GENERAL

this heart of mine by susan elizabeth phillips

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Discovering the Romance Behind “This Heart of Mine” by Susan Elizabeth Phillips

When you first hear the title **“This Heart of Mine” by Susan Elizabeth Phillips**, you might picture a sweeping love story, a character-driven plot, or perhaps a tender exploration of modern relationships. In reality, this novel is a masterclass in contemporary romance that blends humor, heart, and a dash of Southern charm. Whether you’re a long time fan of Phillips or a newcomer to the genre, this guide will walk you through every facet of the book—from its plot and characters to its critical reception and lasting impact on readers.

About the Author: Susan Elizabeth Phillips

Before diving into the specifics of the novel, it’s helpful to understand the mind behind the manuscript. Susan Elizabeth Phillips, born in 1964, is a celebrated American author known for her witty, relatable, and often family centric romance novels. She began her writing career in the early 1990s and has since published over 40 books, many of which have become New York Times bestsellers.

Phillips’s style is unmistakable: she blends humor with genuine emotion, creating characters that feel like real people you’d meet at a coffee shop or a family reunion. Her novels often explore the complexities of love, marriage, and friendship while maintaining a light, engaging tone that keeps readers turning pages.

“This Heart of Mine” fits seamlessly into her oeuvre, showcasing her signature blend of heartwarming storytelling and sharp dialogue.

Overview of “This Heart of Mine”

Published in 2005, **“This Heart of Mine”** is a contemporary romance that centers around the life of a woman named **Laura**—a devoted mother, a talented pastry chef, and a woman who’s been juggling love and responsibility for years. The novel follows her journey as she navigates the unexpected arrival of her estranged mother’s old flame, the challenges of a new bakery venture, and the possibility of a second chance at love.

Plot Summary

Laura’s world is a blend of kitchen aromas and the gentle hum of her two children’s laughter. She’s built a life that many would envy: a loving husband, a thriving bakery, and a close-knit community. However, the arrival of **Michael**, her mother’s former lover, throws everything into motion.

Michael, a charismatic yet complicated man, has been a ghost in Laura’s past for decades. He shows up on her doorstep, seeking closure and perhaps a new beginning. As Laura and Michael reconnect, they must confront their shared history, the secrets that kept them apart, and the possibility that love can bloom again even after years of silence.

Parallel to this rekindled romance is Laura’s struggle to keep her bakery afloat. With rising competition and a growing demand for artisanal pastries, she must innovate while staying true to her values. The novel interweaves these storylines—family, business, and love—creating a rich tapestry that keeps readers invested from beginning to

end.

Main Characters

- Laura – A devoted mother, baker, and the heart of the story. Her resilience and warmth make her a relatable protagonist.
- Michael – Laura's mother's former lover. Charismatic, mysterious, and surprisingly vulnerable.
- David – Laura's supportive husband, whose loyalty is tested as new dynamics emerge.
- Emily & Ethan – Laura's teenage children, each bringing their own challenges and joys to the family narrative.
- Supporting cast – From bakery staff to town gossip, these characters add depth and humor to the story.

Themes and Motifs

While the plot is engaging on its own, the novel's true strength lies in its exploration of several enduring themes:

1. Second Chances – The possibility of love after loss or regret is a central motif, encouraging readers to believe in renewal.
2. Family Dynamics – From parent child relationships to the complexities of blended families, the book highlights the importance of communication and understanding.
3. Entrepreneurship and Passion – Laura's bakery represents a dream turned into reality, inspiring readers to pursue their own passions.
4. Self Discovery – Characters often question their choices, learning to listen to their hearts rather than societal expectations.

Writing Style & Narrative Voice

Phillips's voice in **"This Heart of Mine"**is conversational yet polished. She uses witty asides and heartfelt introspections to balance humor with depth. The narrative perspective—primarily Laura's first person viewpoint—allows readers to experience her internal conflicts and triumphs intimately. Her descriptive language paints vivid images of bakery interiors, the scent of fresh bread, and the gentle rhythm of small-town life.

Reception & Reviews

Upon release, the novel received positive reviews from both critics and readers. Many praised its realistic characters and the way Phillips handled the delicate balance between romance and everyday life. Reviewers highlighted the novel's pacing, noting that the story moves steadily without sacrificing emotional depth.

In particular, the novel was lauded for:

- Its authentic portrayal of a working mother's life.
- The chemistry between Laura and Michael, which many readers found believable and engaging.
- Its subtle commentary on the evolving nature of family and love.

Why Readers Love It

Readers often cite the following reasons for their affection toward **"This Heart of Mine"**:

1. Relatable Characters – Laura's struggles mirror those of many readers who juggle work, family, and personal dreams.
2. Heartfelt Storyline – The novel's focus on second chances resonates with anyone who believes in the power of forgiveness.
3. Humor & Lightness – Phillips's comedic touches keep the narrative buoyant, preventing it from becoming too heavy.
4. Inspirational Themes – The entrepreneurial spirit embodied by Laura's bakery offers motivation for aspiring

business owners.

Comparison with Other Works

When compared to other titles by Susan Elizabeth Phillips, such as *“The Wedding Planner”* or *“A New Life”*, **“This Heart of Mine”**stands out for its focus on a single family’s internal dynamics rather than a broader social event. While many of her novels revolve around weddings or career milestones, this book delves into the day to day joys and challenges of running a small business and raising children.

Moreover, the novel’s Southern setting provides a unique backdrop that differs from the urban landscapes seen in some of Phillips’s other works. The gentle, community centric atmosphere adds a layer of authenticity that readers find comforting.

Where to Find It

If you’re ready to step into Laura’s world, you can find **“This Heart of Mine”** in several formats:

- Print editions – Hardcover and paperback are widely available at major bookstores and online retailers.
- eBook – Available for Kindle, Nook, and other e reader platforms.
- Audiobook – Narrated by a professional voice actor, the audiobook version offers an immersive experience.
- Library – Many public libraries carry the book in both physical and digital formats.

Conclusion

“This Heart of Mine” by Susan Elizabeth Phillips is more than just a romance novel; it’s a heartfelt exploration of love, family, and the courage to pursue your passions. Through Laura’s journey, readers discover that even in the most ordinary moments—baking bread, teaching children, or sharing a laugh—there is room for extraordinary love.

Whether you’re a long time fan of Phillips or a newcomer looking for a sweet, engaging read, this novel promises warmth, humor, and a reminder that hearts, no matter how battered, can always find a new rhythm. Dive into the pages, and let Laura’s story remind you that love, indeed, can bloom again—just as beautifully as a freshly baked croissant.

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