



2019

Small Town Hearts

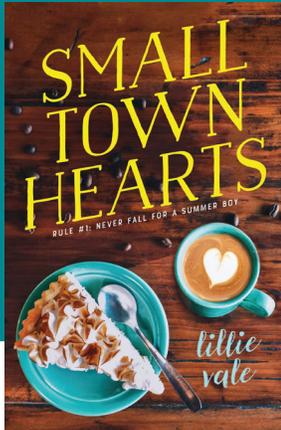
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Book Review

Small Town Hearts

Author

Lillie Vale

Reviewer

Taylor Nelson

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

324

Year

2019

ISBN

9781250192356

Publisher

Swoon Reads

Barbara “Babe” Vogel is excited to have a perfect summer with her two best friends after graduating high school. Life in the small beach town of Oar’s Rest, Maine, is sleepy and predictable, and Babe loves the quiet structure of her life. But everything changes when a reckless kiss causes her friends to split up, and things seem to get infinitely worse when Babe’s ex-girlfriend returns to town, intent on picking up where they left off. Babe’s only solace comes in the form of a tourist boy named Levi Keller, whose artist hands and serious eyes draw her in. Babe has always told herself never to fall for a summer boy. But perhaps by breaking her own rule, she’ll find that love can be found in unexpected places, and that growing up means learning to embrace change and daring to take risks.

This book’s biggest strength is without a doubt its setting. Vale’s rich description of life in tiny Oar’s Rest masterfully paints a vivid atmosphere that makes the reader feel at home. Oar’s Rest practically leaps off the pages and comes to life right in front of your eyes. Contemporary novels need strong world-building just as much as any fantasy novel, and Vale proves this with her fantastic depiction of a picturesque and charming small town. It is also refreshing to see a main character who is content with small town life, rather than the trope of a protagonist who can’t wait to get out of their hometown. The exploration of changing relationships is very relatable, since post-graduation can be quite a confusing time, and Vale does a wonderful job of fleshing out the friendship dynamics. Though the writing can get a bit too carried away at some points, overall *Small Town Hearts* is a beautiful book full of friendships, growing up, delicious baked goods, and a swoon-worthy romance.

*Contains moderate language, mild substance abuse, and mild sexual content.