

Ashes and Bones

Introduction and inspirations:

I was determined to get the hard-working Emma on vacation for once, and it had to be Hawaii. I really love Kauai and the [Big Island](#); I'm slightly obsessed with volcanoes, too. If you're lucky enough to go, hit [Volcanoes National Park](#) (wear sensible shoes—it's a volcanic mountain, for heaven's sake!) and then, go to [Merriman's](#) in Waimea. I make the most of my appetite there and remember it fondly as the first place I ever drank port.

Unlike Emma, I don't drink a lot of coffee. I do frequent a coffee shop for lunch, though, because the good folks at the [Atomic Café](#) in Beverly don't mind when I stare sightlessly and write down notes on their napkins. They also named the "no-fun mocha" for me (decaf, non-fat, no-hip, no chocolate stick).

Besides volcanic mountains, mai-tais, and Shakespeare, I, like most archaeologists, have a thing for cemeteries. In Massachusetts, we're blessed with early and beautiful ones like [Granary Burying Ground](#) (Boston), [Charter Street Cemetery](#) (Salem), and [Mount Auburn](#) (Cambridge). There's a lot of art, history, and beautiful trees and plants in these historic places, so enjoy them—but! Always obey the rules that are posted, be respectful, and don't make rubbings. I'm serious. I'll come after you if I find out. Seriously.

Questions:

1. What do you think happens to a person when they get everything they've ever aspired to? Has this happened to you?
2. Have you ever believed something that no one else believed? Did people treat you differently? Automatically accept that you were right? Just ignore the situation?
3. Emma is accused by several people—Rob, Nolan, Erik—of thinking too much. Is this really a problem for Emma? For a detective? For anyone?
4. Emma asks on more than one occasion: "Is this what it looks like when you're losing your mind?" She's genuinely concerned, but is never convinced enough to drop her investigation. How should she have been able to tell—or not tell—that she was going crazy? Should she have listened to everyone else as soon as she started asking that herself?
5. Throughout the story, Emma is surprised by the reactions of people she thinks she knows. Do you think Marty and Dora behaved rationally, by asking Emma to stay away from their families? Were you surprised by Erik's response to the events at the restaurant and the boat? Emma surprised herself—did she and Erik go too far?
6. One of the themes of the book is a question: How far would you go to protect what you

loved? How far would you go? Emma found her answer, but was also reassured that while she might go to what she called "the dark places," she could always come back. Do you think once you do something extreme, you're the same person after?