

# LOVE *on a* WHIM



CAPE COD CREAMERY

SUZANNE  
WOODS FISHER

BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *ON A SUMMER TIDE*

## Praise for *The Secret to Happiness*

“Fisher balances emotional depth with lively humor (and some fun ice cream–making tips), all while keeping up a breezy pace. This delights.”

*Publishers Weekly*

“Original, memorable, and a fun read from first page to last, *The Secret to Happiness* showcases author Suzanne Woods Fisher’s natural flair for originality and the kind of deftly scripted and narrative-driven storytelling style that keeps her readers’ rapt and entertained attention from cover to cover.”

*Midwest Book Review*

“This is a story that embraces second chances, self-realization, and romance. *The Secret to Happiness* is a pleasure to read. Highly recommended.”

*Fresh Fiction*

## Praise for *The Sweet Life*

“This deliciously concocted novel is a charming start to a sure-to-satisfy series.”

*Booklist*

“Restoration and reawakened dreams gather in Suzanne Woods Fisher’s Christian romance novel *The Sweet Life*.”

*Foreword Reviews*

“This is a clean contemporary story that will give many readers the feels. Such a fun summer read!”

*Write-Read-Life*

“*The Sweet Life* is a wonderful beach read, set at the Cape, with lots of ice cream sprinkled throughout. Nothing could be better on a hot summer day!”

*Romance Junkies*

## Novels by Suzanne Woods Fisher

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*The Sweet Life*  
*The Secret to Happiness*  
*Love on a Whim*



*The Moonlight School*  
*A Season on the Wind*  
*Anything but Plain*  
*Lost and Found*

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WOODS FISHER



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# Cast of Characters

**Brynn Haywood** (age 30), longtime friend of Dawn's, civil engineer who secretly longs to be a full-time baker.

**Marnie Dixon** (a woman of a certain age), mother to Dawn, co-owner of the Main Street Creamery; known for spontaneity and creativity.

**Dawn Dixon Collins** (age 30), daughter to Marnie, wife to Kevin, co-owner of the Main Street Creamery (she's the ice cream maker) and part-time CPA for Kevin's historical preservation construction company; known for being an exceptional planner.

**Kevin Collins** (age 30), husband to Dawn, preservationist architect, co-owner of a construction company.

**Lincoln Hayes** (age sixtysomething), retired Chatham resident, permanent volunteer for charitable causes, lover of ice cream, friend to all; silent partner of Kevin's historical preservation construction company. Has two adult children, Ashleigh and Bear.

**Ashleigh Hayes** (age 32), daughter to Lincoln, twin to Bear.

**Bear Hayes** (age 32), son to Lincoln, twin to Ashleigh.

**Callie Dixon Bianco** (30), wife to Bruno, stepmother to Leo the Cowboy, professional chef and owner of the Intuitive Cooking School. During shoulder seasons and winter, she helps out at the Main Street Creamery. Known for her exuberance and expertise in all things food related.

**Leo the Cowboy** (age 7), son to Bruno Bianco, lover of any and all ice cream.

**Bruno Bianco** (midthirties), father to Leo, husband to Callie, professor at the 4Cs (Cape Cod Community College), author of *The Secret to Happiness*.

**Mrs. Nickerson-Eldredge** (age seventysomething), Chatham resident born and bred, chair of the Historical Commission. Considers herself to be the guardian of Chatham.

**Nanette** (age seventysomething), Chatham resident, runs a T-shirt shop. Self-appointed town crier of Chatham.

**Maeve Grayson** (age mid-sixties), Marnie's best friend from Needham, Massachusetts. Married to Paul Grayson of the Three Sisters Island series. Marnie and Maeve text a lot. Quite a lot.

**Deidre Klassen** (won't reveal age), considered by many (herself included) to be the *best* wedding planner on the Cape. Possibly in all New England.

**T. D. (TD) DeLima** (midthirties), twenty-four-hour husband to Brynn Haywood. Not much is known about him. Not at first, anyway.

# Glossary of Ice Cream Making

**add-ins**—premade food products that are mixed into ice cream base

**artisan**—a skilled worker in a trade that involves making things by hand

**barrel**—opening of the ice cream machine to allow ice cream to slide out

**base**—egg-dairy-sugar mixture that is the main ingredient in all ice cream products

**curing**—usually a twenty-four-hour period to allow the flavors in the ice cream base to blend and mature

**custard**—base for ice cream products if it includes eggs

**dasher**—churning tool of the ice cream machine, also known as beater

**frozen custard**—has more egg and less air than regular ice cream, making it both rich and dense. Popular on the East Coast and in the Midwest.

**frozen yogurt or Froyo**—contains less fat than regular ice cream. Popular on the West Coast. Perceived as a healthier option, though sugary toppings are usually piled on it.

**gelato**—Italian style ice cream

**overrun**—air pumped into each batch of product (varies dramatically)

**pasteurization**—the process of involving heat to sterilize a product, destroying microorganisms, to make it safe for consumption

**prepackaged base**—ice cream base from a dairy that is premade and prepasteurized

**soft-serve machine**—injects air into the liquid cream mix to get the right consistency

Eat ice cream. Read books. Be happy.  
—author Carew Papritz

# Chapter

# ONE

Breakup: An excuse to eat ice cream no matter the weather.

—Unknown

## **Sunday morning, June 26**

Fingers hovering over the phone, Brynn Haywood hesitated before texting her best friend. Was Dawn the right person to go to? Brynn had met Dawn as a freshman in college, and she'd never known her to do anything wrong, stupid, embarrassing, or rash. All those adjectives could describe the last twenty-four hours in Brynn's life. Add to the list mortifying, humiliating, impulsive. What happened last night was, by far, the worst thing she'd ever done, so out of character. So shameful.

How would Dawn react? From the start of college, Brynn and Dawn had been dubbed the Sensible Sisters. They never did anything crazy, nothing close to foolish or irresponsible. Their majors, and then careers—Dawn was a CPA, Brynn was a civil engineer—reflected their rational, logical, left-brain-dominant personalities.

Then came last night. Brynn had committed a regrettable, out-of-character, reckless act.

How to untangle it? How to make it all go away? She needed help. Desperately.

Brynn looked up from her phone to see why the long, snaking line to get through TSA was barely moving. Only one TSA agent was checking IDs and boarding passes, and he looked as old as Methuselah. Behind him, only one screening machine was open. She blew out an exasperated puff of air and looked down at her phone. She needed Dawn's help.

---

**Brynn**

Something terrible has happened.

---

**Dawn**

What? Are you OK?

---

Barely OK.

---

I'll call.

---

No! Don't call.

If Brynn were to hear Dawn's voice, if she had to try to explain herself, she would burst into tears. And once the tears started, they'd never stop.

---

I just can't talk. I can hardly think straight.

---

Where are you?

---

Standing in a TSA line.

---

Airport? Change your ticket and come to Cape Cod.

---

But . . .

---

Don't overthink. Just come! We'll sort it all out.

Not this time, Brynn thought. This wasn't something that could be easily sorted out. A knot of helplessness clogged her throat until she felt as if she was struggling to breathe. Almost shaking, she stepped out of the interminably long TSA line to rush back to the ticket counter. There, she switched her flight to Boston to a flight that would go straight into Hyannis on the Cape.

She knew she was running away from her problem. She knew that what happened last night would require some legal action, but all she could think about was escaping to the beach. She felt an almost frantic longing to face the ocean, to hear the crash of the waves against the shore. To sense their eternally soothing reminder that everything was going to be okay.

She squeezed her eyes shut, defeated. She had absolutely no idea how to get back to okay.



When Dawn picked Brynn up at the airport, it was obvious something was seriously wrong. Brynn always looked like she'd stepped right out of *Vogue* magazine, even on a sleepy Sunday morning in a college dorm. She sent her blue jeans to the dry cleaners. She leather-conditioned her purse and shoes. And her personal grooming was impeccable: French-manicured nails; long, straight dark hair, cut every six weeks; bangs trimmed every three weeks; makeup perfectly applied. Even the wings on her eyeliner looked professional.

But this girl? She was unrecognizable as the Brynn whom Dawn had roomed with all through college and into their mid-twenties. Brynn had no makeup on, or if she did, it had been washed away with tears. Her hair was pulled into a messy bun, and it wasn't the stylish kind of messy. Her socks were mismatched, her T-shirt had a coffee stain, and her beautiful dark doe eyes were puffy and red.

Dawn couldn't imagine what had happened to her. Brynn

was a civil engineer who worked with tough construction types. Somehow, as small and slender and feminine as she was, she'd always been able to handle them well. No one dared to push her around or hit on her. But looking at her, Dawn worried that someone had hurt her, had taken advantage of her, and that worry made her stomach turn over. Then flip back. Brynn was one of Dawn's most beloved persons in the world. She was the sister she'd never had. Brynn's parents had divorced, several times, and were absent more than present. Since the age of eighteen, she'd spent every holiday with the Dixons. If anyone had laid a hand on her, Dawn would hunt him down and—

*Hold it.* She was letting her imagination run wild with dreadful possibilities. Dawn didn't see any bruises, any signs of physical injury. Still . . . *something* terrible had happened to Brynn.

Earlier, on the drive to the airport, Dawn had promised herself that she would let Brynn talk when she was good and ready. So as hard as it was to stay silent, Dawn held her tongue. She hugged Brynn, opened the car door to help her in, put her suitcase in the back, and drove away from the small Hyannis airport—all done wordlessly.

In Yarmouth, as Dawn flipped on the blinker to turn onto Highway 6, Brynn finally spoke. "Could we go to the beach first? I don't think I can face anyone right now. Especially your mom."

Dawn flashed her a sympathetic smile. "You bet." She knew of a quiet beach in Chatham that wouldn't be overrun with children and dogs. July was the most crowded time on the Cape and today was a picture-perfect day. The population of Chatham swelled fourfold in the summer. Good for an ice cream shop, not so good if you were trying to find a quiet spot on the beach to sob your eyes out.

Dawn knew all about *that*. A few years ago, she'd come to Cape Cod to nurse a broken heart. Her fiancé, Kevin, had broken off their engagement just weeks before the wedding. Dawn had felt the same desperate longing to sit on a beach and watch the waves

come in, to absorb the tranquil sounds of the ocean. Vast and mysterious, yet calming and soothing. Time healed her heart-break, aided by her mother's impetuous purchase of a run-down ice cream shop. And somehow, both time plus the dire needs of the ice cream shop brought Kevin back into her life. Two years later, they had worked through their problems and were happily married. So happily that they'd been trying to start a family.

Trying . . . without success . . . for six months. She hadn't found the right moment to tell Kevin that she'd made an appointment with a fertility specialist. Her mom had trouble conceiving, and she'd always had a dread that infertility might be a problem for her too. Because of that niggling fear, she didn't want to let any more precious time slip away.

Brynn sniffed, wiping her nose with her sleeve (soooo unlike her), and Dawn rummaged one hand through her purse to find a tissue packet to hand to her. When she saw the sign for Harwich, she exited onto Pleasant Lake Avenue, then drove along Queen Anne Road to 137, turning onto Route 28, until she reached Forest Beach Road in South Chatham. The road ended at the beach, facing Nantucket Sound. A lovely, overlooked spot.

Most people assumed that Cape Cod beaches were one long sandy strip, one wide ribbon. Just the opposite. The beaches were narrow strands, separated from each other by inlets, ponds, bays, jutting dunes covered in wild roses. More like a chunky necklace than a wide ribbon.

Dawn parked the car along the side of the lane, and the two walked down to the beach. She let Brynn decide where to plop down. A few people clustered on the beach but no children, no leashless dogs, and the tide was heading out. About a third of the way down, Brynn dropped to her knees. Dawn followed her lead, then crossed her legs, settled into the sand, and patiently waited. She breathed in the salt-scented air, watched the waves as they crashed, admired a bobbing sailboat in the distance, looked at the seagulls circling overhead, noticed the angle of the sun, and

counted a few puffy clouds floating in the sky. Waiting, waiting, waiting for Brynn to start opening up. Dawn had never been good at waiting. She lasted a full two minutes before turning to Brynn. “Okay, spill it. What in the world happened to you?”

Eyes squeezed shut, Brynn tensed up, and suddenly, the dam broke. Big, choking sobs. Shoulder-shaking gasps. Struggling breaths. Dawn rubbed her back in circles and let her cry it out. In between sobs, Brynn mumbled something.

“You did *what*?” Too harsh. Dawn had triggered another crying jag.

When that jag ebbed, Brynn repeated herself, more clearly.

Dawn’s mind could hardly grasp what Brynn was trying to tell her. She leaned back, elbows digging into the sand, gobsmacked. “You got *married* . . . to a stranger?”



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**Dawn**

Brynn has come for a visit. Can she stay in my old room at the Creamery?

---

**Mom**

What? Now? The 4th of July week? It’s the busiest time at the Cape! The ice cream shop needs our full attention.

---

Not to worry. You’ll hardly know she’s there.

---

How long does she plan to stay?

---

Hmm. Not sure. She just needs a place to crash for a while. Her life has just become a little bit . . . complicated.