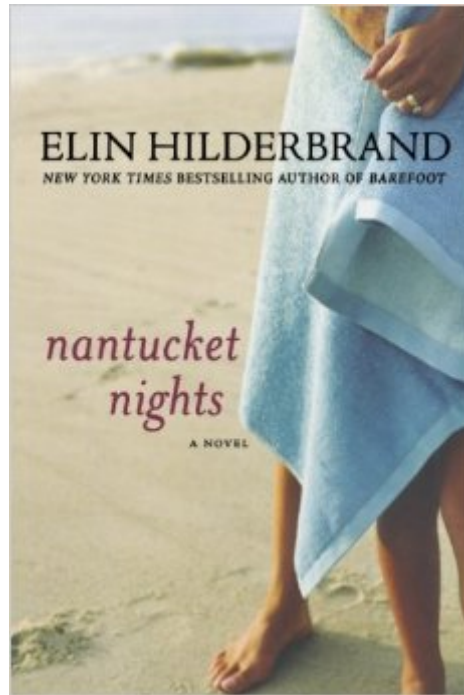


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Nantucket Nights: A Novel



Synopsis

The ties between women can run as deep as the ocean--but so can their secrets. For 20 years, Kayla, Antoinette and Val have performed their own special summer ritual. Once a year, the old friends put aside their daily, separate lives to drink champagne, swap stories and swim naked under the Nantucket stars. But on one of those bonding nights, one of their trio swims out from the shore and doesn't return. After the surviving friends emerge from their grief, they realize that the repercussions of their loss go far beyond their little circle, and they begin to uncover layers of secrets--and their connections to each other--that were never revealed on the beach. What has made their friendship strong now has the power to destroy--their marriages, families, even themselves, in Elin Hilderbrand's Nantucket Nights.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

After having loved Hilderbrand's first book, *The Beach Club*, I couldn't wait to get my hands on *Nantucket Nights*. This book did not dissappoint. Despite having fewer characters, fewer pages, and fewer parrallel stories, this book was a far more complex book then her first. Aside from that the two are completely different entities, for which Ms. Hilderbrand should be commended. Too often, authors get burdened by publisher deadlines and churn out formulary stories, but not her. This is an intricately woven story of family, of friendship, and of our perceptions of the truth. It is the story of instincts and judgements, and of identity. Kayla, the story's protagonist, is a complex woman who struggles with insecurity in her marriage, and insecurity with who she is. She identifies herself as a

mother, a wife, and a friend until the story unravels and all of that comes into question. This is the story of three unlike women who, for twenty years, get together one night of Labor Day weekend for a ritualistic midnight swim, truth telling and end of Summer celebratory night. Well, on the twentieth anniversary of this night the unspeakable happens and their friendship -- amongst so many other things -- becomes unravelled when one of the women disappears before sharing a dark secret. As Kayla searches for the truth about that secret, she begins to learn things about her friends and her family that she never would have imagined. As the pages turn towards the end, the reader is drawn in and Kayla learns so much about perception versus reality. She learns about herself, her family and who she has to be in order to render the strength to move on. This book is fantastic, and I cannot wait to read more by this talented author. If you want a fast but intelligent and interesting read that delves into the human psyche and relationships, pick up one of her books. You will be captivated.

This was definitely a light beach read --- a romance shrouded in a bit of mystery. I read it in just a few hours, enjoyed it while reading it, and found it quite a page-turner. But at the end I wondered why it appealed to me and why I even read it. Thinking about this, I realized that the book was appealing because Hilderbrand pushed a lot of *hot* buttons: interracial relationships, extramarital sex, murder, women's friendship, female bonding, etc. She targeted an audience and reached it - the hallmark of a good marketing plan. Almost every single situation bordered on preposterous....from Antoinette's "disappearance", to the ridiculous way the police acted, to the affair between an 18 and a 40 year old, to Kayla's behavior -- but I sped through it, so what does that say about me? Guess I just needed something light to read at that particular time and this story reeled me in!

It's not the plot of Nantucket Nights that bothers me, it's the execution of it. For a book/author whose target market is women, I cannot understand why there would be such an undercurrent of disdain for female friendships, and I'm actually insulted that Hilderbrand suggests the difficult dynamic between the three characters is typical of most friendships between women. I'm so tired of that particular gender stereotype, especially because all current research shows that women who get opportunities to spend quality time with close female friends (girls nights, book clubs, etc) experience an increase in the production of happy hormones, like serotonin. What better physical proof is there that female friendships are indeed good for you? But unfortunately for Hilderbrand's loyal readers, it's not so in Nantucket Nights. Even on the very last page, Hilderbrand sums up female friendships

like this: "To be friends with another woman was difficult...and painful and complicated. But when a friendship between women was good, it had a sacred, shining power." Call me crazy, but that does NOT sound like a ringing endorsement for womankind. My relationships with most of the women in my life --friends, sisters, daughters, mother-- flow with the kind of gentle ease that makes my life feel MORE secure, not less. Consider how Nantucket Nights might have been improved by a trio of friends who were genuine, supportive, and loving; the plot would have been much more intriguing and thought-provoking if it was circumstances ONLY that broke up the friends and not just the characters' weaknesses and lack of integrity.

As the old saying goes, "With friends like these, who needs enemies." That's exactly what NANTUCKET NIGHTS' central characters - Kayla, Antoinette and Val - discover on the twentieth anniversary of Night Swimmers, their annual celebration of life and friendship. Once a year, for two decades, the three women have made a sacred pilgrimage to a secluded Nantucket beach, where they share decadent food and tantalizing secrets (two cornerstones of women's friendships). But, this year, betrayal and heartbreak (two more cornerstones of women's friendships) have come along for the ride. And when tragedy strikes the calm waters of their annual skinny dip, the two remaining friends are forced to deal with the far-reaching consequences on an island with a low tolerance for scandal. Hilderbrand ambitiously explores the meaning of life's most intangible concepts - truth, love, loyalty, happiness and a sense of place - with a cast of unexpectedly human characters. Her greatest success in this book lies in the well-constructed contradictions that make Kayla's story impossible to put down. Her friends are her greatest source of strength, and her ultimate downfall. To punish her loved ones for hurting her, she ruins her own life. She loves an island that can't/won't love her back. And through her teenage son's eyes, she defines herself as both a good mother and a horrible mother. Don't make the mistake of thinking NANTUCKET NIGHTS is merely light beach reading - the wine-cooler of the literary world. There's a lot more to this book than a fluffy mystery and scads of steamy sex. Kayla's downward spiral is inevitable, but irresistible. And NANTUCKET NIGHTS is a supremely satisfying read.

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