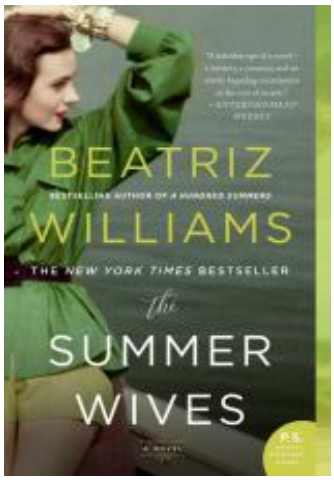
The Summer Wives

by Beatriz Williams



About the Book

?THE SUMMER WIVES is an exquisitely rendered novel that tackles two of my favorite topics: love and money. The glorious setting and drama are enriched by Williams?s signature vintage touch. It?s at the top of my picks for the beach this summer.?

? Elin Hilderbrand, author of THE PERFECT COUPLE

New York Times bestselling author Beatriz Williams brings us the blockbuster novel of the season --- an electrifying postwar fable of love, class, power and redemption set among the inhabitants of an island off the New England coast.

In the summer of 1951, Miranda Schuyler arrives on elite, secretive Winthrop Island as a schoolgirl from the margins of high society, still reeling from the loss of her father in the Second World War. When her beautiful mother marries Hugh Fisher, whose summer house on Winthrop overlooks the famous lighthouse, Miranda is catapulted into a heady new world of pedigrees and cocktails, status and swimming pools. Isobel Fisher, Miranda?s new stepsister --- all long legs and world-weary bravado, engaged to a wealthy Island scion --- is eager to draw Miranda into the arcane customs of Winthrop society.

But beneath the island?s patrician surface, there are really two clans: the summer families with their steadfast ways and quiet obsessions, and the working class of Portuguese fishermen and domestic workers who earn their living on the water and in the laundries of the summer houses. Uneasy among Isobel?s privileged friends, Miranda finds herself drawn to Joseph Vargas, whose father keeps the lighthouse with his mysterious wife. In the summer, Joseph helps his father in the lobster boats, but in the autumn he returns to Brown University, where he?s determined to make something of himself. Since childhood, Joseph has enjoyed an intense, complex friendship with Isobel Fisher, and as the summer winds to its end, Miranda is caught in a catastrophe that will shatter Winthrop?s hard-won tranquility and banish Miranda from the island for nearly two decades.

Now, in the landmark summer of 1969, Miranda returns at last, as a renowned Shakespearean actress hiding a terrible heartbreak. On its surface, the Island remains the same --- determined to keep the outside world from its shores, fiercely loyal to those who belong. But the formerly powerful Fisher family is a shadow of itself, and Joseph Vargas has recently escaped the prison where he was incarcerated for the murder of Miranda?s stepfather 18 years earlier. What?s more, Miranda herself is no longer a naïve teenager, and she begins a fierce, inexorable quest for justice for the man she once loved...even if it means uncovering every last one of the secrets that bind together the families of Winthrop Island.

Discussion Guide

1. When Miranda first returns to Greyfriars in 1969, she says, ?I should approach the house like an old friend with whom you had quarreled long ago and since forgiven so far as to forget what the quarrel was about. But now I glimpsed the stone wall?I was eighteen again.? At the end of the novel, does Miranda still view Greyfriars in this way?

2. How is the locals? relationship with Winthrop Island different from the Families? relationship with the island? What do these differences tell us about the social structure of the island?

3. How does World War II affect the Island and its residents? Do you think it affects locals and Families differently? How does the power and status of the WASP elite change in the postwar era and how does this play out in the Islanders? lives?

4. Several romantic relationships play out through the course of the novel. How does the unequal social status of the participants affect each relationship?s power dynamics, its course, and its outcome? Do we still see these dynamics playing out today?

5. ?I?ll say this about the Island. The Families and the locals, they respect each other, which is more than you can say of a lot of places like this.? Do the locals and the Families really respect each other? How would you describe the relationship between the locals and the Families, and how does it change between 1930 and 1969?

6. In what ways have Miranda and Isobel changed since the passing of Hugh Fisher? In what ways have they stayed the same?

7. ?Nobody ever says what they really mean. There is this vast fabric of tender little lies, and all the important things are unspoken. Boiling there underneath. We only bother telling the truth when it?s too small to count.? How does this statement hold true throughout the novel?

8. Everyone on Winthrop Island has a secret. Are the secrets the locals and the Families are keeping worth it? How would their lives be different if they weren?t carrying around these secrets?

9. What do you think happens to Miranda in the years following the novel?s end?

Author Bio

Beatriz Williams is the *New York Times*, *USA Today* and internationally bestselling author of HUSBANDS & LOVERS, THE SUMMER WIVES, THE SECRET LIFE OF VIOLET GRANT, A HUNDRED SUMMERS, the *Wicked City* series, and several other works of historical fiction, including five novels in collaboration with fellow bestselling authors Karen White and Lauren Willig.

A graduate of Stanford University with an MBA in Finance from Columbia University, Beatriz worked as a communications and corporate strategy consultant in New York and London before her first novel was published in 2012. Beatriz?s books have won numerous awards, have been translated into more than a dozen languages, and appear regularly in bestseller lists around the world. Her essays have appeared in magazines such as *Real Simple* and *Southern Living*, among others, and she regularly reviews fiction for the *New York Times Book Review*.

Born in Seattle, Washington, Beatriz now lives in southeastern Connecticut with her husband and four mostly grown children.

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