aspects of this book felt woefully underdeveloped and, ultimately, pretty much unnecessary to the plot. This is especially obvious with regard to Ronan. His role seems to serve little purpose other than to give Annie a gift that miraculously saves her from disaster, and also to drop a major bomb about Owen that is then left unresolved. Not to mention that a major plot bomb about Nora's mother is dropped right at the end of the book that I found very confusing rather than clarifying. Everything about this particular aspect of the book just felt half-hearted to me.

Also problematic is Maire and her relationship with her niece and great nieces. They've all effectively known each other for little more than a couple of months before a huge tragedy befalls them. It's not that I think anyone would be indifferent, given the circumstances, but it just did not seem to me that their relationships were developed enough for the tragedy to have the kind of emotional impact it should have had. Instead, it feels like yet another plot device.

It's a shame that things deteriorate as they do. The beginning of the book is lovely, with lots of evocative passages about the island and the ways in which Nora's emotions seem almost in sync with the island's character. Barbieri's writing is quite lovely, but it's not enough to carry the book when stacked against its shortcomings.

Ruth says

It was the title and then the cover that drew me to this book. Those are two very powerful attributes! When I looked at the author's name, I realized that I had read something else by her but couldn't remember what. At the bottom of the cover I saw the name of her previous novel *The Lace Makers of Glenmara* which was the one that I had read.

This is a story of a mother and her two daughters. Nora is married to the youngest Attorney General in Massachusetts and lives the life of a politician's wife having abandoned her own law career. She has received a note from her aunt inviting her to come home to Burke Island, where she was born and initially raised until

her mom passed away and her dad took her back to the mainland. Burke is a small, unknown place that tourists do not haunt. She has just suffered the bitter humiliation of her husband's affair and she is not sure where to go in life from here. Her aunt's invitation seems heaven sent. It is a chance to get out of the spotlight and make some decisions about what she will do with not only her marriage but her life in general.

We do get a taste of the Celtic in this novel even though it wasn't set in Ireland like the previous one that I read. Barbieri has woven in some of the folklore of the "Silkies" or the seals that are part human and part seal. Although I enjoyed the story and there was some excitement building in those pages, it seemed as though the ending came too suddenly and didn't tie it all up but quickly tried to throw in some of the meaning of life. The ending is what kept the book from earning four stars.

Shelleyrae at Book'd Out says

I was immediately intrigued by the premise of *The Cottage At Glass Beach*, particularly because it hints at mystery and magical realism. It's a combination of elements that I delight in and are guaranteed to attract my interest. Unfortunately, I was left distinctly underwhelmed by this novel, which couldn't quite resolve into the enchanting read I hoped it would be.

While I quite liked the storyline, which is accurately described in the blurb, little was actually resolved by the end of the novel. The larger questions are left unanswered and I think some readers may dislike the ambiguity of those answers that are provided.

I found I wasn't really able to really identify with Nora, whose passivity was draining. She rarely initiated anything despite expressing the desire to deal with her husband, and solve the mystery of her mother's disappearance and her air of detachment from everything going on around her is something that I found off putting. While I really liked the way Barbieri portrayed the sibling relationship between Ella and Annie, individually they were just a touch too precocious, though Annie is sweet and Ella plays the part of a stropky preteen well. Aunt Maire was my favourite character, her warmth, her regrets, her memories served to create a well rounded character that gave depth to the absent character of Nora's mother, Maeve. Surprisingly Owen barely registers, he is absent from much of the story both physically and emotionally.

What I mostly struggled with while reading, was the overly formal tone of the novel. There were instances of lyrical, evocative phrasing, particularly in the descriptions of the island landscape, but the author was unable to sustain this through the book. The dialogue was often stilted, and overall *The Cottage At Glass Beach* just never seems to quite find its rhythm.

Carolyn Hill says

Heather Barbieri's writing is lovely and evocative, especially as she describes the sea and the island setting off of Massachusetts. However, her storytelling does not equal her lyricism. Many of the characters held promise, and Barbieri does a good job of distinguishing each. Nora, the main character, has accepted an invitation to visit her aunt Maire on a small island off of Boston to escape the scandal of her politician husband's exposed affair and shield their two daughters from the repercussions. Wallowing in self-pity and anger at her unfaithful husband, and feeling 'at sea' about the course of their future, Nora succumbs to feelings of abandonment, as her husband's betrayal brings back haunting memories of her mother's disappearance from the island. The mystery of her mother Maeve's disappearance when Nora was five

lingers in the background. The islanders still remember her charismatic mother, but not all that kindly. Perhaps Maeve's sister Maire, whom Nora hasn't seen since she was a child, can shed some light on the past. Nora has her own maternal struggles as her children deal with their parents' separation. The seven-year-old daughter Annie is a delight, but the twelve-year-old Ella is unbearable, siding with her father and blaming her mother. And Nora allows her bad behavior because she understands how Ella adores and misses her father. I just wanted Nora to get a grip and send Ella off to her father and let him handle her and his mistress. I got rather tired of Nora's indecisiveness. That's OK to set the stage but the character needs to progress towards a resolution. However, what little plot there was just dragged. I would have liked a little more of the story of Nora's aunt Maire, who had lived her whole life on the island. Perhaps she could have breathed some life into the Irish myths that are part of the island's tradition, but only briefly alluded to. Nora's new love interest was hardly developed, and then there was the whole selkie story. The magical realism in some books seems so natural that the reader easily buys into it. Here it seems strained, and the 'realities' don't meld. If someone didn't know the selkie myth, they would never have 'gotten' this novel at all. The author hardly explains it. And practical former lawyer Nora apparently is willing to consider a changeling story about her mother? Huh? Though this is a novel of two worlds colliding - one of the every day reality of the wife of a philandering Boston politician who retreats with her daughters to the island of her birth; the other 'peopled' by characters from mystical Irish folklore - they are as disparate as it sounds. Barbieri can't seem to bridge that gap. The ending offers little resolution or explanation. And one mysterious selkie would have been enough, but here we have three. This book is a good effort, but fails in execution. Sadly, I could never really feel the magic.

Shannon says

So much promise in the premise of this book and there were glimpses of a gripping story in a few chapters and with certain characters. But damn if the ending is one of the biggest disappointments I've ever read. Unresolved doesn't even begin to describe what this book lacks. NOTHING is explained. There was lots of potential with characters, with the exception of the annoying pre-teen daughter character and the wimpy mother Nora. An island mystery, the Irish legend of selkies, ship wrecks, a possible ghost and a supernatural romance were all hinted at, but then nothing. Waste.Of.Time.

Heather Book Savvy Babe says

Fairy tales meet reality in Heather Barbieri's novel, *The Cottage at Glass Beach*.

In *The Cottage at Glass Beach*, with a hazy past and an uncertain future, Nora is a woman facing major life changes. Her husband has been caught cheating and Nora has retreated to the small island home of her late mother. With two daughters in tow, Nora must figure out how to move forward with her life and gain clarity for her life. With the help of her aunt and a mysterious shipwrecked man, Nora begins to find peace.

There are definite highs and lows to *The Cottage at Glass Beach*. It was easy to sympathize with all the characters. Nora's husband is a selfish, clueless man who moved on from Nora, his "starter" wife. Nora is crushed, confused, and at a loss as to where to go from there. I really like Nora's character, she is a wonderful mother, dedicated to her girls. However, somewhere along the way, she lost her sense of self. She became a politician's wife and the more engrossed she became in being a wife and mother, the farther away from her true self she became. When she returns to the cottage where she lived with her mother, her childhood

memories and her past remind her of what she loves, the sea, art, and a peaceful life. Nora's daughters each have their own quirks and emotions. The older daughter is confused and places blame in the wrong places. The younger daughter is constantly searching for the silver lining and for adventure. The realities of this families situation were quite believable and worked for the story.

Heather Barbieri created a beautiful setting, a small island town filled with caring people and magic in the air. I loved the setting and envisioning the beach was easy to do. The magic and mythology hinted at through the story was quite intriguing. There is a fairy tale like quality to the book that kept me reading and guessing as to the families origins.

While I thoroughly enjoyed much of the book, I did have some problems in a few areas. I was often frustrated with the oldest daughter, Ella. Ella, in typical 12 year old fashion, had a major attitude throughout the book. This is to be expected, however, the problem was that she was never corrected, she was allowed to think the wrong thing and to place blame on her mother. Nora never really sat her down and explained the situation to her daughters, she just let them work it out themselves, and that just didn't sit well with me. The relationships overall in *The Cottage at Glass Beach* are not fully developed. The romance and relationship between Owen and Nora is slow and unclear. Many of the relationships are never resolved by the end of the book.

While I loved the hints of magic and mythology throughout the book, the hints were just not enough. I kept waiting for the magic to play a more central role and be clarified. I was disappointed that I was confused and left to come to my own conclusions on this front, the magic could have benefitted from better development through the story. This all culminates with the ending. I was less than satisfied with the ending, I felt that the story was left open. Nora's next steps are not explained, her relationship with Owen is not explained, her relationship with her daughters is still unclear, and overall, I was not pleased.

The Cottage at Glass Beach is a beautiful book, but with a lack of clarity and an unsatisfying ending, this book missed the bar for me. I enjoyed the book enough that I would read more by Heather Barbieri in the future, and I think that *The Cottage at Glass Beach* would make for a good, relaxing summer read.

I received this book for review

Melissa says

I wanted to like this book more than I actually did. It felt very unfinished at the end, and I admit that might be because I like things tied up neatly. But it's not so much all of the threads left hanging, it felt like the entire story was left hanging. And it's not the type of book for a sequel.

Angel says

4 Stars for Chapters 1-23

2 Stars for Chapter 24

I really wanted to like this book, however, the ending was a huge disappointment.

I appreciated that the storyline had twists and turns and was not predictable. I enjoyed all of the main characters. Certain elements were too drawn out and then other elements left unanswered completely.

In summary, the ending left me feeling like I was supposed to understand everything, but I did not.

Leaving the reader with lingering thoughts is ideal for me. Leaving the reader with numerous unanswered questions is lazy writing to me. I enjoy mythology, however, I felt like it was an excuse to end the book without some closure.

I checked out the reviews on the author's other two books and I am not impressed. My life is too short to read "so-so" books. With that being said, I would not recommend this book to anyone. I feel really bad to give such a negative review when I really enjoyed the book except for the last chapter.

Vickie says

Nora and her daughters move to a family cottage on a small Maine island after a scandal with Nora's husband, who is an overall DB. I liked Nora's character; Ella, the 12-year old daughter is a smartmouth but what 12-year isn't?; Annie is a sweet 7-year old who is in touch with much of the magic that surrounds Burke's Island. Owen may or not be a selkie, but he is an enjoyable character.

I would give 4* to The Cottage At Glass Beach, but the ending was not even a complete cliffhanger. It just ended with way more questions than even The Giver. Where did Nora's mother go? Was Owen a selkie? What was the deal with the answering machine at Maire's home?
