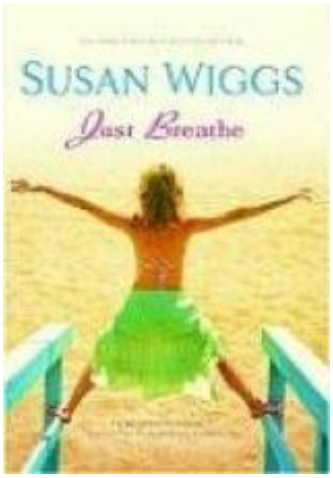
Just Breathe

by Susan Wiggs



About the Book

Chicago cartoonist Sarah Moon tackles life?s real issues with a healthy dose of sharp wit in her syndicated comic strip *Just Breathe*. As Sarah?s cartoon alter ego, Shirl, undergoes artificial insemination, her situation begins to mirror Sarah?s own difficult attempts to conceive. However, Sarah?s dreams of the future did not include her husband's infidelity: snag number two in Sarah?s so-called perfect life.

With Chicago --- and her marriage --- in the rearview mirror, she flees to the small northern California coastal town where she grew up, a place she couldn?t wait to leave. Now she finds herself revisiting the past --- an emotionally distant father and the unanswered questions left by her mother?s death. As she comes to terms with her lost marriage, Sarah encounters a man she never expected to meet again: Will Bonner, the high school heartthrob she?d skewered mercilessly in her old comics. Now a local firefighter, he?s been through some changes himself. But just as her heart is about to reawaken, Sarah discovers she is pregnant. With her ex?s twins.

It?s hardly the most traditional of new beginnings, but who says life or love, are predictable...or perfect? The winds of change have led Sarah here. Now all she can do is just close her eyes...and breathe.

Discussion Guide

1. When the book opens, Sarah Moon seems to have it all, except she?s having trouble getting pregnant. What hints do you see that something is amiss? Were you surprised by her discovery at the end of chapter one, or did you see it coming?

2.. Could you relate to Sarah?s desire to have a child? What was her real motivation? What was Jack?s? Would you be willing to try fertility treatments in order to be a parent?

3. What did you think of Sarah?s decision to walk away from her marriage? Should she have stayed and tried to work it out? How would it have played out if she had?

4. How does Sarah use humor to shield herself from hurt? How does this come through in her dialogue and inner thought? In her art?

5. Sarah returns to Glenmuir to find that she still feels like a misfit. Have you ever gone back to a place you lived as a teenager? How did the years change your perceptions?

6. What did you think of the way Sarah related to her father and brother? Her grandmother and great-aunt? How did they help her through the rough times? Did they hinder her recovery in any way?

7. Will Bonner was the last person she expected to meet upon her return. What kind of life did she imagine for Will? How did the reality contrast with those expectations? Think about some of the people you went to high school with. Which ones surprised you, and which ones fulfilled your expectations?

8. Will gave up a lot of options when he brought Aurora into his life. What motivated him? Was it a good trade? Was it in character, given the way he was raised? We get just a glimpse of his family life, but what can you tell about his parents?

9. What elements in Sarah?s new life helped draw her out of her depression? What elements complicated it?

10. Sarah doesn?t trust her feelings for Will, but she?s drawn to him anyway. How does her trust in him grow? What does she bring to the relationship? What do you suppose their life will be like in a few years?

Author Bio

Susan Wiggs is the author of more than 50 novels, including the beloved *Lakeshore Chronicles* series and the recent *New York Times* bestsellers THE LOST AND FOUND BOOKSHOP, THE OYSTERVILLE SEWING CIRCLE and FAMILY TREE. Her award-winning books have been translated into two dozen languages. She lives with her husband on an island in Washington State?s Puget Sound.

Critical Praise

"Wiggs is one of our best observers of stories of the heart. Maybe that is because she knows how to capture emotion on virtually every page of every book."

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