



You
Don't
Know
Me

Susan May
WARREN

❧ *a deep haven novel* ❧

Praise for Susan May Warren's Deep Haven novels

My Foolish Heart

“A lighthearted, punchy story about two wounded souls who find love and a new lease on life . . . [that] nicely balances the funny and realistic.”

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“Warren’s charming inspirational romance has it all: the boy next door and the princess isolated in her tower, past histories and new beginnings, poignancy nicely blended with hopefulness, and troubled, everyday people doing their best to live according to their faith. Highly recommended.”

BOOKLIST

“Delightful . . . a story reminiscent of both *Steel Magnolias* and the Mitford novels, but with a personality and charm all its own.”

CROSSWALK.COM

“A truly delightful tale straight from the heart.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

“This delightful tale centered on family, friends, football, and trust in God’s wisdom . . . is a very entertaining and inspiring romance.”

FRESHFICTION.COM

The Shadow of Your Smile

“Warren handles well the many facets of lives intertwined by love, hope, and tragedy. This is a book of second chances for the Hueston family, for those who care about them, and for readers looking for clarity in their own lives.”

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“Quiet, yet powerful . . . Warren’s latest inspirational novel is a story of hidden pain. . . . At the end, hope is in full bloom.”

BOOKLIST

“A warm and charming tale that features well-developed characters and a solid story line.”

LIBRARY JOURNAL

“This heartwarming story serves as a gentle reminder of God’s faithfulness and that He is always near.”

CHRISTIAN RETAILING

“Warren handles [the story line] with such grace that the reader is drawn into the tale. . . . This is a beautifully written book.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

“An eminently readable story, perfect for book clubs . . . or to read on your own.”

CROSSWALK.COM

“*The Shadow of Your Smile* confronts the pain of tragedy, reminding those suffering that loss may define us, but God will not leave us.”

CHRISTIAN RETAILERS + RESOURCES

“[Warren] explores serious themes that impact marriages and relationships with authenticity and honesty, while maintaining the charm and whimsy that have marked her Deep Haven stories. . . . *The Shadow of Your Smile* . . . will undoubtedly garner her readers for life.”

TITLETRAKK.COM

A decorative rectangular frame with ornate, symmetrical scrollwork at each corner and small circular accents at the midpoints of the top and bottom edges. The frame is composed of two parallel lines.

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Prologue

THERE SIMPLY WASN'T ENOUGH GRACE to survive saying good-bye.

Claire O'Reilly knotted her hands on her lap as the plane lifted off, leaving her heart, her stomach, even her resolve, behind her on the St. Louis tarmac.

She couldn't do this. She wasn't finished being Deidre's mother.

Claire leaned her head on the seat rest, drew in a long breath. Three-plus hours to reconsider the decision she'd already made. Three hours to let the regrets gnaw at her. Three hours until she had to live with her decision for the rest of her life.

How did they expect her to let go, to never know the woman her daughter would become?

"Why are you going to Portland?"

The woman next to her, a blonde dressed in a business suit, had

pulled out a notepad from the seat pocket and was lowering the tray to work. She looked about thirty, old enough to have children, but not yet so old that she'd have to watch them make the decisions that would scar the rest of their lives.

"I'm going to Portland . . ." *To say good-bye.* She'd already made the decision. Why could she not push the words out? "To see my daughter."

"How old is she?"

"She's eighteen."

Eighteen and just finding herself, just breaking free of the chaos years. Just becoming the woman Claire knew she could be. No, she couldn't talk about this. "Do you have children?"

The woman flipped the pages of her notepad. "Yes, four. All in grade school."

Claire smiled. "I remember those days. When you wonder if anything you say to them will take."

"Oh, I hear you. I keep thinking that if I do the hard work now, I'll reap the rewards when they become adults."

Claire kept her smile, but the words found tender soil. She'd never see those rewards, would she?

She would never hold her daughter's precious babies, never smell their skin, never delight at their lopsided smiles. She'd never see them grow to become teenagers, maybe a replica of her daughter, smart and beautiful and strong.

This wasn't the ending she had planned.

Claire looked out the tiny window, watching the earth slip away, turn into precise boxed squares of farmland. If only people could have this vision, the order of it all, before they decided to fall in love, to run away from home, to throw away their futures.

Why was it that Deidre thought only until her next pocket of

fun instead of looking ahead to the ending God would give her? What had Claire done wrong to make her child so reckless?

“How many children do you have?” the woman asked.

“Three,” Claire said. But she’d have to get used to a different answer, wouldn’t she? *Two. A boy and a girl.*

She’d have to forget her oldest child, the one who had broken her heart, the one she hardly recognized last time she saw her.

“Your daughter is very brave,” a man named Frank Harrison had told her while she paced outside Deidre’s hospital room.

Brave. Bravery was three broken ribs, a collapsed lung, her daughter’s beautiful face turned purple and grotesque. Claire probably wouldn’t have recognized Deidre anyway, with the short, midnight-black hair, her wan face, bones protruding from the form under the sheets. Once upon a time, Deidre plowed through college brochures, fielded calls from volleyball coaches.

Then she met Blake Hayes.

Claire swallowed the acid pooling in her throat as they announced the beverage service over the speaker system. Her seatmate began to write on her notepad.

Claire closed her eyes. *Oh, God, I can’t do this. I don’t know how I’m going to do this.*

No, not nearly enough grace to say good-bye.

1

DAYS LIKE TODAY, Annalise Decker's happily ever after almost seemed unbreakable. With the perfect blue sky suggesting the golden days of autumn, the hill overlooking the town of Deep Haven a cascade of jewels—gold oaks, crimson maples, lush green pine—the hint of woodsmoke filling the air, she could stop, breathe in, and believe she belonged here.

Believe that she deserved this life.

“Mom! Watch this!” Henry's voice caught her attention back to the soccer practice—twenty youngsters outfitted in wool hats, fleece jackets under their club T-shirts, and sweatpants under their shin guards. Henry needed a haircut, his own hat discarded on the sideline bench, the wind parting his hair as he chased the ball. She wanted to yell at him to put the hat on, but that

might only encourage his sudden propensity to shy away from her good-bye kisses.

She would do anything to keep her eleven-year-old in her embrace, before he was yanked into the world of cell phones, dating, and drama. Perhaps she held him with a tighter grip than her older children, but motherhood turned out to be rife with too many small sorrows for her liking.

Once he was gone, she wasn't sure what she'd have left.

Annalise winced as his kick flew past the goal and into the tangle of forest beyond the field.

His shoulders slumped.

"It's okay, buddy!" she yelled because she couldn't help herself.

"C'mon, Annalise, give me your cookie recipe." Beth Iverson, dressed for soccer in her jeans, boots, a red parka, and a hat over her short brown hair, handed Annalise the Tupperware container, now half-empty. "And I'll promise Nathan my vote."

"You'll promise him your vote anyway," Annalise said as she pinched the cover back on. "He's the only one running."

"You are not putting those away." Lorelei reached for the container to pick out a chocolate chunk cookie, then passed it again to Karin, in the front row, cheering for her daughter as she chased the ball down the field. Their club team still played co-ed. "Jerry never served us cookies."

"Or put up signs or ran ads or hosted a luncheon," Karin said. "Nathan *does* know that no one is running against him, right?"

"He just wants to . . ." Win. For some reason, Nathan breathed and dreamed of this mayoral position. As if his entire life hinged on landing the electoral approval of the town of Deep Haven. Like he didn't already have it? "He wants to do a good job."

Apparently Annalise's role as his wife was to secure votes across

Deep Haven, from the PTA to the thrift store to the soccer field. She had Election Day circled in red on her calendar in the wild hope that then the Nathan she knew might return to her instead of this man who crept into their room long after the lights dimmed, after meeting with locals and knocking on the well-worn doors of their neighbors and friends.

As if anyone in Deep Haven didn't know Nathan Decker. Or his family.

Then again, that precise fact might be what drove him. What made him stretch the hours down at the realty office and over at his mother's house, or volunteering at the care center or running the church finances, and generally serving on too many town committees.

He probably didn't even need her campaign cookies with all his activities, but that's what wives did.

They campaigned. They kept everyone's lives running.

They made sure the secrets stayed in the dark.

"Please, Annalise. Tell us your secret," Karin said, catching cookie crumbs on her hand.

For a second, the question jolted Annalise, found the last patch of guarded soil in her heart. She looked at Karin, her brain blank, and couldn't breathe. Shoot, she wasn't made of glass—no one could see inside her.

"Not until after the election," she said, and her voice sounded just fine.

"Which is Minnesotan for no." Beth shook her head. "You Deckers know how to keep us in suspense."

"Uh-oh, here comes Henry." Karin handed her the container.

Annalise watched as her son trudged to the bench, kicked it, and sat down. She reached for her bag. "I think that's our cue."

"You're leaving?" Beth asked.

"I gotta run. The auditions for *Romeo and Juliet* are today, and I have to take Jason some food before Colleen's game."

Please, please let him get the lead. Because it was the only chance for redemption he had after turning down a job offer at Licks and Stuff Ice Cream. Nathan was always so tied up over finances and their children's education that he'd practically demanded Jason drop out of theater and get an after-school job to help pay for college. But the kid could get a scholarship with his acting abilities. Let him land a role, and then they'd tell Nathan together.

She didn't really want to keep things from Nathan, but she didn't want to cause tension either. Besides, every marriage had secrets, right?

Like Colleen and her new boyfriend. Annalise and her sixteen-year-old daughter had a showdown ahead over that lowlife Tucker Newman. If Colleen came to her senses, Annalise wouldn't have to tell Nathan about finding them in the front seat of Tucker's Jeep parked down by the lighthouse during lunch hour on Tuesday. Really, it wouldn't do Nathan's campaign any good to appear on Tucker's doorstep, ready to tear him limb from limb.

Yes, secrets protected them. The small secrets . . . and the large ones. Like the fact that "Nathan Decker for Mayor" just might get her—maybe even all of them—killed. The remote possibility hovered over her with every step Nathan took farther into the spotlight.

Okay, the *very* remote possibility. So remote that Annalise shrugged off the brush of fear that had traveled up her spine when Nathan announced today at breakfast that the media would be interviewing him—and her—at tomorrow's luncheon.

After all, they lived in a town of less than two thousand, in the

northern tip of Minnesota. And after twenty years, she could stop looking over her shoulder.

Probably.

“Of course you’re taking Jason dinner. Probably some homemade energy bars or a plate of casserole you have cooking in the Crock-Pot,” Beth said.

Actually, yes, but she must have frowned because Beth laughed. “You’re such a curve wrecker. Can’t you leave some of the all-star mothering for the rest of us?”

Annalise stared at her.

“You’re at all the practices—too often with cookies. You make bread from scratch. You attend every PTA meeting, every field trip, every school party. You make the rest of us feel like we’re bums when we serve a frozen pizza.”

“There’s nothing wrong with frozen pizza—”

Karin had turned, listening to the conversation. “When is the last time you cooked a frozen pizza?”

“I happen to like homemade—”

“And let’s not talk about the Christmas decorations.” This from Lorelei, who tossed her long black ponytail over her shoulder as she gathered her stadium blanket and rose from the bench. “I feel like I’m the Grinch with my wreath and twinkle lights. I think Deep Haven needs its own electrical grid just for the Decker Christmas display.”

They laughed, and Annalise forced a smile. “I’m not that bad. . . .”

Beth shook her head. “Oh, Annalise, we’re just giving you a hard time. Listen, you’re not *bad*. You’re wonderful. And Nathan is a shoo-in for mayor, so please don’t tempt us with cookies next week.” She leaned forward and caught Annalise in a one-armed hug.

“Uh-oh. Kelli Hanson just made a beeline for Chip,” Beth said, releasing her.

Annalise glanced at the field as Kelli sidled up to Beth’s husband, the assistant coach, catching him in conversation. A tie-dyed bandanna caught her long cherry-red hair, the rest of it blowing in the afternoon breeze. She wore green Army pants and an oversize wool sweater, a pair of purple Converse, and looked like she might still be in high school and not married to a local landscaper. She waved to her sixth-grade daughter, Marin, playing midfield. Her son, Casey, played football for the Huskies—Annalise remembered seeing him make the front page a few times.

“I better get over there. She doesn’t mean to, but she’s a natural flirt, and my husband is befuddled by her.”

“Kelli is a flirt?”

“I know you’ve only lived here for twenty years, Annalise, so you’ll have to trust me—Kelli is a little bit of trouble. You know she had Casey when she was seventeen.” Beth raised a perfect eyebrow. “And she has a tattoo.” She leaned over to Annalise. “A tramp stamp—right here.” She placed her hand at the small of her back. “That should tell you something.” Beth’s mouth tightened into a knot of disapproval. “I know I shouldn’t be judgmental, but . . . a gal can’t be too careful. You might want to keep an eye on her around Nathan.”

Annalise had no words for that. She’d always considered Kelli . . . well, original, if not pretty. She watched Beth climb down the bleachers and jog onto the field.

Not that Nathan would notice Kelli, anyway. He barely noticed Annalise these days.

“Are you kidding? Nathan’s only ever loved Annalise. I’ve known him since grade school, and he was a changed person when

Annalise came to town. I've never seen him so happy as the day they got married." Lorelei winked at her. "They were love at first sight. A storybook romance."

Well, not really. But they had managed to build a life together. "See you all next week," Annalise said.

Sunbaked, crispy leaves tumbled along the edges of the field as she tucked the empty container into the bag, then pulled out her keys, heavy with pictures of her kids and emblems of her life—a plastic volleyball, a Decker Real Estate fob, her Java Cup discount tag.

Henry trudged by her, and she jumped off the bleachers to catch up to him.

"It's okay, Henry," Annalise said as he reached the Suburban. He opened the hatch, then slid onto the bumper and began to pull off his cleats. "You don't make every shot."

"I quit." He wiped the back of his hand across his face, leaving a trail of grime. "I hate soccer. Why did you have to sign me up?" He turned and climbed through the car, disappearing behind the backseat.

"You hate soccer? Since when?" Ten minutes ago he'd been waving for her attention on the field.

"Sheesh, Mom. Since *always*."

Annalise checked her watch. They had about an hour before Colleen's game. As she closed the tailgate, she glanced around the parking lot for Nathan's Ford, but clearly he hadn't been able to make it to practice. Not that she expected him, but . . .

"Can you drop me off at the skateboard park?" Henry shoved his uniform into a ball in the backseat and climbed into the front.

"What about supper? You need to eat something before Colleen's game."

"I'm not hungry. Besides, Grandma always brings snacks."

"Popcorn isn't dinner." At least it shouldn't be. But even she looked forward to Helen's contraband volleyball snacks. What were grandmothers for but to spoil their grandchildren?

She often wondered how her own mother might have spoiled her kids. Would she have made them her homemade hot chocolate? Maybe the snickerdoodles that Annalise just couldn't seem to perfect?

"Fine. Buckle up."

"It's two blocks."

"I don't care. It's the law."

Henry rolled his eyes, and she quelled the urge to push his hair from his face. He looked so much like Nathan's boyhood pictures—round face, dark hair, vivid green eyes that took in the world. So much energy—just not for sports. The kid could probably win an Xbox gaming competition.

Henry also reminded her too much of her little brother, Ben.

Someday she'd love to see him again, know the man he turned out to be.

Annalise pulled into the parking lot of the skateboard park. "I'm going to get some coffee. Walk over to the school for Colleen's game. I'll meet you there. Do not go anywhere else."

"Thanks, Mom," he said as he slid out of the car. And he gave her a real smile as he tucked his skateboard under his arm.

Almost as good as a kiss.

She passed Marybeth Rose in her RAV4, dropping her daughter off at the curb for tonight's volleyball game, and lifted her hand to wave. Colleen had stayed after school to practice her serve. At least, Annalise hoped that was the truth. Just in case, she searched the parking lot for Tucker's Jeep and hated herself a little for it.

But she saw herself—too much—in Colleen, and it raised the tiny hairs on the back of her neck.

She drove down the hill toward the coffee shop, her hand closing around her phone. Maybe she should text Nathan, remind him about Colleen's game. Poor man spent most of last night going over his responses to the preposted questions for tomorrow morning's radio call-in show.

She passed houses decorated for Halloween—orange lawn bags packed with leaves, hay bales stacked in yards with stuffed scarecrows or hoboes leaning against them, a display of pumpkins. They still had weeks to go before Halloween—a holiday she'd forever been trying to get Nathan to celebrate. But their church had a moratorium against Halloween in any form and, well . . . she didn't like to make trouble.

One of these days, however, she might like to dress up. Maybe as Alice in Wonderland. Days like today, she could relate to Alice.

A local had propped up a homemade sign with *Go Husky Volleyball* written in blue paint against the white background. A win at tonight's final regular season game would take them to the conference sectionals.

How Annalise loved volleyball nights. They helped her remember who she'd been—the good parts—and added a little flavor to their weeknights, something different from the usual dinner and homework. On every other night, for high fun, she might read a book while Nathan went over his campaign finances.

Then, if she were extra lucky, he'd come to bed the same time she did. Maybe give her a good-night kiss.

Okay, a lot of people longed for their kind of ho-hum. A life without drama. She should be thankful for a man who came home every night, lived a life of faithfulness. And just because

they'd never had the type of romance with sparks, candlelight, and swooning, that didn't mean they didn't love each other. Not every marriage had to come from a romance novel.

Besides, she probably didn't have the right to long for anything more.

Yes, volleyball nights made her realize how grateful she was for all of it—her safe, ordered, happy life.

The Java Cup hosted a giant painted moose on its window—a nod toward the Moose Madness celebration this weekend. A tourist town, Deep Haven depended on visitors from the south craving fall color and perhaps a glimpse of wildlife—eagles, bears, foxes, deer, and especially moose. So the tourism board created an entire community event around the hunt for moose, including this weekend's Mad Moose community dance. This season, Indian summer eluded them, so they'd had to move their booths and outside activities to the local community center.

"What's in a Wild Moose Mocha?" Annalise said, reading the menu.

Kathy, the blonde owner, wore a fuzzy brown headband with giant moose ears. "It's a dark chocolate mocha with whip and a caramel drizzle."

"I don't know . . ."

"C'mon, Annalise, you only live once."

Actually . . . "Okay, yes. That. Please."

Nathan didn't need to know she was annihilating her diet. Again. Another secret kept for the sake of their happy life.

For a late afternoon, the Java Cup buzzed with conversation. She nodded to Jerry, the incumbent mayor—talking with Norm, who ran the fish place, in the corner easy chairs. At a long table sat the football coaches, Seb Brewster and Caleb Knight.

On the bulletin board, someone—possibly Nathan—had hung a Decker for Mayor pin. She'd handed them out at Nathan's booth at the Fisherman's Picnic this summer. Seeing all those faces, shaking all those hands—it made her realize just how embedded she'd become in Deep Haven.

"One Wild Moose Mocha," Kathy said and handed her the cup. "Careful, it's hot."

Annalise paid Kathy with the card on her key ring.

"See you at the game? I just love watching Colleen play. She's got a good future in Husky volleyball." Kathy handed the card back.

"She's thrilled to be a starter," Annalise said. She took her cup to the coffee counter to grab a stir stick and work in the whipped cream. Indeed, at any other school, sophomore Colleen would sit the bench until her junior year. Being in a small town gave all of them opportunities unheard of in a big city.

Like hiding out where her sins couldn't find her. And starting over. And becoming someone who desperately wanted to deserve the life God had given her.

Outside the giant picture windows that overlooked Deep Haven's harbor, Lake Superior had kicked up, the waves platinum as they rippled against the brilliant late-afternoon sun. Sunlight poured through the windows, marinating the smells of leather and coffee. Outside, ruby and amber leaves tumbled down the sidewalk, gems bullied by the wind. She'd have to cover her mums tonight.

Soon snow would turn the world white, hiding the rocky shoreline and capturing them in ice.

But today—today her world was unbreakable.

She replaced the lid, took a sip, then turned.

And everything stopped. Sure, conversation in the coffee shop

continued to hum, and outside, the wind tickled the hanging wind chimes, but as Annalise stared at the man seated by the door, the one who looked up at her with sad eyes, apology in them, she couldn't breathe. Couldn't move. Couldn't think beyond . . . *No*.

Perhaps she shook her head, because he rose to his feet. "Annalise."

He didn't look so different from the last time she'd seen him—a moment so vividly etched in her brain that she had no trouble pulling it out, comparing him to the man he'd been. Faded, even unremarkable leather jacket. Short, now-graying hair. Jeans and boots—attire designed to blend in. Hands in his pockets. He could be her uncle visiting from Hoboken for all the presence he had.

He hadn't changed a bit.

He'd always be the man who had saved her life. The man who had given her a new identity. Who had helped her build this amazing, normal, perfect lie.

The man who could steal it all away.

"Hello, Frank," she said softly to her Witness Security agent.



Nathan Decker stood on top of the world.

He stood at the apex of the foundation of the unfinished house, where the Palladian windows would be, and held his camera to his eye, panning for exactly the right shot. So many choices—with the twilight drizzling crimson across the crisp waves of Lake Superior, foaming along the rocky shore; the sky stirred with the palette of magenta, chartreuse, and turquoise; the sun a simmering ball of hot pumpkin. Any one of these shots might catch the eye of a curious Internet surfer.

The right buyer could turn this house into a castle.

Hopefully one with a healthy credit rating and a desire to live on the most beautiful tip of Minnesota, tucked away in a half-finished shell of a house twenty miles from the nearest grocery store. He'd list it as needing TLC, call the location charming and nestled in the woods, and use words like *privacy* and *retreat* and *hideaway*.

He still couldn't believe he'd finally talked Nelda McIntyre into parting with the place. That's what years of Sundays singing ancient hymns at the senior center could do for a man's career. And reputation.

Most of those old folks grew up with his grandfather, his uncles, his cousins, and remembered when the Decker name meant success, even honor.

He intended to bring that back.

For a moment more, Nathan watched the waves crash on the rocks below the cliff that dropped straight down some twenty feet. The violence of waves against the rocky shoreline had the power to trap him with their rhythm—the sound of the surf hitting the cliff like a punch, deep inside the gut of the rocky wall. The giant gulp as the water rushed away only to hurl itself again against the rocks. Over and over, never ending, until he could feel it pulsing within him, a heartbeat of doom, reminding him of who he was, imprisoning him inside the Decker legacy.

It had taken him thirty years, but with this mayoral race, he'd break free from the current of shame and failure.

Nathan took a few more pictures of the tall cement beams that comprised the shell of the massive great room, then moved to capture the building's layout, how it curved along the shore like it belonged there. A cement shell, really, a dream unfinished by Nelda's husband, a man taken before his time.

The right owner simply needed the vision to see beyond its legacy to the potential.

Nathan crunched across the gravel driveway and climbed into his used Ford Focus. He'd purchased it for the gas mileage, no frills, something Jason and Colleen could drive. Someday, he intended to get something fast and shiny. Maybe after he got Jason, Colleen, and Henry through college. And after he replaced Annalise's beater SUV. And his mother could use a new deck after forty years of living in the same tiny bungalow.

But someday.

He glanced at the dashboard clock as he turned around for the trek up the long dirt drive to the highway. Annalise had mentioned something about Henry's soccer practice—he'd wanted to stop by. But he needed to log in these pictures, get them up on the Net before Colleen's volleyball game. Still, a sudden longing to see his wife, maybe spend five minutes holding her hand while watching their son, churned inside him, rearranging his plans.

He'd stop by, say hi, then pop into the office to post the listing.

His campaign depended on his selling this property and digging his bank account out of the red. Thankfully, Annalise had no idea how far he'd plunged them into debt or she'd start talking about working at the nursing home again. Not that he'd mind the extra paycheck or her having her own career, but she loved her volunteer work at the school, around town at the Goodwill, the blood drive, and on the theater board, and she liked being able to attend the kids' events, go to lunch with the soccer moms, hit the gym.

And he loved giving her the freedom to do it. Sometimes, when he saw her wave to him from the stands at the volleyball games, in front of the entire town, looking pretty with her long blonde hair and incredible blue eyes, that old feeling swept through him.

Disbelief that he'd married so well. That God had given him the most beautiful woman in Deep Haven. It was all he could do to keep up with the grace, to be the husband he'd pledged to be. Honestly, she probably deserved better, but he wouldn't tell her that.

All he wanted was to do right by her. To grow old with her.

Most of all, to never end up like his old man.

Nathan pulled out onto the highway and turned on the radio, catching the local broadcast. Vern and Neil, the sports jockeys, were on, giving a pregame analysis of tonight's volleyball game. They mentioned Colleen and her spike, the stats of the team.

He punched the gas, glancing again at the time.

The soccer players were just winding up the post-practice pep talk when he pulled in to Rec Park. He spotted Kelli Hanson, coach Chip Iverson, and his wife, Beth, handing out cupcakes to the line of boys.

No Annalise. He let his car idle for a moment, debated asking, then figured she'd bundled Henry up to run him home before Colleen's game.

Which meant he had time to upload these pictures and at least get them posted in the listing he'd created today. He'd add the tags, features, amenities, and put out a few nibbles to past clients tomorrow.

With luck—a lot of luck—this property would move within a week. Sure, they were in a recession, but the right property, with the right salesman and a motivated seller . . . He just had to work his contacts. He knew a few investors who might be interested.

He pulled out of Rec Park, waving to a couple of the parents, and onto Main Street. His office overlooked the lake at the far end of town—which, in a town the size of Deep Haven, wasn't saying much. Still, sitting in his chair watching the sun over the

harbor, turning the masts of the moored sailboats to gold, he could convince himself that he'd made the right decision staying in Deep Haven.

Nathan was motoring past the Java Cup when he spotted Annalise's truck. Hard to miss—the Husky Volleyball sticker on the side, the dent in the fender where he'd backed into his snowmobile trailer. Maybe he'd stop in and surprise his wife.

She'd pay him with a smile, one that reminded him why he got out of bed every morning and headed in to work.

He parked and climbed out, noticing he'd gotten dust on his dress shoes tromping around the old McIntyre place. He bent for a moment, wiped them off with his leather glove, then smacked his hands and headed for the coffee shop.

The bell above the door jangled as he walked inside. A few heads popped up. Mayor Jerry Mulligan, in one of the chairs in the corner, talking with Norm, the bait shop owner. Nathan lifted a hand and smiled.

Then he looked around for Annalise.

He found her sitting at a table in the corner of the adjacent room, deep in a conversation huddle with someone he didn't recognize. Graying hair, leather jacket. Dark, almost-pensive eyes. The man was talking with Nathan's wife as if he knew her, his hand on the table about to reach out and touch her arm.

They didn't hear Nathan approach. In fact, Annalise was leaning forward, wearing a strange expression. He might even call it fear, although he'd seen fear on her before—that time Henry drove off the cliff on his bicycle and broke his shoulder. Or the time Colleen wandered off for over an hour at the Minnesota State Fair. Or that day Jason crashed the snowmobile and had to hike back in the darkness, two hours late.

No, this didn't look like that motherly fear.

This fear he didn't recognize, and eerie fingers curled around him.

"Lise?"

She looked up and for a moment just blinked at him. As if she didn't know him.

The expression flushed words out of him. If he didn't know better, he would have thought he'd walked into something clandestine.

But this was his wife. The woman he'd known for twenty years. She couldn't keep a secret from him if she wanted to.

Then her smile appeared, and the tightness in his chest broke free.

"Nathan. Hi." She reached out, took his hand. "I'm sorry; were you looking for me?"

His gaze darted to the man and back. "No . . . I was driving by. I stopped by soccer practice. Where's Henry?" He turned, expecting to see their son at the book corner, working his iPod, pretending not to know any of them.

"He's up . . . he's . . . I dropped him off at the park. He'll meet us at the game."

Annalise glanced at her companion, and for a second, the eerie feeling returned. But Nathan shook it away and held out his hand.

"I'm Nathan Decker, Annalise's husband. I don't think we've met. Are you new in town?"

The man looked Nathan over as if assessing him. Then he stood, smiled, and took his hand. Nathan had apparently passed. "I'm Frank Harrison." He glanced at Annalise. "Annalise's uncle."

Uncle.

Nathan opened his mouth, waiting for words. "I . . . I didn't

know that Lise had an uncle." He looked at her. "You didn't tell me you had an uncle."

Funny, she appeared almost as shocked by this man's pronouncement. She gave him an odd smile. "My . . . uncle Frank. From . . . Pittsburgh."

Nathan turned back to Frank. "This is wonderful. I thought her family was all killed in the accident."

Frank blinked as if he had forgotten the demise of her family. Then he nodded. "Yes. They were. Except I was out of the country. On business. I haven't been back for . . . a while."

Frank let him go, and Nathan reached for a chair. "What kind of business are you in?"

"Military." Frank sat and leaned back, crossing one leg over the other, folding his arms. "What do you do?"

"I'm in real estate. And I'm running for mayor."

Frank drew in a breath. "Really. Hmm."

"It's a small town," Lise said, almost too quickly, as if Nathan's bid for mayor were inconsequential. "Very small."

"Not so small that we can't make a difference," Nathan said, casting a glance at her. She turned away, took a sip of her coffee. Huh. "We actually swell to about twenty thousand in the summertime with all the tourist traffic up here. The right laws on the books and we can encourage more tourism, more growth, really help the families who live here year-round survive. In fact, we're having a luncheon tomorrow with a few media folks from Duluth to talk about fresh ideas I hope to bring to the mayor's office."

Frank flicked a gaze over to Annalise, now staring at her coffee. She drew in a breath as she looked up. "Nathan will make a wonderful mayor. But I'm really very behind the scenes."

What was she talking about? "Hardly. This woman is on every

committee in town—from the PTA to the blood drive. She’s the backbone of my campaign.” Nathan reached for her hand, but she had tucked it into her pocket. And her smile—yes, that was fake, like the time he’d given her touch-on lamps for Christmas.

“We need to get going to the game.” She stood. “It’s great to see you, um, Uncle Frank.”

What? “Lise, what are you doing? You suddenly have family and you’re sending him away?” Nathan turned to Frank. “Where are you staying?”

He seemed to catch Frank off guard, as if the man hadn’t thought about it. His eyes flickered to Annalise’s.

“At the Super 8,” she said.

“No, you’re staying with us. You’re family—the first of Lise’s we’ve ever met.” Nathan stood and slipped his arm around her waist. “She’s always so quiet about her family. As if they never existed.”

“She suffered a terrible loss,” Frank said quietly.

“I know. Which is even more reason for you to stay with us. We’re delighted you’re here. And if you haven’t eaten dinner, I’d love to buy you a hot dog at the volleyball game. Our Lady Huskies are undefeated in the conference and my daughter—your great-niece—is a starter on varsity. She’s got a spike that will turn you cold. Probably my wife’s genes because I was never any good at sports, although she claims she never played volleyball.”

He waited a beat for Frank to contradict him and, when he didn’t, added a shrug. “Anyway, our two boys and my mother will be at the game. They’ll be thrilled to meet you too; won’t they, honey?”

Annalise was staring at him wide-eyed. What did she want him to do? This was her only living relative. Finally a connection to his

wife's past. Maybe he'd get more information about the accident that had claimed her parents and two siblings. And left her with that scar on her leg. The accident that still woke her, weeping, at night.

Nathan held out his hand again. "Welcome to Deep Haven, Uncle Frank."

A Note from the Author

THIS NOVEL BEGAN on a flight to Portland. I sat next to a woman who was fidgeting in her seat, clearly distraught at some turmoil in her heart. After a few nudges from the Lord, I leaned over to ask her how she was and why she was going to Portland.

“To say good-bye to my daughter, who is going into the Witness Security Program.” She looked at me wearing a haunted expression. “She witnessed a murder and now the family of the convicted killer is threatening her. She isn’t safe.”

I stared at her. “For how long will she be hiding?”

“Forever,” she said.

I swallowed. After a moment: “How old is your daughter?”

“Twenty-one.”

“Why don’t you go with her?” I asked, not quite able to comprehend the magnitude of her loss. Not knowing if your daughter was alive, not seeing her get married, not knowing your grandchildren . . . so many unbearable sacrifices.

“I can’t. I have a husband who is handicapped and two small children. They can’t move.”

I didn’t pry any further, but my heart wrenched as I prayed

for her, and right then *You Don't Know Me* was birthed. At first I thought it might be the mother's story. But as I worked on it, I realized it was also the daughter's story. A story of secrets, of living another life. A story of second chances but also of regret. A story of grace and walking in it every day, hoping for a happy ending.

As I wrote, I discovered that *You Don't Know Me* was also a story of how secrets can burrow in and destroy our lives even when we believe we are protecting the ones we love. Big secrets and small ones. Like the kind a mother and daughter might keep or the kind a son might keep from his father. While we think that secrets protect our loved ones, secrets are a cancer, and instead of bringing peace, they eat away at our security. Instead of being able to forget the secrets, the longer we keep them, the more they invade our everyday thinking. We wake up with our secrets haunting us, and just when we think we've put them behind us, they creep up and remind us of our deceit. They keep us from believing that we deserve a happy ending. They keep us from accepting the grace that God longs to give us.

I owe credit to my pastor, Dale McIntire, for the church scene in chapter 9. He read that psalm; he spoke those words (or close to them). And as God would have it, he spoke not only to Annalise but to me. See, God wants to break through the identities we've constructed for ourselves, the fears we have of discovery, to say, "I see you. I know you. I know everything about you, and yet I love you. Period. You don't have to fear the truth with Me because I already know it. I know exactly who you are, and I still died to save you."

In that moment, I heard the words of "Amazing Grace"—"How precious did that Grace appear the hour I first believed" (or realized just how wretched I was and how much I needed the

Savior). This is the gift God gives us when we face those secrets that hold us captive. His grace. Salvation.

A fresh start.

We all keep secrets, and frankly many of us are living dual identities—the one the world knows and the one created by the secrets in our heart. God sees them both and He still loves you. More, He longs to set you free. He can free you. Heal you. Fix your marriage, your family, your situation. I know because I've seen Him do this in my life.

I pray that the truth sets you free to be the person God died for you to become. Thank you for reading *You Don't Know Me*.

Live in truth, my friends.

Susan May Warren