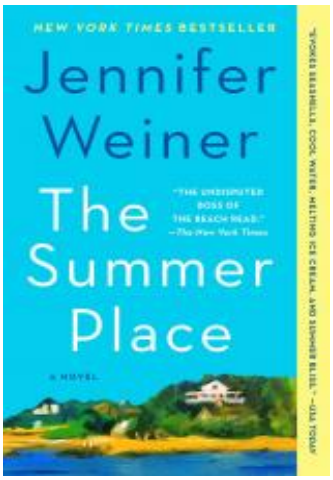
The Summer Place

by Jennifer Weiner



About the Book

From the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of THAT SUMMER comes another heartfelt and unputdownable novel of family, secrets and the ties that bind.

When her 22-year-old stepdaughter announces her engagement to her pandemic boyfriend, Sarah Danhauser is shocked. But the wheels are in motion. Headstrong Ruby has already set a date (just three months away!) and spoken to her beloved *safta*, Sarah?s mother Veronica, about having the wedding at the family?s beach house in Cape Cod. Sarah might be worried, but Veronica is thrilled to be bringing the family together one last time before putting the big house on the market.

But the road to a wedding day usually comes with a few bumps. Ruby has always known exactly what she wants, but as the wedding date approaches, she finds herself grappling with the wounds left by the mother who walked out when she was a baby. Veronica ends up facing unexpected news, thanks to her meddling sister, and must revisit the choices she made long ago, when she was a bestselling novelist with a different life. Sarah?s twin brother, Sam, is recovering from a terrible loss, and confronting big questions about who he is --- questions he hopes to resolve during his stay on the Cape. Sarah?s husband, Eli, who?s been inexplicably distant during the pandemic, confronts the consequences of a long-ago lapse from his typical good-guy behavior. And Sarah, frustrated by her husband, concerned about her stepdaughter, and worn out by challenges of life during quarantine, faces the alluring reappearance of someone from her past and a life that could have been.

When the wedding day arrives, lovers are revealed as their true selves, misunderstandings take on a life of their own and secrets come to light. There are confrontations and revelations that will touch each member of the extended family, ensuring that nothing will ever be the same.

From ?the undisputed boss of the beach read? (*The New York Times*), THE SUMMER PLACE is a testament to family

in all its messy glory; a story about what we sacrifice and how we forgive. Enthralling, witty, big-hearted and sharply observed, this is Jennifer Weiner?s love letter to the Outer Cape and the power of home, the way our lives are enriched by the people we call family, and the endless ways love can surprise us.

Discussion Guide

1. The novel includes very different mother-daughter relationships: Veronica and Sarah, Sarah and Ruby, Annette and Ruby. How are their relationships similar, and how are they different? What do you think of Annette?s rejection of motherhood? How did it affect Sarah to become a stepmother to Ruby at such a young age? Why do you think Veronica has such a different relationship with Sarah, her daughter, compared to Sam, her son? Are there ?right? and ?wrong? ways to be a mother?

2. The relationship between Eli Danhauser and his first wife, Annette, was cut short when she left him and their young child, Ruby. Were you shocked by her rejection of motherhood? Did she redeem herself to Ruby at the end? How was this balanced by the stepparent relationship between Ruby and Sarah?

3. This story includes many secrets, some of which are revealed by the end and some of which are not. Do you think the characters make the right choices about which secrets to keep and which to reveal? Is there a right way to share a secret that will change someone?s life? Is honesty always the best policy? How do different backgrounds --- such as between generations, or between women and men --- affect the decisions made by different characters about their secrets?

4. After we hear the story of Sarah?s friend Marni, she thinks to herself that the story is a warning, ?End your marriage and you and your children will suffer? (page 127). Do you think this is a common feeling among married women thinking about separation? How about among married men? Discuss the difference.

5. All three women in the Weinberg/Danhauser family have built professional lives around their creative interests: Veronica is a writer, Sarah is a musician, Ruby works in the theater. Both Veronica and Sarah must make choices and sacrifices as they balance their creative lives with their professional and family lives. How do their stories reflect the unique pressures on women who have creative or artistic interests? How do their dreams change as they get older and move into different stages of their lives? Do you think Ruby will eventually make similar choices to those made by Sarah and Veronica, or will she take a different path?

6. After growing up extremely close to his sister, Sam moves across the country for college and ends up staying after graduation. Do you think he felt like he needed to move so he could separate himself from his twin? What did you think of their dynamic?

7. Discuss Sam?s journey of sexual discovery after his traumatic experience of becoming a young widower. What was the importance of fanfiction and online dating? In what ways do you think anonymity both was beneficial and detrimental to him?

8. In the Cape Cod community where the events of THE SUMMER PLACE unfold, there is a distinction, sometimes tense, between the ?pond people,? the families (like Owen?s) who have owned vacation homes in the area for generations, and newer homeowners like Veronica and her family. How do the socioeconomic and cultural differences

between these groups influence the events of the novel? Do you have any sympathy for the ?pond people??

9. It is revealed that the completed novels that Veronica left behind are based on Sarah?s life, but Sarah decides to have them published anyway. What do you think of her decision? Would you have been angry with Veronica? What did you think of her explanation, ?that?s what writers do??

10. After Eli confesses to Sarah his own duplicity, she decides not to come clean about her dalliance with Owen. Why not? Do you think she made the right choice not to tell him? Do you think he would have forgiven her? What did you think about Sarah?s relationship with Owen? Was he taking advantage of her when they met later in life?

11. At the end of the book, Rosa tells Gabe the full truth about his paternity and her ruse involving Eli. She even introduces him to his father. How would you have reacted to the news? Would you have forgiven Rosa for her lie?

12. Were you happy that they decided not to sell the family home in the end? Do you think it was important to keep it in the family?

Author Bio

Jennifer Weiner is a #1 *New York Times* bestselling author whose books have spent over five years on the *New York Times* bestseller list, with more than 11 million copies in print in 36 countries.

She is the author of the novels GOOD IN BED (2001); IN HER SHOES (2002), which was turned into a major motion picture starring Cameron Diaz, Toni Collette and Shirley MacLaine; LITTLE EARTHQUAKES (2004); GOODNIGHT NOBODY (2005); the short story collection THE GUY NOT TAKEN (2006); CERTAIN GIRLS (2008); BEST FRIENDS FOREVER (2009); FLY AWAY HOME (2010); THEN CAME YOU (2011); THE NEXT BEST THING (2012); ALL FALL DOWN (2014); WHO DO YOU LOVE (2015); MRS. EVERYTHING (2019); BIG SUMMER (2020); THAT SUMMER (2021); THE SUMMER PLACE (2022); GOLDEN HILLS (2023); THE BREAKAWAY (2024); and THE GRIFFIN SISTERS' GREATEST HITS (2025).

She is also the author of *The Littlest Bigfoot* middle-grade trilogy: THE LITTLEST BIGFOOT (2016) LITTLE BIGFOOT, BIG CITY (2017), and THE BIGFOOT QUEEN (2023).

Her nonfiction collection, HUNGRY HEART: Adventures in Life, Love, and Writing (2016), was a finalist for the PEN/Diamonstein -Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay.

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