



Summer Shift

Lynn Kiele Bonasia

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Forty-four-year-old Cape Cod clam bar owner Mary Hopkins is stuck in the cycle of her seasonal business; overwhelmed by the relentless influx of new names and fresh young faces, she feels as if life is passing her by.

In the first days of the summer season, a young waitress's tragic accident stirs up unresolved pain from Mary's past, leaving her longing for connection. At the same time, Mary's life is further upended as she begins to suspect her beloved great-aunt, the one person in the world who loves her unconditionally, is descending into Alzheimer's disease. Then, in walks Dan, a lost love perhaps the greatest of her life returning to the Cape after disappearing years before without an explanation. As Mary faces these challenges and losses, it's her rekindled romance with Dan and her burgeoning unlikely friendships with a warm, eccentric collection of local characters that keep her afloat.

Set against the backdrop of Cape Cod sand, sun, and seafood, *Summer Shift* is the story of a woman's struggle to find the peace, love, and human connection that have eluded her for decades.

Summer Shift Details

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Kelly says

While I really did like the story line & the setting I had a hard time liking the main character. I totally get why she was the way she was it was still hard to feel compassion amid her selfishness & hardness. She did redeem herself by the end but it was almost too little too late.

Diane Eskridge says

This book was an easy read. I think the takeaway from the book is the underlying message that sometimes we get caught up in life and forget to appreciate the people we interact with on a daily basis. Sometimes we need to be reminded of that and this book did that for me.

Terri Tinkel says

It took me a little while to get into this book. The heroine seemed to procrastinate at times. And of course, the theme was about keeping secrets that caused problems. And yet, the secret keeping continued throughout the story. However, this would be a good beach read for a long weekend. About 1/2 way through the book, the story really picked up. I will be checking for the other book written by this author.

Denise says

I liked but did not love this book. It is the story of a woman who owns a seasonal sea food restaurant on Cape Cod. Mary is widowed following a meaningless auto accident at a very young age. Her husband was less than perfect. Years later, there is a similar tragic accident and she finds herself reliving her past, exploring the facts and seeing her current life in a new way.

The story was satisfyingly complex, exploring various relationships, family, friends, co-workers and those that might come out of chance encounters. Current topics are delved into such as losing someone to Alzheimer's disease, single parenting and survivor's guilt. The story had some unpredictable twists. However, I was left feeling a bit disappointed; because I didn't really feel like the depth of emotions felt by Mary were captured or explored as much as I felt was warranted.

Susan Marshall says

Great summer read!

Lynn says

Not a bad summer read. Mary is a widowed Cape Cod restaurateur who runs a place called The Clambake, mostly with the help of college kids and young locals. When one of her waitresses is killed in a car crash it brings up many old and new issues for Mary: her husband's untimely death, the man she lost after that who has suddenly reappeared on the Cape scene, her lack of connection with the people who work for her, how to cope with her great-aunt's encroaching Alzheimer's, and what will become of the dead waitress' family. Some interesting enough issues but maybe too many to deal with in one book because nothing gets all the attention it deserves and, (perhaps in the interest of moving the storyline along?) the bounds of credibility are stretched to the breaking point in some situations. I liked her first book *Some Assembly Required* better.

Lisa says

Not a great book in my opinion but an easy summer read. For the main character Mary, everything complicated in her life seems to collide at once. I didn't like Mary much which probably had something to do with my overall opinion of the book. In spite of running a successful restaurant, Mary is deficient in a number of other ways. I did like the storyline that followed her great-aunt's diagnosis of Alzheimers and ultimate decline...I found it pretty realistic. I found the book overall pretty predictable.

Ange H says

I had a lot of problems with this book. Mary is a hard character to like. She's mostly a bummer, with lots of real problems, but some of them seem to be self-inflicted. She's like a slightly-less- cranky, female version of Larry David, bumbling through life and causing trouble every time she opens her mouth. Throughout the book she lies frequently, for no apparent reason. It's just hard to buy her as the owner of a successful restaurant. There were many other characters, but few of them were well-developed enough to make any impression, including the supposed love interest. I kept forgetting who was who.

The setting was Cape Cod, but there was no sense of place. It was like the author knew Cape Cod was nice, but had never been there. (Contrast this with someone like Anne Rivers Siddons, whose descriptions are so intimate and vivid she makes you want to immediately sell everything and move to whatever location she is describing.) Finally, even though I just finished the book, I would be hard-pressed to summarize the plot. The story was thin and moved at very slow pace.

There were a few nice elements. The author probably DID work in a restaurant (although not one located in Cape Cod) because she nailed that dynamic, with her descriptions of the hectic pace, the customer complaints, the wait staff bickering with the cooks and everyone hooking up with each other, etc. I also really liked her relationship with the old man who lived in the house behind hers, and there was a nice twist there.

So to sum up, "Summer Shift" wasn't the worst book, but I couldn't enthusiastically recommend it to anyone.

Susan says

I read this book on vacation in Texas. I wasn't that interested in it. I thought it would be good because the main character was a single woman running her own restaurant on Cape Cod. I'm a New Englander, love the Cape, believe in accomplished women. But this book didn't do anything for me. First, it had some very poor

editing. It was like parts were chopped and then reconnected in a disjointed way, leaving some details of the story occurring non-chronologically. I never could warm up to the main character; she did not seem like a real person to me (unless you want to view her as autistic, which was never a claim). I have no interest in reading any other books by this author. This one was a dud!

Sandy says

A forty something restaurant owner mourning the loss of her husband, the return of an old lover, the lives of the restaurant workers, and a great-aunt with Alzheimer's kept me interested from beginning to end. Very good!

Linda Day says

This is the second book by this author which I have recently read, and my review is abt the same ... "eh".

The central character, Mary, has lost her husband in a motorcycle accident, runs a restaurant in the Cape area, has a "summer" business primarily with lots of characters who work there. One of those employees has an automobile accident and dies bringing back the tragedies of her husband's death ... yadda, yadda, yadda !

Of the better parts was the Alzheimer's behavior of Mary's aunt, and a friendship with an artist who has Parkinson's. Both of these illnesses were well researched, and their characters good examples of "living with" challenge.

Otherwise ... I am on to "Cutting with Stone".

Phyllis says

Mary Hopkins has withdrawn from life. She owns a restaurant but runs it from the back. She doesn't get involved with customers or staff. After one of her young waitresses dies in an accident, she finds herself having to deal with unresolved feelings from when her husband died in an accident twelve years earlier. Summer Shift is the story of her reconnection to others. I found it slow in the beginning but ended enjoying the characters and the story.

Doreen says

I enjoyed this story from start to finish. I read it within a 24 hour period. Initially, I felt that Mary, the main character and owner of the Clambake Restaurant, was an aloof, cold, anti-social person. I saw her as a woman in her 40's who needed to 'grow the heck up!' As a business owner and childless widow, she was profoundly self-absorbed, in my opinion.

A tragedy involving a server at her restaurant, causes her to broaden her world and begin to concern herself with other people, instead of just with herself. Death, illness, and lost loves all play into this exceptional story. The innocence and hope of youth is remarkably portrayed through the personalities and actions of the young restaurant employees. Insight into death, illness and acceptance of life, are conveyed through a couple

of endearing, aged characters.

When I truly enjoy a story, I rate it a '3'. When a story takes me by surprise with profound lessons and insight into life itself, I rate it a '4'. This is a solid four!

Kathleen says

Bonasia's second novel is set against the background of a simple clam bar open for the summer crowd on Cape Cod. The characters are drawn with the complexity they might share in life and thus, are flawed, view their small world from their developmental perch, struggle to deal with the death of a young woman/co-worker, are perplexed by the personality (and often the decisions and behavior) of the woman who owns the place. This woman must face truths about her marriage which ended in the death of her young husband many years ago while she embarks on a relationship with a long lost love about whom there are many mysteries and allows herself to enter relationships that she previously denied herself. One of the unexpected treasures of the novel is her journey with a great aunt diagnosed with dementia, the decisions that are made about her care, the heart ache involved, and the grace and dignity of both as they acknowledge this sentinel shift in their lives.

Natalie says

I picked this one up in the Brewster Book Store looking for some Cape Cod fiction :-)

Sometimes I REALLY enjoyed this. Sometimes it felt sort of weird. I enjoyed the synesthesia and yet felt like she must have watched a Discovery Health show on it and decided to include it (that wasn't the case, as I found out in the notes at the end). It felt like "ooh, I learned about this cool thing so I'll work it into my story" but didn't feel like it was overly important to the story. Maybe I read too much into it because of all the Discovery Health shows I watched while I was on bedrest :-D

The plot and the Cape were good. I will probably read this book again in another year or two on a future Cape vacation.
