



## The Summer Garden (A Chesapeake Shores Novel Book 9)

By Sherryl Woods



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Falling for "Maddening Moira" O'Malley was the unexpected highlight of Luke O'Brien's Dublin holiday. So when she pays a surprise visit to Chesapeake Shores, Luke is thrilled...at first. A fling with this wild Irish rose is one thing, but forever? Maybe someday, but not when he's totally focused on establishing a business that will prove his mettle to his overachieving family.

Given Luke's reaction, Moira has some soul-searching of her own to do. Scarred by her father's abandonment, she wonders if Luke, with his playboy past, is truly the family man she longs for. Adding to her dilemma, she's offered an amazing chance at a dream career of her own.

Deep down, though, Moira knows home is the real prize, and that love can be every bit as enchanted as a summer garden.



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Sherryl Woods gives her characters depth, intensity, and the right amount of humor."

-RT Book Reviews

"Friendship and romance are at the heart of the latest Chesapeake Shores book . . . Once again, Woods, with such authenticity, weaves a tale of true love and the challenges that can knock up against that love." -RT Book Reviews on Beach Lane

"Once again, Woods proves her expertise in matters of the heart as she gives us characters that we genuinely relate to and care about. A truly delightful read!"

-RT Book Reviews on Moonlight Cove

"Woods' heartwarming style and compelling stories filled with love, friendship and family have earned her a huge following." -Book blogger Deb Lester, Debbie's Book Bag, on Driftwood Cottage

"Love, marriage, family, and forgiveness all play an important part in Woods' latest richly nourishing, holiday-spiced novel." -Chicago Tribune on A Chesapeake Shores Christmas

"Characters are handled well and have real chemistry-as well as a way with one-liners."

-RT Book Reviews on Harbor Lights

"Sparks fly in a lively tale that is overflowing with family conflict and the possibility of rekindled love."

-Library Journal on Flowers on Main

"Launching the Chesapeake Shores series, Woods creates an engrossing...family drama."

-Publishers Weekly on The Inn at Eagle Point

#### About the Author

With her roots firmly planted in the South, Sherryl Woods has written many of her more than 100 books in that distinctive setting, whether her home state of Virginia, her adopted state, Florida, or her much-adored South Carolina. She's also especially partial to small towns, wherever they may be. A member of Novelists Inc., Sisters in Crime and Romance Writers of America, Sherryl divides her time between her childhood summer home overlooking the Potomac River in Colonial Beach, Virginia, and her oceanfront home, with its lighthouse view, in Key Biscayne, Florida.

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Mladdening Moira was still in his head!

Luke O'Brien had been home from Ireland for a month now. He'd been obsessing over his plans for the pub he wanted to open in Chesapeake Shores, worrying about the likely uproar with his family. He'd gone out a few times with the sophisticated, delectable Kristen Lewis, picking up where they'd left off during a brief rendezvous in Ireland. Truth be told, it was a matter of convenience for both of them, not a meeting of the hearts, but until recently it had been an excellent distraction, if only because it had complications galore that appealed to Luke's desire for a taste of rebellion.

But then along came Moira Malone with the sharp tongue and wry wit.

"I'll not be taken in by smooth talk and a wink," she'd told Luke, firmly putting him in his place. "I've been around such men all my life."

They'd met on the O'Brien family's holiday excursion to Ireland a few months ago. She was the granddaughter of his own grandmother's old flame, Dillon O'Malley. She was beautiful, but impossible. In fact, it was entirely likely that she was the most frustrating female he'd ever had the pleasure of meeting, in part because she'd been mostly immune to his charm. She'd complicated his life in an entirely different way. She'd unexpectedly engaged his heart.

After staying on in Ireland for several weeks after the rest of the family had returned to Chesapeake Shores, Luke had eventually come home, ready to move on with his life. Ready to finally get serious about life, according to his impatient father, who'd vocally protested the wasting of his college education.

He had a degree in history, for heaven's sakes! Had anyone seriously thought he'd use that? He certainly hadn't. He'd chosen history because he enjoyed the subject as much as any other and he'd needed to get the college off his back by declaring a major.

Now, though, the clock was ticking, and the tightly knit O'Briens were all watching and waiting to see what he—the youngest of family matriarch Nell's grandchildren—planned to make of himself. He doubted that opening an Irish pub on Shore Road was what anyone in the family would have guessed his calling to be.

Restless after going over his plans for the thousandth time, hoping to be so sure of himself, so confident of his path that no one would even attempt to talk him out of it, he wandered over to his brother's office.

Matthew was currently proving himself to be almost as talented and innovative an architect as their world-renowned uncle Mick. Like most of Luke's family, Matthew had discovered his passion early on. Luke had envied everyone in his family, not only for knowing what they wanted, but also for succeeding at it, sometimes phenomenally well. He had daunting examples to follow.

When Luke arrived, Matthew was so absorbed in the blueprints on his desk he never even glanced up, which gave Luke more pacing time to get his thoughts in order. He intended to try out his idea first on the most receptive audience he was likely to find.

Eventually, Matthew looked up, spotted him and blinked. "How long have you been here?"

"Long enough," Luke said. "How many towns and villages have you designed today?"

"Only the one," Matthew replied, grinning. "I think the plans for this community in Florida are just about set to go to the developer for final approval. He's very anxious to break ground, judging by the frequency of his calls for updates on my progress."

Luke had seen his share of architectural renderings over the years, but he had to admit that he lacked the vision to translate them into brick-and-mortar towns. Still, he peered over his brother's shoulder, prepared to feign the proper enthusiasm. What he saw, though, as he leafed through the pages, left him dumbstruck.

"You designed this? From scratch? A whole community, from houses to Main Street to schools, a library and even a church? You just looked over a few acres of vacant land and imagined all this?"

Matthew's grin spread as he nodded. "Pretty awesome, if I do say so myself."

"I guess all that time you spent playing with Lego as a kid wasn't wasted, after all. Has Uncle Mick seen it?"

"Of course. He's in here pestering me every other day. I gather when he isn't calling me, the developer's calling Uncle Mick to nudge things along."

"And?"

"Uncle Mick says it's as good as anything he's ever done," Matthew said, looking pleased.

"Which means it's a thousand times better," Luke concluded. "He's not going to say so on your first big job and risk your having a swelled head and demanding a bigger salary."

Matthew shrugged off the compliment. "Things can always be better. Uncle Mick has even talked to me about things he would have done differently if he had Chesapeake Shores to design over again."

Luke regarded him with surprise. "Really? Like what?"

"He admits that Uncle Thomas was right about wanting the community to be built in an environmentally friendly way. He says he wouldn't have given him such a tough time about it."

Luke laughed. "No, he'd just give him a tough time on general principle, the same as he does with Dad."

"More than likely," Matthew agreed. "So what brings you by here at the end of the day?"

"I was hoping you'd have time for a drink."

"Sure. Mind if Laila tags along? I was going to meet her for dinner in an hour. You can join us."

"That'll work. There are some things I'd like to run by her, anyway."

His brother regarded him suspiciously. "Just what do you and my wife have to talk about?"

"Maybe we're conspiring to throw a surprise party for your birthday," Luke teased, knowing how much his brother abhorred the whole concept of surprise parties, even though he'd determinedly pulled off his own almost-surprise wedding in Ireland, keeping Laila mostly in the dark until his Christmas Eve proposal.

"My birthday was just a couple of months ago, and neither of you is that much of a long-range planner," Matthew retorted. "Try again."

"How about I explain it over drinks?" Luke countered.

"Fine. Brady's okay?"

"Actually, I have someplace else in mind. I need to stop by Dad's office first. Why don't I meet you on Shore Road in front of Panini Bistro in twenty minutes?"

"Suits me," Matthew said. "I'll call Laila and let her know. If I get there first, I'll grab a table."

"Actually, don't do that," Luke said. "Wait for me in front, okay? Tell Laila to grab a table, though, if she gets there before we're back."

"Back?" Matthew gave him an odd look. "Curiouser and curiouser."

"Trust me, okay?"

"Always," Matthew said at once. "See you in a few minutes."

Luke gave him a wave, then headed for his father's office. He was hoping to find his father gone for the day and perhaps only his sister still there. Susie might give him grief over his request, but she was less likely to pull rank and demand answers.

Even better, he found the real estate management company run by his father to be closed for the day. Using the key he had for the occasions when he helped out showing properties, he went in, plucked a key off the board for the properties they owned or managed and closed back up.

He beat Matthew to their appointed meeting spot by mere seconds.

"Where to now, o secretive one?" Matthew inquired.

"Not far," Luke said, heading down the block to a large empty space that had been occupied by a French restaurant that had gone belly-up, unable to survive during the slower winter months. Personally, he thought it had failed because of the god-awful uncomfortable chairs that had made the customers squirm through the torturous minutes it took to eat their overpriced food, but what did he know?

He led the way inside and flipped on lights, then turned to his older brother. "What do you think?"

Matthew looked blank. "Of what? It's an empty space."

Luke held his gaze. "Think you could help me turn it into a warm and welcoming Irish pub?"

The words were no sooner out of his mouth than he heard a hoot from the doorway and turned to see his uncle Mick standing there.

"I come to check on why lights are blazing in an empty property and find you making plans to open a pub?" Mick said, his expression incredulous.

Luke sighed. He hadn't wanted such a tough audience right from the outset, but maybe it was for the best. Mick had a good business head and a real understanding of what this town needed. He wondered if Mick would see the value of a gathering spot in the heart of town, a warm and welcoming place in the Irish tradition.

"That's what I'm thinking," Luke confirmed, looking Mick directly in the eye. "What's your opinion?"

Mick's gaze narrowed. "What makes you think you can do this? You never worked as a bartender, as far as I know. Never worked in a restaurant, either."

"Not entirely true," Luke said. "When I stayed on in Ireland, I worked for a time at McDonough's, the pub where we spent so much time while we were there. I also traveled all over the country visiting every pub I could find, from those in cities to those in small villages. I asked a million questions, took copious notes and cooked my share of fish 'n' chips. I even bought an antique bar in a place that was closing. It's being shipped over here for arrival in a month's time."

Matthew's expression was now as stunned as his uncle's. "I thought you stayed in Ireland after the family and Kristen left because you developed some misguided crush on the impossible Moira."

"That's what I wanted everyone to think," he admitted, and it had been partly true. "I wasn't ready to have all of you shoot down this idea of mine. I was still formulating it, testing it out in my heart and my head to see if it felt right." He leveled a look into his brother's eyes, pleading with him to understand and back him in this. "It does."

"But a pub?" Matthew said, his concern evident.

"Why?"

"In a weird way, it was something Mack said a while back," Luke explained, referring to his sister Susie's husband. "I was giving him some advice and he made an offhand comment that maybe I should consider being a shrink like Will. He was actually being sarcastic, but the idea stuck."

"And that led you to this pub idea?" Mick said. "What kind of sense does that make?"

"Everyone knows people pour out their troubles to bartenders," Luke explained. "I like listening, not in any official capacity, the way Will does, but just being a sounding board. When we were in Ireland, I saw that kind of thing happening in every pub we went to, and it all kind of fell into place. Pubs create their own kind of community, not just for drinking but for food and friendship, for music and laughter. At least when they're done right. I'd like to be at the center of something like that."

"Well, I'll be," Matthew said.

Luke studied his brother's face to see if shock was edging toward approval. "So, do you think I'm insane?" he prodded.

"A little," Matthew said. "But I can also see it working. How about you, Uncle Mick? Look around. Imagine that antique bar across the back wall with a big mirror that will bring in the view of the bay, at least during the day. Maybe not as dark as the usual Irish pub, but one suited to a seaside town. Laila and I saw one like that in Howth with a view of the marina."

He glanced toward Luke. "You mentioned music. Does that mean you'd like a small area for a band?"

"Absolutely," Luke confirmed. "Nothing too large or fancy, just an area where musicians can set up. I'm hoping to book some authentic Irish groups from time to time. Bands, singers, whatever I can find."

"Got it," Matthew said, jotting notes on the pad that was ever-present in his pocket. "Uncle Mick, what do you think?"

Mick shook his head and began to pace. Only after he'd been at it a few minutes did Luke realize he was mentally measuring. When he halted in front of Luke, he looked him in the eye. "You have a business plan? Times get tough around here in winter. You have to be able to weather that."

"I think the music will keep the locals coming in and maybe draw people from around the region. My figures seem sound enough to me, but I was hoping Laila could take a look at them," he said. "Math was never my strongest suit. I'm hoping she'll have time to take over that end of things for me, keep the finances on track and yank my chain when I'm tempted to bust the budget for one thing or another, as she does for Jess."

"Ah, so that's why she's waiting for us now at Panini Bistro," Matthew said. "We should probably get over there. Uncle Mick, care to come along?"

"Try to keep me away," Mick said at once. "I'll just walk to the corner, which is where I was headed when I spotted you two, and get Megan. She should be closing up her gallery about now."

On his way to get his wife, Luke surmised, Mick had apparently crossed paths with Luke's cousin Connor, who was meeting his wife, Heather, at her quilt shop and invited them along, because Connor and Heather accompanied Connor's parents to the restaurant.

By the time they were actually seated at Panini Bistro, they needed just about every vacant seat in the tiny restaurant. Naturally, it was Mick who seized the moment to announce Luke's news, which caused a noisy eruption of input from everyone in the room, until Mick finally slapped a hand on the table to get their attention. Then he turned to Luke.

"What do you plan to call this bar of yours?"

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