A romantic scene of a couple holding hands on a beach at sunset. The man is on the left, wearing a dark t-shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a white dress and a brown leather watch. The background shows the ocean and a bright, hazy sky.

Just Look Up

a novel

COURTNEY
WALSH

Praise for Novels by
COURTNEY WALSH



Change of Heart

“Walsh has penned another endearing novel set in Loves Park, Colo. The emotions are occasionally raw but always truly real.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

“*Change of Heart* is a beautifully written, enlightening, and tragic story. . . . This novel is a must-read for lovers of contemporary romance.”

RADIANT LIT

Paper Hearts

“Walsh pens a quaint, small-town love story . . . [with] enough plot twists to make this enjoyable to the end.”

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

“Be prepared to be swept away by this delightful romance about healing the heart, forgiveness, [and] following your dreams . . .”

FRESH FICTION

“Walsh writes a small-town setting, a sweet, slow-building romance between two likable characters and a host of eclectic secondary characters.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

“Well written and charming.”

NOVEL REVIEWS

“I discovered Courtney Walsh’s novels a few years ago and quickly added her to my must-buy-immediately list. Her stories have never failed to delight me, with characters who become friends and charming settings that beckon as if you’ve lived there all your life. You won’t want to miss *Paper Hearts!*”

DEBORAH RANEY, AUTHOR OF THE CHICORY INN NOVELS SERIES

“Delightfully romantic with a lovable cast of quirky characters, *Paper Hearts* will have readers smiling from ear to ear! Courtney Walsh has penned a winner!”

KATIE GANSHERT, AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR OF *A BROKEN KIND OF BEAUTIFUL*

“*Paper Hearts* is as much a treat as the delicious coffee the heroine serves in her bookshop. . . . Like the matchmakers that surrounded the couple in the novel, I couldn’t help cheering them on. A poignant, wry, sweet, and utterly charming read.”

BECKY WADE, AUTHOR OF *MEANT TO BE MINE*

A Sweethaven Summer

“Walsh’s touching debut will have readers longing for a visit to the idyllic vista of Sweethaven. . . . The touch of mystery, significant friendships, and a charming setting create a real treasure.”

ROMANTIC TIMES

“Walsh has created a charming, inviting, homesick-inducing world with Sweethaven. I want to hug the ladies featured in the book and learn from them. . . . To fellow readers, this is a series you don’t want to miss.”

NOVELCROSSING.COM

“A masterful word painting, *A Sweethaven Summer* is a story of loss, regret, forgiveness, and restoration. Novel Rocket and I give it our highest recommendation. It’s a five-star must-read.”

ANE MULLIGAN, PRESIDENT, NOVEL ROCKET

“This book captivated me from the first paragraphs. Bittersweet memories, long-kept secrets, the timeless friendships of women—and a touch of sweet romance. Beautifully written and peopled with characters who became my friends, this debut novel is one for my keeper shelf—and, I hope, the first of many to come from Courtney Walsh’s pen.”

DEBORAH RANEY, AUTHOR OF THE CHICORY INN NOVELS SERIES

“*A Sweethaven Summer* is a sweet debut, filled with characters whose hopes, dreams, and regrets are relevant and relatable. A great book club read!”

SUSAN MEISSNER, AUTHOR OF *A FALL OF MARIGOLDS*

“*A Sweethaven Summer* is a stunning debut. . . . With a voice that sparkles, Courtney Walsh captured my heart in this tender story of forgiveness and new beginnings. It’s certainly a great beginning for this talented author.”

CARLA STEWART, AUTHOR OF *THE HATMAKER’S HEART*

“Courtney Walsh weaves a captivating tale that taps into the universal desire for belonging and happiness. This delightful debut has a bit of mystery, a bit of romance, a beautiful setting, and an intriguing cast of characters.”

MEGAN DIMARIA, AUTHOR OF *SEARCHING FOR SPICE*

“*A Sweethaven Summer* shines with moments of hope and tenderness. With interesting characters, a delightful setting, and a compelling plot, this is one of those stories that stays with you.”

TINA ANN FORKNER, AUTHOR OF *RUBY AMONG US*

A Sweethaven Homecoming

“Courtney Walsh puts the sweet in Sweethaven. If you’re looking for an uplifting, hope-filled story filled with characters you’ll feel like you know, *A Sweethaven Homecoming* has it!”

MARYBETH WHALEN, AUTHOR OF *THE BRIDGE TENDER*

“*A Sweethaven Homecoming* is a triumph! With the foundations of family, love, and faith, The Circle grows through heartbreak, loss, and betrayal and emerges renewed in their love for one another and, most of all, their love of themselves.”

SUSAN OPEL, CREATIVE EDITOR, *PAPER CRAFTS MAGAZINE*

A Sweethaven Christmas

“Readers will smell the pine of Christmas trees and the aromas of holiday food and will hold close the friendships they develop with the characters.”

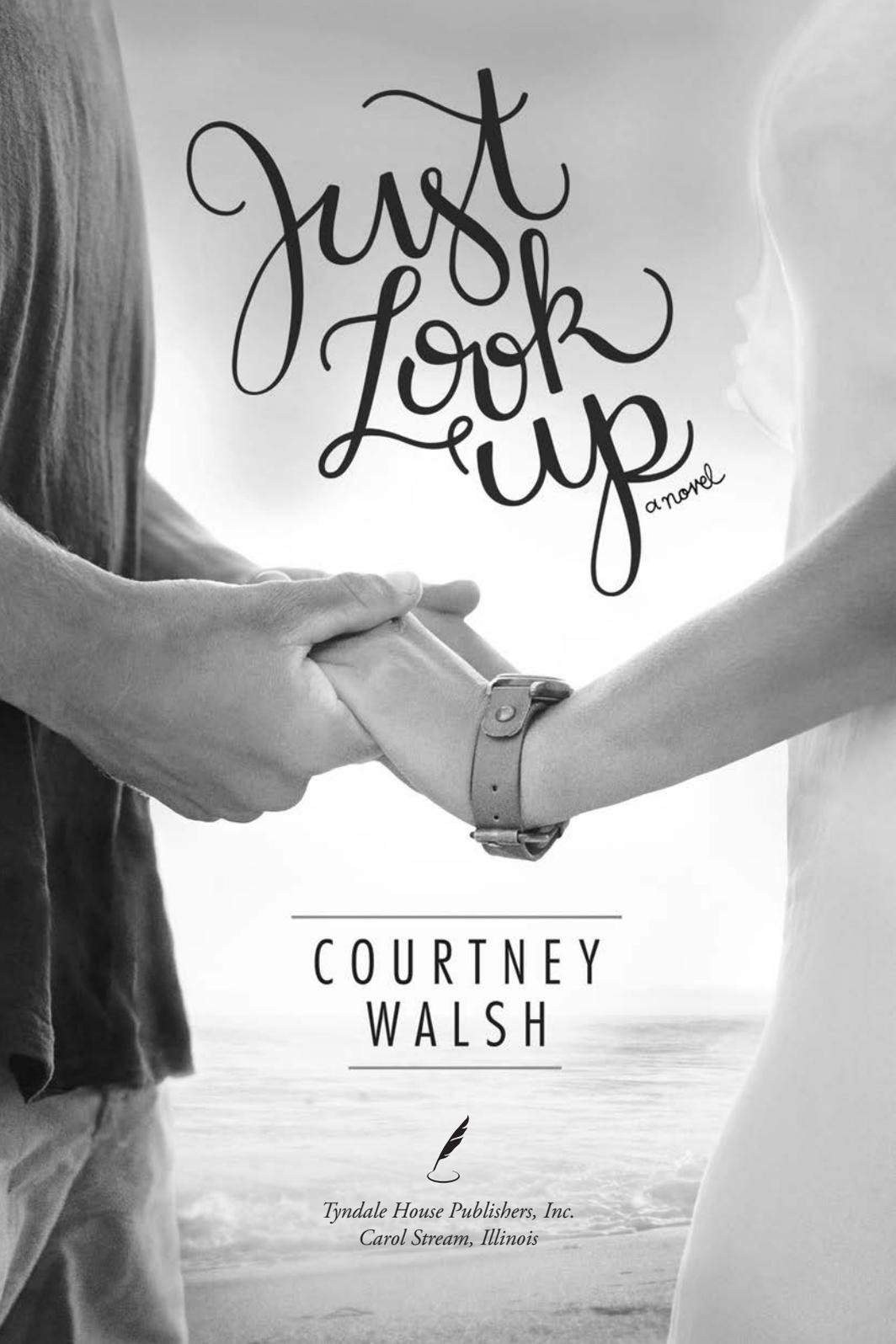
ROMANTIC TIMES

“Walsh’s compelling writing style creates unforgettable characters readers come to know and love, while her story lines contend with issues common to us all. . . . Even though the ending is emotional (keep [a] box of Kleenex handy), it’s a story of hope, goodwill, and good friends that is perfect for the Christmas season.”

EXAMINER.COM

JUST LOOK UP





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a novel

COURTNEY
WALSH



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CHAPTER

1

JUST BREATHE.

Lane Kelley rested her hand on her knee, willing it to stop bouncing. She watched from behind her desk as Marshall ushered the client—a young guy in jeans who appeared to be valiantly attempting a goatee, albeit unsuccessfully—through the glass doors of the conference room at JB Sweet & Associates, the interior design firm where she worked as one of many designers.

You can do this. It's what you've been working for.

The chance of a lifetime.

That's what Marshall had called it—the *chance of a lifetime*. “You’re one of five people in the company who will get to be part of this project, Lane. The higher-ups are watching. This is huge. You’re not going to get an opportunity like this again.”

She understood. She’d been pursuing this since she started at the design firm seven years ago as part of her senior seminar at Northwestern. She hadn’t expected to stay here this long, but she quickly found a home at JB Sweet, and she was good at what she did.

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The last seven years had gone by in a blur, leaving Lane with half-remembered moments of creating branded environments for new and established companies by using her artistic abilities and her love of interior design. Her college internship had turned into a career—one that afforded her a luxury loft in the city, a shared personal assistant, and now the chance to become the next creative director at JB Sweet.

Chloe welcomed the goatee guy—Ashton—and the rest of the team from Solar into the meeting room and flashed Lane her trademark oh-my-goodness eyes. Chloe understood, more than anyone, what this meeting meant to Lane. In some ways, this would be *their* promotion. After all, if Lane did get the position, she'd already promised that her first request would be for Chloe to move up with her.

Chloe gave Lane one more knowing nod as she passed by again, and Lane actually considered pinching herself.

This was the moment she'd been dreaming of—a chance to win over the execs at Solar, to convince them that yes, they very much should give JB Sweet & Associates the honor of designing and branding their new business space, because yes, she and her team would work round the clock to make sure the branded space would reflect Solar's unique, casual-yet-trendy style.

"They love our aesthetic," Marshall had told her. *"I mean, bring your A game, but expect good things. According to Ashton, the whole team is leaning our way."*

And that was *before* her pitch. All she had to do was *not* mess it up.

She'd run through her presentation well into the wee hours of the morning, starting in on the caffeine around 4 a.m. She was ready. Excited, if a little jittery. Her designs were great. She could do this. She could wow them.

And yet, thinking of it now, she felt rocking-on-a-boat-in-choppy-waters sick. She'd never had a chance this big in her life.

Don't mess this up, Lane.

The rest of the executives from Solar, a tech company in the *Forbes* top ten last year, filed past. They shook hands with Marshall

and the others from her team as they walked through the door. But not Lane. She was still at her desk, busy trying not to throw up.

Stay in control. These guys have no idea that your nerves are taking you out to the woodshed. No one can make you feel inferior in this arena. This isn't high school. This is where you shine.

The guys from Solar—she could only call them “guys” because not a single one of them actually looked like a man—all resembled their fearless leader, Ashton, aka Mr. Wanna Goatee. Jeans, hoodies, Converse One Stars. No suits for this company. Somehow she found that more intimidating, not less. After all, she'd never been the trendy type.

She shoved aside the unwelcome image of a sweater that didn't quite cover a protruding midsection.

“Honey, I tried to tell you, you shouldn't wear clothes that are so tight.”

She'd been aching for sympathy, but her mother had only given empty *I-told-you-sos* and the sour taste of disapproval. She hadn't meant to disregard Lane's feelings; she just wanted to help. At least that's what Lane tried to tell herself.

Nobody here knows about that.

Marshall looked terribly outdated next to the Solar execs with his white button-down and geometrically patterned red tie. Handsome in his own way, yet everyone in the room aged twenty years in the presence of their fetus-clients.

Marshall broke away from the others and headed her way.

Her phone pinged, and she glanced at it almost without thinking. Instantly she wished she hadn't.

“What is it?” Marshall asked when he reached her. “You have that look.”

She tapped on the notification. She'd set her phone up to alert her whenever a competing design firm posted something on social media, and this was a big one.

“Julia Baumann.” She looked up at Marshall. “You didn't tell me Innovate was pitching your friend Ashton, too.” She showed Marshall

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the photo, a cozy image of Julia Baumann and the goatee guy in the next room. “The caption says, ‘Sweet things are happening for Innovate. Details coming soon.’” She frowned. “There’s a winking emoji and *sweet* is in all caps. Is she sending a message to us?”

He took the phone from her and read the post for himself. “I’m sure you’re reading too much into this.”

“I thought you said we practically had this one ‘in the bag.’”

Marshall shrugged. “We do, Lane. Maybe she’s trying to get under your skin.”

Well, that would be juvenile. Lane groaned. She didn’t want to think about Innovate just before she walked into that room. Julia Baumann had a way of swiping clients right out from under her, and it was starting to feel personal. Lane found most of the design community open and friendly—encouraging, even—but Julia was none of those things.

Lane took another glance at the photo. “They look awfully friendly, Marshall, and you know Julia probably had a solid pitch.”

“Maybe.” Marshall squeezed her hand. “But ours is going to blow them away.”

He couldn’t possibly know that. She thought back to their many long team meetings—how many times had Marshall deferred to her, chosen her ideas and trusted her vision? What if he’d been wrong to do so? What if she’d misunderstood Solar and gone in completely the wrong direction?

No. She shook her insecurities away. Their pitch was ready—and it was on point. JB Sweet himself would have to take note once she presented her plans. She’d finally get that promotion and maybe even take a little vacation to celebrate.

She’d never taken a vacation.

“Come on, forget Innovate. You’re ready for the big leagues.” Marshall walked her over to the small huddle at the end of the room where the rest of their team had gathered.

She barely listened as Marshall gave the team his version of a pep talk. He scanned the circle and was met with overenthusiastic

nodding from everyone but Lane. She didn't do overenthusiastic. She did focus. She did the game face. She did control.

And she did it well.

"Lane, you okay?"

"I'm ready." She didn't bother trying to explain her readiness or convincing Marshall she really meant it. That's what weak women did. And she never wanted to be one of those again.

"Okay. We'll start in just a few minutes. Knock 'em dead, guys." Marshall waited until the others had dispersed, then turned his attention back to Lane. "You feel good?"

She nodded as she ran through her pitch in her mind.

"Remember, this is the chance—"

"Of a lifetime." She cut him off. "I know." *Don't remind me. I'm nervous enough as it is.*

"I went out on a limb to give you this meeting, Lane. You're up to this, right?" He raised a brow as if issuing a challenge.

"You know I'm up to this." She clicked her phone's screen off, wishing she could click off the sick feeling in her stomach that easily.

"That's my girl." He clapped a hand on her shoulder. Like she was one of the guys. Very professional.

She had to hand it to him—he was doing an excellent job of keeping their relationship hidden. Even she found it hard to believe he had any romantic feelings for her at all.

"You go ahead," she told Marshall. "I'll be right there."

Breathe. She was running through her opening one last time when her phone pinged again, and as if she were programmed to do so, she pulled it out and glanced at it.

Julia had posted another image, this one a photo of the mock-up Innovate had presented to Solar only hours ago. The caption read, *We're calling it "Solarvate." Can't wait to get started.*

Lane's mouth went dry, her stomach hollow. The image on the screen looked so elegant, so regal, so not what she had planned for this pitch meeting.

"You ready?" Chloe stood at her side, looking a little more tired

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than usual, the way she often did after one of their all-nighters. Lane made a mental note to get her assistant a gift certificate for a massage or give her some time off to thank her for being so helpful.

Chloe had probably seen Julia's posts too. She kept tabs on them the same way Lane did. But Lane had to believe Solar hadn't made up their mind already. If they had, would they really be sitting here in JB Sweet's conference room?

She did a quick survey of Julia's design, then turned her phone to vibrate. "I'm ready."

Chloe nodded and moved out of the way as Lane passed by. She smoothed her black dress pants and sat down next to Marshall.

After everyone was seated, JB called the meeting to order. The Solar executives, with their Starbucks to-go cups, their casual shoes, their bordering-on-shaggy hair and impress-me expressions, all turned their attention to the man. Marshall might've aged twenty years in the presence of the Solar execs, but next to them, JB seemed downright prehistoric.

Lane had always found him to be a quirky kind of man, one who used words like *fellow* and had a bushy white mustache that made her doubt the presence of an upper lip at all. Ashton should take a few pointers from JB. That man knew how to grow facial hair.

Lane half listened to JB's introduction of Solar—stating facts she'd already researched on her own. Next, JB gave a short pitch about why his firm was the best to take on the massive task of creating and designing a branded space for a cutting-edge tech business like Solar.

JB assured them that the space they had planned for Solar was not only functional but truly creative at its core—something the artistic Solar execs would certainly appreciate. JB was nothing if not an excellent salesman. Maybe that's why this *fellow* was still running the show after all these years.

Lane glanced down at her tablet, mentally reciting her opening lines, when the phone in the bag near her feet lit up, vibrating loudly enough to pull Miles's attention.

“Might want to silence that thing,” her coworker hissed.

She fished the phone out of her bag and pressed the button to stop the noise before anyone else noticed, but not before she saw that it was her mother calling. She sent the call to voice mail. She supposed she was due for her monthly guilt-trip phone call—it had been at least that long since she’d spoken to her mom.

In her hand, the phone started vibrating again.

Mom, you have the worst timing.

She hit the button to shut it up, then turned off the power.

Marshall took JB’s spot at the front of the room and introduced himself. “I think we’re ready to begin.” He glanced at Lane.

Just breathe. Part of her, she supposed, would always feel like a fraud. Most days, despite her Northwestern education and years of experience, Lane still felt like she was playing dress-up in the closet of someone much older, much thinner, and much more professional than she ever felt.

And yet she’d mastered the art of playing this part perfectly, as if she were born for the role.

“. . . and we’re sure you’ll be as impressed with her as we are. Lane Kelley.” Marshall spoke her name, pulling her out of her own head.

She met his eyes and he leaned forward as if to will her out of her seat.

Had time suddenly stopped moving?

Lane stood, taking her place next to the big screen. *You can do this.* She flipped open the cover of her tablet and drew in a deep breath as the image of a mood board that perfectly captured their design popped up on the screen beside her.

She’d created the image herself. Most people were visual, and the images, all of them, needed to conjure the same feelings the space itself would. Every item on the mood board had been carefully—painstakingly—chosen.

Lane knew Solar inside and out, she reminded herself. She’d read every article, every blurb, every tweet and Facebook post that

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had anything to do with the business this team had built. She was wrapped up in the details—and it was about to pay off.

In spades.

She had her game face on. As she stood there, every insecurity melted away. They were in her world now, and here, she knew how to get things done.

Lane was about to deliver her first sentence when the glass door of the conference room opened and Chloe appeared. She wore an apologetic look on her face and Lane knew her well enough to tell she wasn't happy to steal the attention.

"I'm sorry to interrupt." Chloe looked at Lane. "Lane, you've got a phone call."

"Can't it wait?" Marshall spoke through clenched teeth, doing a bad job of pretending he wasn't annoyed.

Chloe's face fell. "I'm afraid not."

Marshall pressed his lips together and glared at Lane, telepathically communicating the words undoubtedly running through his mind: *Don't screw this up.*

"Can you take a message, Chloe?" Lane asked. "I'm just getting ready to begin."

"I don't think—"

"Take a message," Marshall cut her off.

"There's been an accident, Lane," Chloe said. "You need to take the call."