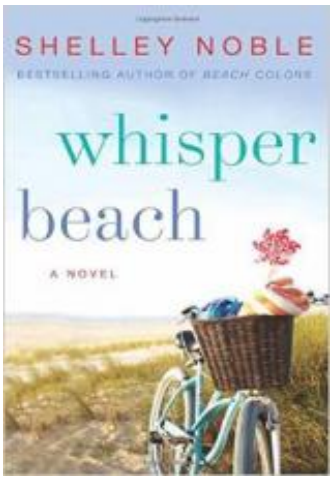
ReadingGroupGuides
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Whisper Beach

by Shelley Noble



About the Book

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of BEACH COLORS and BREAKWATER BAY comes this unforgettable story --- reminiscent of Kristin Hannah?s beloved novels --- of friends, loyalty and love as three women, who are reunited in the idyllic beach town where they grew up, are forced to re-evaluate their bonds.

Fifteen years ago, 17-year-old Vanessa Moran fell in love and lost her virginity, but not to the same boy. Pregnant, desperate and humiliated, she fled friends and family and Whisper Beach, New Jersey, never breathing a word about her secret to anyone. She hasn?t been back since. Now a professional Manhattan organizer, she returns to the funeral of her best friend?s husband. She intends on just paying her respects and leaving --- though she can?t deny she also wants the town to see how far she?s come as a successful business woman. But her plans to make this a short visit fall by the wayside when her girlfriends have other ideas.

Dorie, the owner of the pier?s Blue Crab Restaurant where Van and her friends worked as teenagers, needs help. Dorie?s roving husband spends every penny they make and now their restaurant is failing.

Joe, the boy Van left behind without an explanation, has never stopped loving her. While he?s wary of getting hurt again, he also can?t help wondering what would happen if they took up where they left off.

As the summer progresses and the restaurant takes on a new look, trouble comes from unexpected sources. For Van, this summer will test the meaning of friendship and trust --- and how far love can bend before it breaks.

Discussion Guide

1. Van left Whisper Beach 12 years ago and hasn?t been back or communicated with anyone. Why do you think she chose a funeral for her return?

2. What is it about coming ?home? to Whisper Beach that Van is most afraid of? Is it one major reason or many reasons that add up to overwhelm her? Is her fear valid or has she built the fear out of proportion?

3. Van isn?t very sympathetic to Dana at first, if ever. Do you think in her heart Van thinks Dana deserves unhappiness because of what she did years before? What, if anything, changes her mind?

4. Can Van and Dana ever really be friends?

5. Why is Suze so adamant about not taking her family?s money? What kinds of ?strings? are attached if she does accept help? How important is it to make it on your own?

6. Gigi says that she always did what was right, and look where it got her: widowed, unemployed with two small children to support. Do you feel sympathetic toward her? Or do you think she allowed people to take care of her and expects them to continue to do so? Why do you think Gigi always tried to do what was right? Or did she?

7. Van and Joe get off to a rocky start because of Van?s preconceptions. Do you think seeing Joe surrounded by wine bottles triggered her memory of childhood and colored her expectations of how Joe had turned out? What does her reaction say about Van?

8. Suze spends most of the book waiting for her grant application. What was the motivation for the theft of the application? Was it to hurt Suze or Van, or something else entirely, like jealousy?

9. Van has been thinking about expanding her business. When Joe suggests the possibility of opening a branch in Whisper Beach she is skeptical. What factors changed her mind? Do you think it is a viable choice? Will it be possible for her to run a successful, fulfilling business in her childhood home?

10. What do you think about Dorie and the way she has chosen to live her life? Why does she stay married to Harold? Is she destined to failure or can she make a success of the restaurant?

11. There are success and failures among this once close-knit group. Were there victims in this story? Gigi? Van?s father? Van? Joe? Dana? Suze? Dorie? Bud? How did each of them cope with their situation. Who were the sympathetic characters?

12. Do Van and her father have a chance of developing a positive relationship? What are some of the challenges they face?

13. Van has buried her desire for children by nurturing her career. Knowing how much Joe wants a family, will this be a deterrent for any future together? Do you think either of them will be happy with adoption or will there always be hidden accusations and insecurities?

14. Much is made about one little episode when they were all teenagers. All their lives seemed to be affected by it in one way or another. Do people get over humiliations or hurt they experienced as children or teenagers? Or will it always be a

part of them that they can?t overcome?

15. It?s hard enough to get over something inside yourself, how hard is it to change others? perceptions of a person. Will people always look at Van and remember her as the girl who ran away, or will they see the successful business woman that she has become?

16. Do you think the lingering and erupting emotions in Whisper Beach were more than the teenage episode should have provoked?Or was that incident merely a catalyst for some underlying reasons that existed then and now?

Author Bio

Shelley Noble is the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestselling author of 16 novels of historical fiction, historical mystery and contemporary women's fiction, including THE TIFFANY GIRLS, ASK ME NO QUESTIONS and WHISPER BEACH.

A former professor, professional dancer and choreographer, she now lives in New Jersey half way between the shore, where she loves visiting vintage lighthouses and carousels, and New York City, where she delights in the architecture, the theater, and ferreting out the old stories behind the new.

Critical Praise

?With broad brushstrokes Shelley Noble paints a beautiful, vivid picture of a small coastal town we wish we grew up in and tight-knit friends we wish we were part of. We?re taken on Margaux Sullivan?s journey of loss, healing, rediscovery of self, and love of a man and his boy. With Noble?s words we see sunsets and sea grass, fashion and frustration, life, love and happily ever afters. I can?t wait for her next book!?

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